

# **SLADEFIELD INFANT SCHOOL**

## **Attendance Policy**

**Written by: Rob Meadows (Head Teacher)**

**Reviewed and Approved by Governors on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

**Next Review Date: September 2025**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**September 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

At Sladefield Infant School, we expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy to do so. All children benefit from well-planned sequences of lessons designed to ensure that they make the best possible progress. If they are frequently absent, this learning is disrupted and makes it difficult for progress to be maintained.

Everyone that comes to Sladefield Infant School is expected to aim for 96% attendance. We understand that everyone gets sick from time to time but minor coughs, colds or aches and pains should not stop a child from coming to school.

We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all our children. We shall reward children whose attendance is good and/or improving. We shall also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The Governing Body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day.

Sladefield Infant School bases its Attendance Policy on the Guidelines set out by Birmingham Local Authority.

## **RIGHTS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every member of staff in school is responsible for ensuring good attendance and punctuality of all children. All staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents/carers.

The Attendance Team specifically work to improve children's attendance; this team includes the Head Teacher, Attendance Officer, Family Support Worker & School Secretary. The team liaises on a daily basis to ensure that attendance concerns are being raised with immediacy.

Parents/carers have a legal duty to send their children to school each day that school is open, and school has a legal duty to monitor and report the attendance of all children. In accordance with Local Authority policy, leave of absence in term time is only granted in exceptional circumstances. Each case is reviewed by the Attendance Team on its merits, and records of leave are kept for individual children. It is school policy that no holiday or extended holiday absence is authorised under any circumstances.

Whilst parents/carers of children in Reception classes do not have a legal duty to send their children to school until they are five years old, at Sladefield Infant School, we believe that expectations of attendance and behaviour are laid down from a very early age, and will therefore monitor attendance from as soon as a child begins at the school, and endeavour to work with parents/carers to improve it where necessary.

We believe that a partnership approach to attendance is vital: Senior Leaders, Governors and the Attendance Team will work with parents/carers and pupils, and Support Services where necessary, to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

## **ROLES OF CORE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SCHOOL**

### **Governors**

- To monitor progress towards school targets for attendance
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

### **Attendance Team**

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual pupil, group and whole school patterns
- To discuss and disseminate to class teachers the attendance of children whose attendance is causing concern
- To analyse attendance codes to inform action planning
- To contact parents/carers and meet with them to discuss how their child's attendance could be improved, providing support for the parent/carer or child where appropriate
- To carry out home visits for pupils with poor attendance, or whose reason for absence can't be determined
- To request medical evidence for pupils with poor attendance, where it is clear that this can be provided to support the child's absence
- To ensure that those children with expected attendance, or improving attendance, are rewarded as outlined in the policy
- To ensure appropriate support and intervention for pupils with low attendance to reduce impact on learning
- To regularly analyse attendance data in comparison with local and National data sets
- To liaise with the Local Authority, providing names of pupils who have had continuous absence, or absence due to sickness/a medical condition
- To feedback to Governors and provide information for them to evaluate the success of the policy and practice
- To follow the Local Authority 'Children Missing in Education' guidelines if required
- To implement the Local Authority 'Leave of Absence' and 'Support First' procedures when necessary

### **Office Staff**

- To prepare, manage and co-ordinate the use of the attendance module in SIMs
- To prepare attendance reports when requested by the Head Teacher
- To record names of pupils who arrive late via the Inventory System; pupils late after 9.30am will receive a 'U' mark meaning they are considered absent for that session
- To record reasons for absence on the system
- To call parents/carers on first day of absence if no reason has been given, ensuring that priority is given firstly to those children considered 'vulnerable'
- To make further contact with parents/carers of children who have been absent for more than a couple of days to get an update of their absence
- To ask parents/carers for evidence of illness if required, and record on pupil's attendance

- To amend attendance registers accurately, and only when necessary, ensuring clear reasoning behind the amendment

### **Class Teacher**

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class, completing the register twice daily at the designated time
- To promote good attendance, which may include questioning children and/or parents/carers as to reasons for absences when the child has known absence concerns
- To notify the Attendance Team should a child's attendance cause a concern
- To inform the Office Staff about any messages linked to an absence of a child that has been sent to them (for instance, verbally, or via Class Dojo or Reach More Parents)
- To ensure that children who experience difficulties with attendance and/or punctuality receive targeted support to minimise the impact on their learning

