St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Diocesan Multi Academy Trust

Attendance Policy

Date Approved and Minuted	**MAT Board**	**7th May 2026**
Date of Next Review	**MAT Board**	**July 2027**

Attendance Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy has been written in conjunction with the DfE guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' published in May 2022 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-schoolattendance) and the Guidance for Suffolk Schools from the Suffolk Attendance Service (https://suffolklearning.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/School-Guidance-final.pdf). The policy outlines the attendance expectations for pupils at all schools within the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust.

1.2 Information specific to your child's school, such as timings for the school day and school contact details can be found in Appendix 5.

2 Principles

2.1 The principles of this policy are based on a quote from Ofsted in their recent document on securing good attendance (Feb 2022) which says the school's role in attendance is to:

'listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate'

2.2 Improving attendance is everyone's business and, as schools, we understand that the barriers to attendance are wide and complex, both within school and outside of school, and can be specific to individual pupils and families. We also understand that to secure good attendance, school needs to be a calm, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and encourages them to be keen to learn. However, as this policy outlines, whilst we will support families and pupils who are struggling with their attendance, we will not tolerate ongoing poor attendance and will work with families to remove barriers and improve attendance.

3 The Law on School Attendance

3.1 The law entitles every children of compulsory age to an efficient, full time education suitable for their age and any special educational need they may have. **It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. All children have a legal right to a full-time education.** Where parents decide to have their children registered at a school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends the school regularly. Children must attend school every day except in a small number of allowable circumstances.

4 The Impact of Poor Attendance

4.1 Research shows that the children who have the highest end of Year 6 results across the country have higher rates of attendance compared with those children who have the lowest end of year 6 results. This is also true for pupils at the end of Year 11 in secondary schools. There is a strong link between poor attendance and poor progress or attainment in school. It is essential for pupils to attend school every day to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

5 Attendance and Punctuality Expectations

5.1 Punctuality & Lateness

It is important that all children arrive at school equipped and ready to learn on time. When a child is late they miss vital parts of the morning sessions. Therefore, it is vital that all children are punctual to school every day. The start time for your child's school can be found in Appendix 5.

5.2 Absence Reporting

It is the **parent's responsibility** to inform the school when their child is absent. All parents must **call the school before the time specified in Appendix 5** to report their child as absent and to explain the reasons for their absence. This is to allow school staff to speak with families and support them where necessary with advice and to ensure the correct information is recorded.

Any parents who leave voicemails or email the school office may still receive a phone call following up their child's absence. For more information, see the section on the school's day to day processes.

5.3 Requesting Leaves of Absence in Advance

In the exceptional case where families know in advance of a reason why their child may not be able to attend school, they must request a 'Leave of Absence' form from the school office. This must be completed in its entirety, detailing the reasons for the leave request. **Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence.**

The Headteacher will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. For example, a background context might be linked to the fact that the school serves an agricultural community or a military service base.

Parents will receive a response in writing to say whether the leave is granted. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Headteacher to decide the length of time a pupil can be away from school.

As Headteachers can only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances, **it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.** The impact of missing a week of school is huge on children's learning and can severely impact their understanding of a topic or unit of work when they return to school; in turn affecting their outcomes.

If parents decide to not bring their child to school following a leave of absence being rejected, **this absence will be marked as unauthorised and could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice.** Please see the section on Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) that explains the point at which FPNs will be issued.

If families request two or more unauthorised leaves per year, this will lead to an automatic referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

5.4 Medical Appointments

All medical appointments should be made outside of school hours. This includes dentist, optician and doctor appointments. On the rare occasion where this is not possible, for example a child needs to attend a specialist centre at a given time, parents must complete a 'leave of absence' request. A form for this can be collected from the school office.

When a pupil has a medical appointment, the child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. They should be brought back to school as soon as possible so that they do not miss out on any more learning than is necessary.

6 The School's Day to Day Processes for Managing Attendance

6.1 The approach in this policy is focused on being ambitious for all our pupils' attendance. This means that effective day-to-day processes are set up to ensure that all absences are **tracked and followed up.**

6.2 The school recognises that there can be challenges to regular attendance for some children with SEND and will make reasonable adjustments to their processes for individual circumstances. It is important for parents to communicate with the school to allow these adjustments to be made.

