

Improving Attendance at Sladefield Infant School - The Fast-Track Process

Friday 16th February 2018 at
9.00am

What is 'Fast-Track to Attendance'?

- 'FAST-Track to Attendance' is an Early Help approach to improving pupil attendance which also seeks to act quickly where there is unauthorised absence.
- It is used when there is a concerning level of absence for any individual child, whether this is authorised or unauthorised.

When will 'Fast-Track to Attendance' procedures be used at Sladefield Infant School?

- When a child's attendance is classed as 'persistent absence' – when it has fallen below 90% AND there is no 'Leave in Term Time' absences as part of that (these children/parents will be tackled using the 'Leave in Term Time' OR monitored closely to ensure that attendance improves rapidly).
- When there is a concern regarding an ongoing drop in attendance, even when this is not below 90%.

Step One

The following actions might be taken as a first stage in trying to improve attendance:

- **First-day calling (from the Office Staff)**
- **Sending a letter outlining our concerns regarding attendance**
- **Informal meeting held with parents**
 - **Is there an underlying medical condition?;**
 - **Are there any health practitioners involved?;**
 - **Has the child been taken to see the GP?**
 - **If evidence of medical condition, potential for offer a referral to the School Nurse for an assessment**
- **Home visits (to elicit if a child is actually absent due to illness)**
- **Gather the 'voice of the child' – 'Signs of Safety & Wellbeing' (see Appendix 1)**
- **Add the child to the 'Vulnerable Children's List' held at school**

Step One – ‘Signs of Safety & Wellbeing’ – Three Houses

Birmingham Early Help and Safeguarding Partnership

Signs of Safety and Wellbeing – Three Houses

The diagram consists of three identical house-shaped boxes arranged horizontally. Each box has a red outline and a white interior. The text inside each box is as follows:

- House of WORRIES**: The words "House of" are in black, and "WORRIES" is in red, bold, uppercase letters.
- House of GOOD THINGS**: The words "House of" are in black, and "GOOD THINGS" is in green, bold, uppercase letters.
- House of DREAMS**: The words "House of" are in black, and "DREAMS" is in blue, bold, uppercase letters.

Each box is empty, providing space for notes or observations.

Step One

'Signs of Safety & Wellbeing'

Three Houses Outcomes

From this step, there should be one of four Early Help outcomes:

- no additional support or alterations required for the individual child
- initiate simple, reasonable adjustments to address the child/young person's unmet needs
- develop a school focused action plan with child/young person, parent /carer as appropriate
- initiate a multi-agency Early Help Assessment (EHA) & Our Family Plan (OFP).

If the conversation with the child indicates a serious safeguarding concern under 'Right Help, Right Time', we would follow our child protection procedures.

Step Two

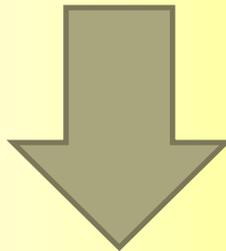
If there were no other concerns found when the 'Three Houses' Early Help process had been carried out, we would continue with the 'Fast-Track' process and there is ONE SESSION OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

OR

If the 'Early Help' process had been refused by the parents and there is still an attendance concern

OR

If the 'Early Help' support offer was not leading to a sustained attendance improvement



A **SARM** – **S**chool **A**ttendance **R**evision **M**eeting

What is a 'SARM'?

The 'SARM' is a meeting held between the parents/carers of the child with continued attendance concerns and the Designated Lead Person (DLP) with the purpose being to try and illicit as to why their child's attendance is causing concern.

There will be a number of questions asked during this meeting regarding the following areas (Appendix 2):

- any illnesses that have prevented the child attending school
- any other agencies/professionals working with the family
- any incidents linked to bullying
- any other reasons as to why the child might not be attending school regularly

SARM continued...

Once these questions have been answered, an Action Plan would be completed where agreed actions would be created that the parents had to agree to...

- child attends school every day
- parents contact school on the first day of absence before 9.30am
- parents contact and attend the Doctors if the child is unwell
- parents contact the school if there are any other difficulties preventing regular attendance.

The school would also have to ensure that they...

- respond to parental contact promptly
- continue to monitor attendance
- **ONLY** authorise absences due to illness when provided with medical evidence.

Step 3

If the pupil has any further unauthorised absence AND it adds up to at least 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 full days) in total over the previous 12 calendar months...

Schools should then send out:

- a 'Formal Warning Notice' (Appendix 3a)
- a copy of an up to date attendance printout
- the 'Legal Action' leaflet (Appendix 3b)

A copy of these documents will be sent to BOTH parents, using First Class post, and the school will keep a record of the date that the letter was posted.

A copy of the letter will also be kept in school so that we have a record of the letter that was sent.

Step 4 – Education Legal Intervention Team Referral

If the pupil has had at least **TEN FURTHER SESSIONS** of **UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE** within 12 school weeks of the 'Warning Notice' being issued...

...school will complete a referral form to the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT) and will also include:

- evidence that the wellbeing of the child has been sought (Three Houses)
- an attendance printout
- copy of the SARM form and agreed Action Plan
- copy of the 'Formal Warning Notice' letter that had been sent to BOTH parents
- any additional information parents have given as to why their child was absent (that was not included on SARM)
- any medical evidence provided.