### **PROCEDURES**

The doors for children to enter the school are opened at 8.30am and closed again at 8.50am. Class teachers complete the register during this 20-minute period, electronically sending it at 8.55am. If a child arrives after the register has been electronically sent, they are marked as late. Children who arrive late or after the register has closed report to the Main Office, where they are signed in by their parent/carer using our electronic system; a reason for their lateness is requested. **Children who are late after 9.20am will receive a 'U' mark, meaning they are considered absent for that session.**

### **ABSENCE**

- Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers) as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

#### **Authorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for legitimate reasons and the school has received notification from a parent/carer.
- Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents/Carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences outlined by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.
- When members of the Attendance Team have a legitimate reason to not believe the reason for absence given by a parent/carer, they may make the decision to not authorise the absence (for instance, the child has been seen out of their house and looking OK even though the school had been told they were ill).
- An absence may not be authorised following a home visit when staff attending have seen and spoken to the child and believe that they are well enough to attend school.

**We follow the Local Authority policy of allowing authorised absence for Religious Observance. The guidelines state, 'A school must treat absences as authorised when it is due to Religious Observance'. Any other days taken for travelling or continuing celebrations will not be authorised by the school.**

#### **If a child is absent**

- Parents/Carers are asked to let the school know if their child is going to be absent. All absences are imputed onto the school's registration records by Office staff.
- When a parent/carer informs a class teacher of an absence on Class Dojo or Reach More Parents, the class teacher will request that the parent/carer calls the school Office; the class teacher will also inform the Office staff of the communication.
- When a parent/carer informs the Office staff of an absence on Reach More Parents, Office staff may still decide to call the parent/carer to elicit more information.
- Where children are absent for registration, and we have not been notified of an absence, parents/carers are telephoned by a designated member of our Office staff to request a reason for absence. All reasons for absence are recorded onto the school's registration records.
- If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the school tries to make contact straight away with the parent/carer in order to check the safety of the child
- If the school has concerns about a child's poor attendance, a 'safe and well' home visit might be carried out for any absence irrespective of the number of days of absence
- On the third day of absence, staff will make either a 'safe and well' phone call or home visit and ask to speak to/see the child
- If the school believes there might be a Safeguarding concern regarding a child's absence, the school may carry out a 'safe and well' check at the known address for that child; this is likely to be carried out by at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead alongside another member of staff
- If there is no response from any 'safe and well' visit, the school may follow any of the following procedures:
  - contact other Emergency Contact numbers to see if they know of the whereabouts of the child and to request that they try and make contact with the parent/carer, and request that they make contact with the school to explain the child's absence
  - Contact the Police and ask for them to carry out a check on the property
  - Contact CASS to outline the situation and request advice
  - Contact the Child Missing in Education Team to outline the situation and request advice, potentially completing a referral to the team

#### **Requests for Leave of Absence**

- The Governing Body have agreed that holidays will not be permitted during term time
- Parents/Carers should be strongly discouraged from arranging holidays here or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term time. If they do go

then they need to provide school with a copy of the tickets for both the outward journey and the return journey, as well as updated contact details for whilst they are abroad, including telephone numbers, email addresses and addresses for where they will be residing.

- Information regarding this is available to parents/carers in the school prospectus and when a child is admitted into school.

Following guidelines updated by Birmingham City Council in September 2024, the school will follow procedures whereby parents/carers might be issued with a Penalty Notice should a child's leave of absence reach levels as indicated in these guidelines.

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL STRATEGIES AND PROCEDURES**

As a school, we believe it is essential to treat each child's attendance individually, based on our knowledge of the child and their circumstances, as well as attendance data from previous school years.

Our school has clear procedures and triggers for action based upon data analysis and contextual information for attendance.

On a daily basis, The Attendance Team will meet. Decisions will be made as to children whose attendance needs to be monitored; any immediate actions that need to be taken; any longer-term actions that need to be completed.

Therefore, irrespective of the child's attendance percentage, the Attendance Team will consider the most appropriate cause of action for the individual case.

Immediate actions may include:

- making a welfare telephone call to the family to discuss the absence
- carry out a 'safe and well' home visit to hopefully see the child and establish with the parents/carers when they might be able to return to school
- requesting medical evidence for the absence
- liaise with the Pastoral Team to see whether they can facilitate an improvement in attendance

In all cases, the Attendance Team will take due regard to the thresholds outlined in the 'Right Help, Right Time' guidance. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Attendance Team will liaise with the DSL to consider whether contact with CASS was required.