6.3 Managing Lateness

Lateness will be treated in the same way as attendance in this school as we are ambitious in our learning and in achieving our goals.

Each time a pupil is late to school, parents will receive a message from the school to inform them that their child was late to school today. If a pattern of lateness is identified, staff will work with families to support them with getting to school on time. If this persists, school staff will follow the processes described in the Attendance Outline in Appendix 1.

6.4 Contacting parents when their child is absent

On the first day of absence, a member of school staff will contact parents by phone to discuss their child's absence. The reasons given will be recorded on our electronic system and may be used in future meetings with families where attendance is causing concern.

If no reason has been provided by the parent and the parent has not contacted the school or has not answered the phone, this will be followed up on day 1. If there is still no contact from parents by the end of day 1, this will lead to a home visit to ensure safeguarding of the child.

6.5 Following up unexplained absences

Office staff will check the registers daily for any unexplained absences and contact parents, even if the child has returned to school. If no suitable reason is given within 3 working days, this will be recorded on the electronic system and marked as an unauthorised absence. See Appendix 3 for the attendance codes and their definitions. School staff will contact other relevant agencies where appropriate, for example family support workers or social workers, and may complete a safeguarding referral if they have concerns.

6.6 Emergency Contacts

The school will aim to hold at least 2 emergency contacts for each pupil. On the rare occasion where the school is unable to contact the first emergency contact regarding attendance, they will ring all contacts listed to ascertain the reason for the child's absence as well as to ensure safeguarding of the child.

6.7 Informing parents about their child's attendance

Starting at the end of the Autumn term, each half term, all parents may receive in writing the attendance for their child. This will have a breakdown in days to support parents in better understanding how many days the child has been absent from school as well as the impact on their learning. See Appendix 1 for further information.

For pupils where attendance falls below **95%,** parents may receive an additional letter outlining this in the week it happens. **This will show that the child's attendance is at risk.**

For pupils where attendance falls below **93%**, parents may receive an additional letter outlining this in the week it happens. **This will show that the child's attendance is at high risk.**

For pupils where attendance falls below **90%**, parents may receive an additional letter outlining this in the week it happens. This will show that **the child's attendance is now considered persistently absent** and will contain information about what happens next to support the family in improving attendance.

6.8 Parent Attendance Meetings

Schools are expected to hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school consider to be vulnerable, or who are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement in the school. These are designed to be supportive where staff will listen to the barriers to attendance, both at school and at home, and will work with families to find ways to tackle these. These meetings may be done over the 'phone or included as part of another meeting if appropriate.

When a child's **attendance drops below 93%, an initial parent attendance meeting may be set up**. These will be regular and will discuss the child's attendance, share attendance information and patterns identified and support families to improve attendance.

When a child's **attendance drops below 90%, they are considered persistently absent and may be allocated an 'attendance key worker'.** This key worker will hold regular parent attendance meetings to share progress on attendance and support

families to improve attendance rapidly. For more information, see the section on the school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence.

6.9 Support from wider agencies

Poor attendance is usually an indicator that the family is facing a range of wide and complex situations. Through effective parent contact and meetings, school staff may consider that the pupil or family need additional support from wider agencies beyond the school. This may include, but not limited to:

- Mental Health Support Team
- Emotional Wellbeing Hub
- Early Help Team (through a Common Assessment Framework – CAF)
- SEND services like SES and Communication and Language Team
- Speech and Language Team
- Safeguarding referral (MARF)

Through a robust procedure, school staff will be able to identify pupils who need support from wider agencies as quickly as possible and will make the necessary referrals in a timely manner.

6.10 Supporting pupils back into school

On some occasions, where a pupil has had a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, school staff will provide support to build children's confidence and support them with bridging gaps on what they have missed. This will allow them to have the smoothest return to school and limit the possibility of additional absence due to being anxious about returning to school.