What legal interventions can be imposed?

Stage 1 – a Penalty Notice (an alternative to prosecution) – up to £120 fine for each parent per child

Stage 2 – if payment is not received or the level of offence is too great to issue a Penalty Notice, the case may be prosecuted under Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act – this could lead to up to £1000 fine for each parent per child.

For repeat offenders, the court can...

- fine parents individually up to £2500 per child
- order payment of the prosecution costs
- sentence parents to a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months

Leave in Term Time (Penalty Notice) Process

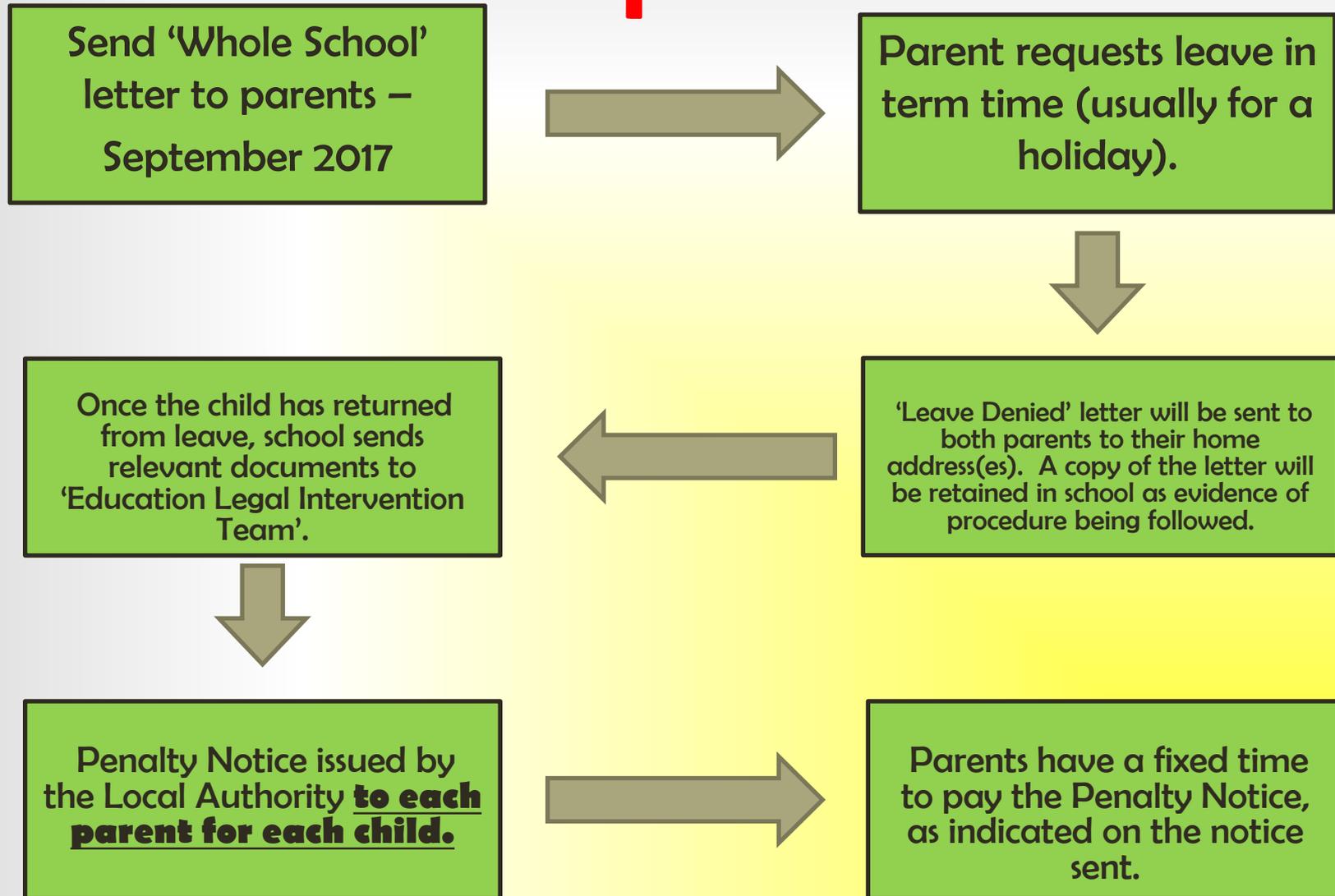
**February 2017 onwards –
a reminder!**

When does the process take place?

When a pupil's absence is marked as an **unauthorised absence (UA) coded G**, i.e. a family holiday - NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement; and a pupil has been absent either:

- for a minimum of five school days of G codes and has had five school days of other unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months; or
- for at least ten school days of G codes, where there has been no other unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months.

The process



Things to be aware of...

- **The Team does not send reminders to parents regarding the payment of Penalty Notices.**
- **Penalty Notices can not be paid in instalments or by Debit/Credit Card.**
- **Parents have to send any queries regarding a Penalty Notice directly to the Legal Intervention Team, in writing, not to the school.**
- **There are time periods in place by which Penalty Notices have to be paid by.**
- **If a Penalty Notice has not been paid by Day 28 in the process, parents are prosecuted (under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996).**
- **The school has a responsibility to publicise the outcome of the process – the process is a community initiative to raise parent and pupil awareness of the importance of school attendance.**