In circumstances where it appears that a child's absences are linked to their mental health and wellbeing, the school may refer to professional support, and would be supportive where parents/carers feel the child needs to visit a health professional in relation to this mental health concern.

Where parents/carers are engaging with the school, but the child appears reluctant to attend, the school will use the resources provided as part of #you'vebeenmissed, and will also consider if a consultation with the STICK team would be beneficial.

In circumstances where the school is aware that a child has a known health condition that is likely to impact on their attendance, school staff will either:

- seek consent from the parents/carers to make a referral to the School Nurse Team in order for a Health Care Plan to be instigated, which would be reviewed regularly.
- refer to James Brindley Academy (where the child has a known significant/serious health condition with 15 or more continuous/cumulative illness absences).

In exceptional circumstances, where it is in the child's best interests, the school, alongside the parents/carers, may decide to provide a child with a part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. The part-time timetable will be reviewed regularly with the eventual aim being for the child to attend school on a full-time basis. School staff will ensure that they inform the Local Authority of any part-time timetables.

When a child appears to be feeling unwell during the school day, the class teacher should liaise with the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or Lead DSL who will make the final decision as to whether the child's parent/carer will be contacted to come and collect their child.

## **STAGES OF SUPPORT**

When attendance becomes a concern, the school, at first, 'Listen and Understand', as per Birmingham City Council's 'Support First' guidance. At this stage, the Attendance Officer will make an informal call to the parent/carer to discuss the school's initial concerns about their child's attendance. This will enable the parent/carer to outline any reasons as to why their child has been absent. In turn, the Attendance Team may decide to give advice or offer additional support to improve the child's attendance. A letter is sent following the call to outline the discussions; a record of the call is kept on CPOMs.

If attendance concerns persist, the school will continue to follow the guidance set out in 'Support First' (see Appendix 1).

### **Facilitate Support**

At this stage, the Attendance Office and Family Support Worker will hold an informal meeting with the parent/carer to discuss the child's absences in more detail. School staff will also explain what might happen in the future if there is not an improvement seen in their attendance. The Family Support Worker will also complete Section 6 (with the child) and Section 7 (with the parent/carer) of the Early Help Assessment form as a format to discuss barriers to attendance. As well as completing Section 7, school staff may also signpost parents/carers to other sources of help and support such as the Birmingham Family Hubs.

Both sections 6 & 7 will be uploaded onto CPOMs and reviewed by a DSL, leading to one of the following outcomes:

- initiate simple reasonable adjustments to improve attendance
- develop a school focused Action Plan with the parent/carer
- initiate a multiagency Early Help Assessment (EHA) & Our Family Plan (OFP)

If it is decided that a school-focused Action Plan is to be written, these will include actions to be completed by both parents/carers and school staff, working together in order to support the improvement in the child's attendance. Action Plans usually last for around 5-6 weeks, and are reviewed for success at the end of this period. It may be the

case that school staff use a range of personalised incentives with the family to encourage improved attendance.

If an Early Help Assessment is the outcome of the discussions with the parents/carers, it must be offered. For support and guidance with Early Help, school staff may contact our Early Help Locality Team or Early Help Co-ordinator, or book an Early Help conversation with our Local Early Help Hub.

If the parents/carers do not attend the meeting or do not respond to phone calls, school staff will undertake a home visit to try to engage the parent.

Where parents/carers have not responded to phone calls, informal meeting invitations and home visits, school staff will request an Early Help conversation with the school's Local Early Help Hub.

### **Illness Absence - Frequent Illness Absence (see Appendix 2 for a flowchart of procedures)**

Where a child (with no known underlying medical condition) has three or more instances of illness absences in a half term, or five in a term, the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher will meet with the parents/carers informally where the child's illness absences should be explored using Section 7 of the Early Help Assessment form, and, if necessary, offer an Early Help Assessment. Where it is deemed appropriate, the parent/carer will also be asked to take the child to see their GP to rule out any underlying medical conditions which could be contributing to the high levels of illness absence.

If Early Help is agreed; and after 6 weeks of Early Help being in place; and if the child continues to have illness absence from school; and if the child's attendance is now 85% or below, consent should be sought for a referral to the School Nurse. If consent is granted, school staff will allow the School Nurse the time and support to complete their intervention before moving onto the next stage in the attendance process.

If the parents/carers refuse consent, or choose not to engage, meet with school staff, or discuss their child's illness absence, a 'medical absence' letter will be sent.