7 Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance

7.1 There are many children who have really strong attendance. At St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust schools, we promote and reward good attendance in many ways – these may include:

- An attendance section on our newsletter each week
- An attendance breakdown by year group shared with parents and children each week where a year group winner is identified
- Attendance assemblies used to celebrate the year group winner and to identify pupils with improved attendance
- Certificates for pupils who have high attendance each half term
- Certificates / stickers for pupils who have improved in their attendance
- Sharing attendance updates with parents regularly for their child
- Attendance information shared with all new starters, including new Reception cohorts
- Attendance cohort sessions for parents where attendance is a concern
- Regular attendance letters sent home
- Attendance discussed at every parents' evening and on end of year reports

7.2 As a school, promoting good attendance is key to ensuring that all stakeholders understand the importance of attendance. It is also vital to celebrate the pupils who have strong attendance and reward these accordingly.

8 The Trust's Strategy for using attendance data

8.1 Through using data to target the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most, our schools are well equipped with information to drive continued attendance improvements. Regular, thorough and robust data analysis allows the school to identify trends, patterns and most importantly plan for early intervention. Poor attendance is a habit and it is vital that schools act quickly to reduce the likelihood of this becoming a long-term habit.

8.2 Schools may use attendance data as outlined in the table below:

Daily	Identify all 'Lates' and pupils who are absent and check reasons Check pupils who have given no reasons over 2 days
Weekly	Attendance report shared with attendance team and class teachers Individual PA report to be updated to track patterns Key data / trends shared with leaders with responsibility for areas of the school for example the SENDCO, pupil premium champion and DSLs
Fortnightly	Attendance data is shared and reviewed to identify key next steps and actions Use this to identify support and plan specific strategies for individuals and pupil groups Send parent letters for all pupils who have fallen below 95%, 93% and 90% Use this information for parent meetings where applicable
Half termly	Write to all parents to share attendance information Use data to analyse trends for pupil groups and individuals Generate attendance breakdown for governors, MAT and staff alongside national benchmarks to enable comparison and plan for areas of improvement. Measure impact of interventions through monitoring improvements in data.
Termly	Share attendance information with parents at parents' evening Share more detailed attendance analysis with governors Share statutory data with the MAT
Yearly	Analyse attendance summary for the year and review ASP attendance information to identify any further trends or patterns for whole school

9 Our Strategy for Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

9.1 We work on building strong relationships with families as we know this is key to improving attendance. We treat all pupils and parents with dignity and respect and all staff model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school.

9.2 We will listen to families and truly understand the barriers to attendance and work with them to remove these. All of our strategies will focus on listening and understanding, building on support for our persistently absent families. We will always work with families

and support them in many ways, but we will not tolerate poor attendance. The support process is detailed in Appendix 2.

9.3 Our strategy for reducing persistent absence is built on the following:

- All persistently absent pupils and severely absent pupils will be allocated an 'attendance key worker' as soon as they fall below 90% attendance. (For pupils above 90% who are at risk of dropping below 90%, please see Section 8 and Appendix 1)
- The attendance key worker will be the named person responsible for ensuring raised attendance and will work with the attendance team to draw up an action plan for the child.
- The attendance key worker will book a family meeting with the family to listen, understand and discuss barriers to attendance and will support the family in raising attendance. They will also collate pupil voice about what they feel the barriers to attendance may be.
- Every day, their attendance will be monitored and the key worker will ring home when the child is absent to discuss reasons for this and support the family in bringing them into school as quickly as possible.
- Fortnightly, the persistent absence action plan will be reviewed during attendance meetings and data will be monitored to indicate improvements or any patterns and trends. These will be shared with families to ensure that progress is seen and celebrated.
- On occasions where illness is being reported as a reason for absence, if attendance is not improving following support, the school will ask to see medical evidence for absence. Any absence where medical evidence is not provided will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Support will be sought from external agencies where appropriate (see Section 6.9)

9.4 **When support will be formalised**

Whilst schools will aim to be supportive in raising attendance of persistently absent pupils, if, despite all these actions, attendance is not improving after 15 school days, it is likely that a formal process will begin. This will involve:

- a formal parenting contract will be put in place and will be shared in writing with families. This will outline the targets and goals and how the school will support as well as the expectations of the family. See paragraph 98 of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance document for further details.
- attendance information will be shared with parents weekly so they are always up to date with their child's attendance.
- a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be completed to gain further support in raising attendance
- where attendance is severe (below 50%) a safeguarding referral will be completed as the school will have concerns around neglect for the child.
- a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) may be issued in some cases (see next section).

- if none of the above has been successful in raising attendance, an Education Supervision Order will provide formal, legal intervention. See paragraph 107-109 of the Working Together to Improve School Attendance document for further details.

- in the very rare circumstance that none of the above improves overall attendance, prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort. This is when all informal and formal support or legal intervention has failed. Only local authorities can prosecute parents but will seek evidence from the school about the support measures put in place.

10 Fixed Penalty Notices

10.1 To promote good attendance at school, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) will be used in line with guidance from the DfE and Suffolk County Council (Appendix 5). The Working Together to Improve School Attendance document outlines that **FPNs are used by schools where parents have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school that they are registered in**. The Education Attendance Service aim to support schools/ Academies and parents/carers to improve pupil attendance but Suffolk County Council will issue a Penalty Notice once a referral from a school has been received when:

- **Unauthorised absence has occurred from school** and limited improvements have been made despite intervention and support. **This can include being persistently late.**

- One off instances of irregular attendance where a leave has been taken during term time without the permission of the school. This includes family holidays during term time and includes when these have been requested but not authorised by the school.

- Where **parents are stopped during a truancy sweep** and the absence is not authorised by the school.

- Where a parent allows their child to be present in a public space during school hours without reasonable justification **during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion.**

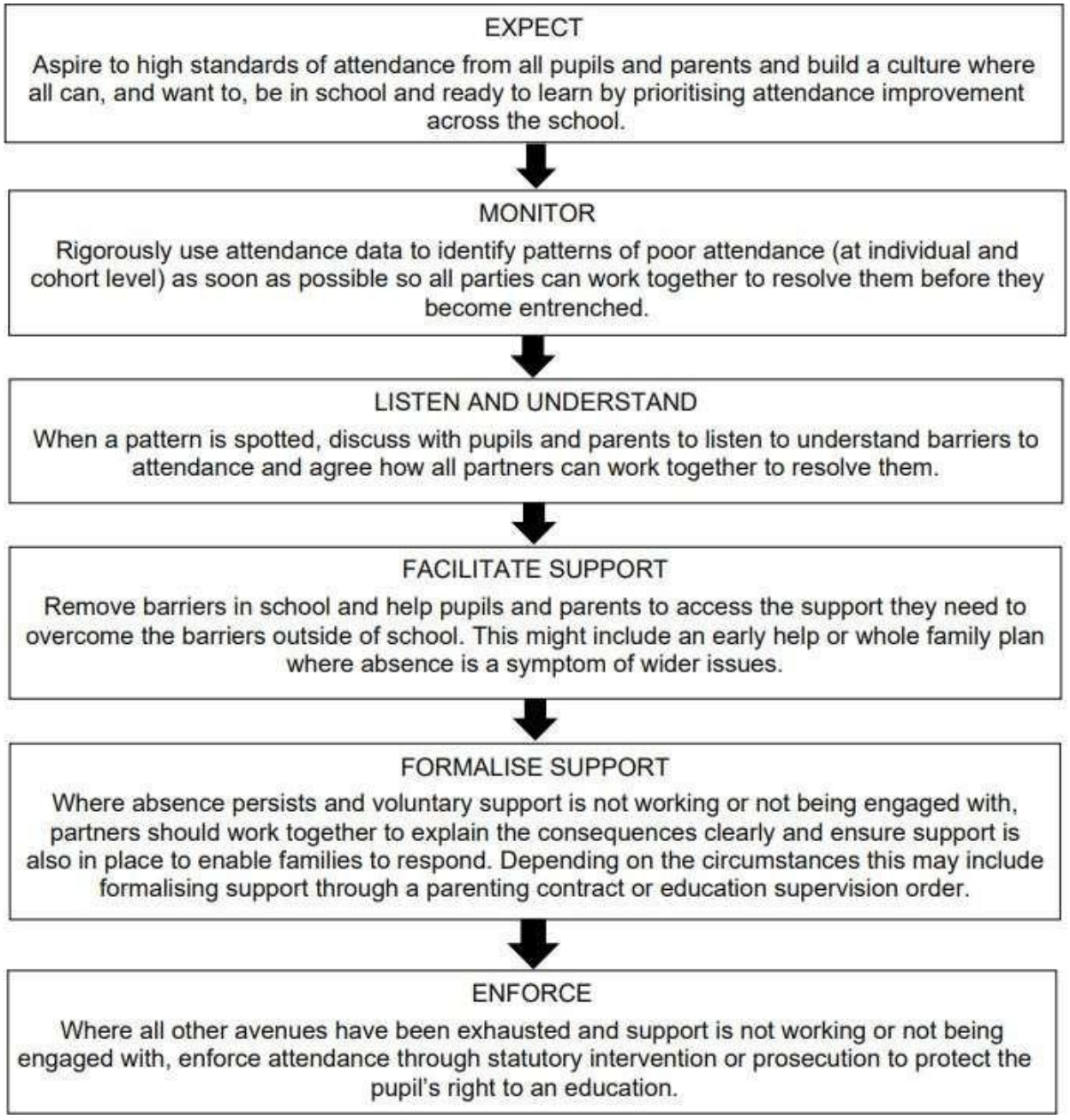
The law says that if children of compulsory school age are absent from school without good reason they are committing an offence and their parents or carers may be prosecuted in the Magistrate's Court.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Outline for Parents