### **Formalise Support**

If the pupil has at least one further session of unauthorised absence, Early Help has been refused, or Early Help/Social Care strategies have not resulted in sustained attendance improvement, the school will call a 'Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM)'. During this meeting, the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher will work with the parents/carers to complete an online form, which includes an offer of an Early Help Assessment.

At the conclusion of the FAM, an 'Attendance Contract' will be completed. School staff will ensure that the contents of the contract are agreed and signed by both parties. The school will ensure that they carry out any actions agreed to be completed within the contract.

The school will review whether there has been any improvement in attendance at least halfway through the agreed contract term (after around 5 weeks) in terms of whether the parents/carers and the school are complying with what's been agreed. If the parents/carers haven't complied with the contract, they will be contacted and invited in for another FAM where the terms of the contract will be reviewed. If the parents/carers indicate early on within the term of the contract that they are unable to comply with what's been agreed, another FAM will be called and the contract amended if appropriate, but this will only be



offered once. If the parents/carers are offered another FAM to discuss the contract further but don't attend, the school will move onto the 'enforcement' stage.

## **Enforcement**

If the pupil has a minimum of 10 further sessions of unauthorised absence since the 'Attendance Contract' was sent, school staff will complete a 'Support First' referral form which will be assessed by the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT). ELIT will take into consideration a number of factors before deciding upon the outcome, which could be:

- issuing a 'Notice to Improve'
- issuing a 'Penalty Notice'
- involving Children's Social Care
- prosecution
- issuing a 'Parenting Order'

## **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE**

In order to maintain the high importance of attendance, throughout the year there are:

- **Weekly reflections** on attendance during SLT-led assemblies.
- **Weekly 100% attendance** shared on each class's Class Dojo page
- **Improvement Postcards** sent to indicate that we have seen an improvement in attendance, and to set a challenge to earn a reward

## **REWARDS**

We use a range of rewards and incentives - a differentiated reward system ensures that every child, every day, has an attendance reward to work towards.

- **'Sladefield Spend'** - an ongoing incentive which we use to reward attendance and behaviour in classrooms, linked to PHSE and managing money. Children are given a coin for 100% attendance and a coin for punctuality each week. Children get the opportunity to spend or save their coins and the shop allows them to save for bigger and better prizes.
- **Family rewards** for positive attendance (eg. Teddy Bear's Picnic, Picnic in the Park)
- **'Pizza Party'** - when a class achieves attendance of 95% across the week, they earn a slice of pizza; when they have earned 6 slices, the class gets to have a Pizza Party afternoon
- **Prize** reward system - different prizes are earned for different numbers of days' attendance without an absence, with the prizes building up in terms of 'gravitas'

In addition to ongoing rewards, incentives and rewards are introduced across the academic year when there is an opportune moment, or when there is a need within a specific cohort. For instance, if it became apparent that there was an attendance concern a specific Year Group, an incentive would be introduced into that Year Group rather than as a whole-school initiative.

## **WORKING WITH OUR PARENTS/CARERS**

It is the parents/carers' responsibility to ensure that their child comes to school. We talk to our parents/carers about how they can make sure their children are fit enough to come to school during the Induction meetings at the beginning of term; this session outlines how to support their child at home to prevent absence from school, as well as outlining when it might or might not be necessary for a child to be kept off school.

When discussing an individual child's attendance, especially when there are concerns, staff at the school will ensure that they discuss the link between attendance and attainment, and wider wellbeing.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

When a child is not at school there can be Safeguarding risk. The Safeguarding of pupils is one of Sladefield Infant School's highest priorities. Please see the Safeguarding Policy for general safeguarding issues and procedures.

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding risks. It is important our response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such safeguarding risks, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

The attendance of all children considered vulnerable or potentially vulnerable will be checked on a daily basis alongside all other children to maintain an up-to-date analysis. If no contact can be made by the school, a DSL will assess if further action is required; this may include making a home visit or contacting external agencies.

When attendance falls to a level considered 'persistent absence' without any reasonable circumstances, or there is a pattern of continual absence on certain days, the case will be referred to a DSL.

All applications for holiday/extended leave will be assessed in terms of safeguarding risks. This particularly includes the risk of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) or being exposed to radicalisation or extremism (see The Prevent Strategy). Any applications considered high risk would be referred to a DSL.

In certain circumstances, there may be a need to contact other agencies without first contacting parents/carers. This decision will be made in partnership between Education Services and Social Care Services and is a legal obligation, not a personal decision.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Absence is monitored daily via telephone calls for all absences where the school has not been notified.