Number of days absent	Attendance Percentage	Impact	School Actions
0-2 days absent in a school year	**99% to 100%**	**Attendance levels are Excellent** Your child is accessing all learning opportunities	- Celebrate strong attendance in Collective Worship - Positive encouragement and awards for pupils and classes - Update parents on their child's attendance termly
2.5-9 days absent in a school year	**96% to 98%**	**Attendance levels are Good** Your child has missed very few learning opportunities	
9.5-17 days absent in a school year	**93% to 95%**	**Attendance levels are at risk** Your child is at risk of underachieving due to missed learning	- Attendance letter sent home informing parents attendance is at risk - Weekly check-in by member of staff for pupil and family - Monitor attendance weekly
18-25 days absent in a school year	**90% to 92%**	**Attendance levels are at high risk** Your child is at risk of high underachievement due to missed learning	- Attendance letter sent home informing parents attendance is at high risk - Attendance support meeting for parents, pupils and staff - Weekly check-in by member of staff for pupil and family - Identify support for pupil and family needed to improve attendance
Over 25 days absent in a	**Below 90%**	**Attendance levels are not good**	- Attendance letter sent home informing parents attendance is now not good and considered persistently absent

school year		**Your child is at risk of serious underachievement and is now considered persistently absent**	- Attendance support meeting for parents - Pupil and family allocated one member of staff to support with improving attendance - Daily check-in by member of staff for pupil and family - Family action plan to be considered if necessary

Appendix 2 – How Trust Schools Will Work With Families



Appendix 3 – Attendance Codes for Absence

Authorised Absence Codes

Code	What the code stands for	Additional information
Code I	Illness	Not medical or dental appointment
Code C	Authorised Leave for exceptional circumstances	Agreed in advance through the leave of absence process.
Code C1	Authorised Leave for participating in a regulated performance	Agreed in advance through the leave of absence process. If the performance is under a licence issued by the local authority or BOPA and this specifies the dates this should be used in place of the leave of absence process
Code C2	Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age child subject to a part-time timetable
Code L	Late	Before register closes
Code E	Exclusion	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
Code M	Medical or Dental Appointment	
Code R	Religious Observance	
Code T	Traveller absence	

Unauthorised Absence Codes

Code	What the code stands for	Additional information
Code U	Unauthorised Late	After register closes
Code G	Unauthorised Holiday	Denied in advance through the leave of absence process (or when not informed)
Code N	No reason given at the time of absence	No more than 5 working days and then converted to Code O
Code O	No reason established	Other or unknown circumstance

Attending Approved Educational Activities

Code	What the code stands for	Additional information
Code D	Dual Registered at Another School	
Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Arranged under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 (exceptional provision of education) or Section 42 or 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (special educational provision off site)

Code B	Offsite educational activity	Y6 taster days at secondary school (as part of transition). School to contact to check pupils have arrived. If not, then usual absence processes follow. Not to be used for Virtual learning.
Code J1	Interview with prospective employers or transfer to another educational institution	To enable Y5/6 pupils to visit a secondary school To enable other pupils to visit schools for a tour to support transfer to new school
Code P	Supervised Sporting Activity	For pupils taking part in sports activities
Code V	Educational visit or trip	School organised trips and visits (including residential)

Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause

Code Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements	
Code Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available.	
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Travel disrupted due to local, national or international emergency
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of school premises being closed	
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed.	
Code Y5	Unable to attend because pupil is in criminal justice detention	
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	

Code Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Must be something affecting the pupil not the parent.

Administering Codes

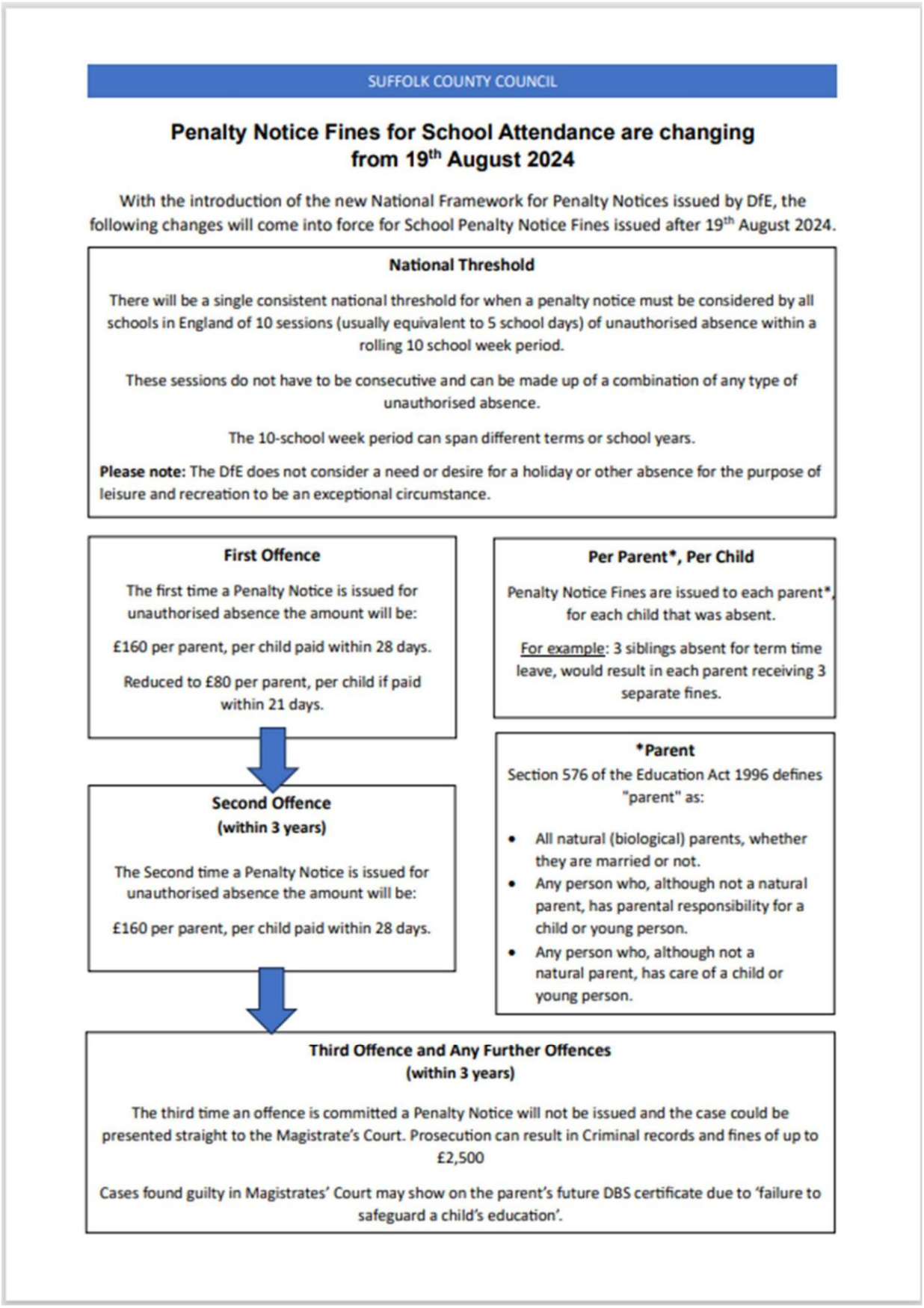
Code X	Non-compulsory school age not required to be in school	Agreed part time school placement for 4 year olds.
Code Z	Prospective pupil not an admission register	To enable schools to set up pupils before they arrive in September
Code #	Planned whole or partial school closure	Half terms Bank holidays PD Days