Spreadsheets are in place to track daily attendance and persistent absence.

Weekly overviews are monitored for each class, and individuals within those classes.

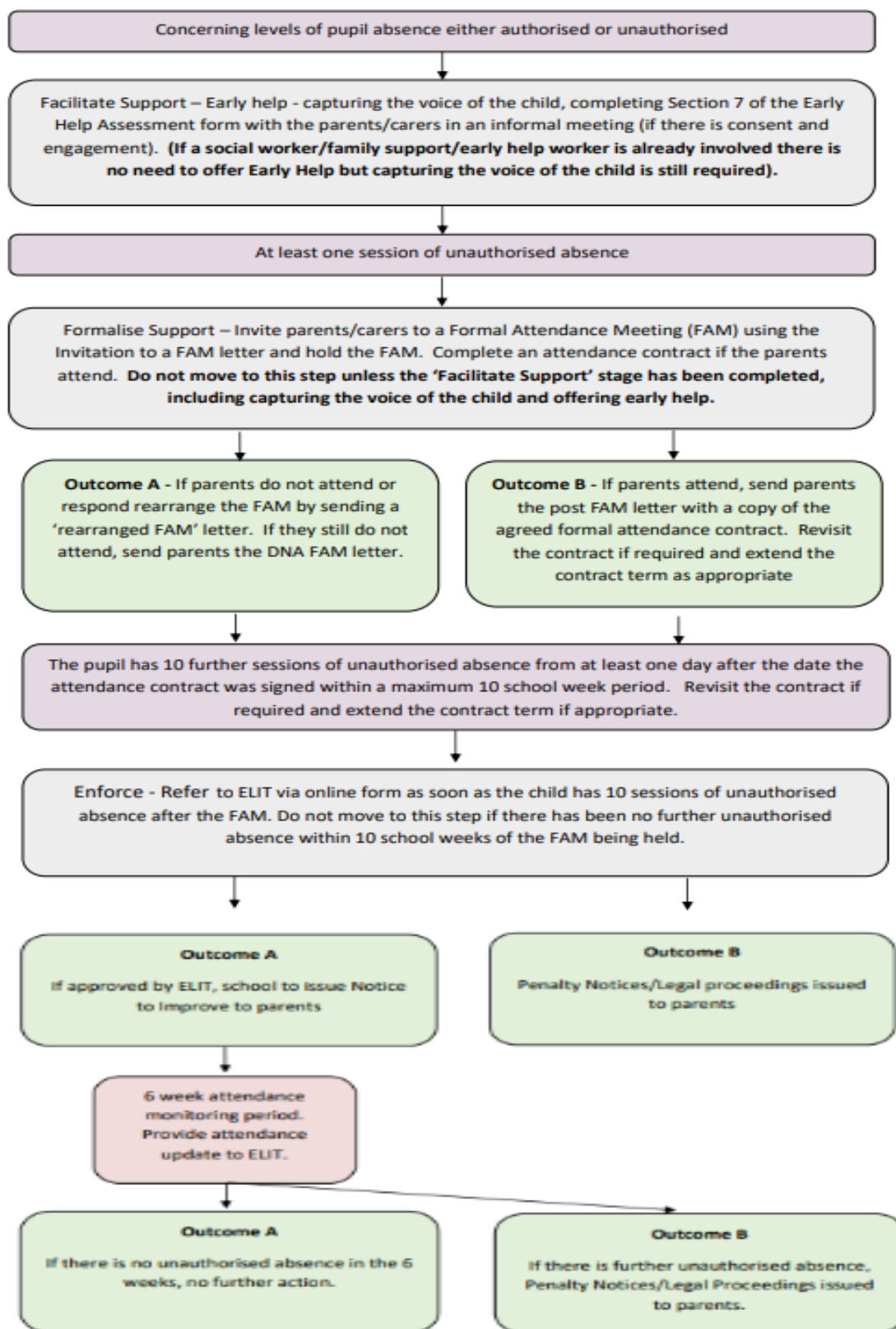
Termly analysis is made of data for attendance, punctuality and persistent absence. This includes analysing for different groups including gender, SEN, ethnicity and Pupil Premium children. This analysis will influence future action taken.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years or earlier if deemed necessary.

**Policy written by: R Meadows (Head Teacher)**

**Review: September 2025**

## Appendix 1 - 'Support First' Guidance Flowchart



## Appendix 2 - Frequent Illness Absence Flowchart