NOTE: Codes B, K and Y7 will require a reason to be recorded with the attendance code.

NOTE: The following codes cannot be used after 19.08.24:

- H – Family Holiday agreed o J – Interview (now J1)
- Y – Exceptional circumstances (now Y1-Y7)

Appendix 4 – SCC Penalty Notice Fine Leaflet for Parents



SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are changing from 19th August 2024

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices issued by DfE, the following changes will come into force for School Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19th August 2024.

National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

Please note: The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Per Parent*, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent*, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

Second Offence (within 3 years)

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

*Parent

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as:

- All natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented straight to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution can result in Criminal records and fines of up to £2,500

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court may show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

11 Appendix 5 – School Information

Aims of the School;

The School Day

- Gates open for school at **8:25am** Children can be dropped off at the classrooms from 8:35am.
- School starts at **8.35am**
- The register closes at **9.00am**
- The afternoon register is taken at **1.10pm** after lunch
- The end of the school day is at **3.05pm**

Lessons start at school from 8.35am.

- A child is marked as **'late' (L)** if they arrive after 8.35am but before 9.00am
- A child is marked as **'unauthorised late' (U)** if they arrive after 9.00am

Absence Reporting

It is the **parent's responsibility** to inform the school when their child is absent. All parents must **call the school between 8am and 9am** on 01638 662835

12 Key Contacts for Attendance

The information below outlines the key contacts who will be responsible for overseeing attendance and supporting families with improving attendance. All members of staff can be contacted via the school office on 01638 662835 or via email at admin@allsaints.suffolk.sch.uk. Parents must indicate which member of the team they would like to discuss their child's attendance with and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

The named senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance is; Katie Hammond (Headteacher)

The named person will lead the attendance team implementing this policy across the school. On the next page is an outlined summary of roles and responsibilities of this team:

Name	Roles covered.	Responsibilities
Katie Hammond Fran Mortlock Carter	Headteacher Attendance Leader Attendance Team	- Strategically lead attendance - Work with families whose attendance is not improving - Implement this policy - Review leave of absence requests - Refer Fixed Penalty Notices to the LA
Karen Tuite Fran Mortlock-Carter	Office Manager Attendance Team	- Attendance registers - Receive phone calls from parents regarding absence - monthly and termly tracking of attendance - Send letters to parents where attendance is a concern
Fran Mortlock-Carter Karen Tuite	Admin Assistant Attendance Admin Attendance Team	- Daily calls and check ins - First day of absence calls and late texts - Daily and weekly logging of attendance and lateness - Receive phone calls from parents regarding absence
Kerri Conway	SEND specialist Attendance Team	- Attend fortnightly attendance meetings - Support SEND families with attendance - Weekly / Daily calling for some families
Kerri Conway Fran Mortlock-Carter Katie Hammond	Mental Health specialist Attendance Team	- Attend fortnightly attendance meetings - Support families with attendance where mental health is a barrier - Weekly / Daily calling for some families
	Higher Level Teaching Assistant Pupil Premium Champion Attendance Team	- Attend fortnightly attendance meetings - Support pupil premium families with attendance (free school meals/service/LAC) - Weekly / Daily calling for some families
All Class teachers	Class teachers	- Hold half termly meeting with families where attendance is a concern - Refer families to headteacher where attendance is not improving.