

Medlock Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy - A Whole School Approach

September 2022
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Role	Name	Contact
Leadership Contact	Jonathan Brown	0161 2731830 admin@medlock.manchester.sch.uk
Office Contact	Joan Hart	0161 2731830 admin@medlock.manchester.sch.uk

1. Introduction

Ensuring a pupil attends school every day is everyone's business. Medlock Primary School recognises the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex (both within and beyond the school gates) and are often specific to individual pupils and their families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Medlock Primary recognises that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. Therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, Medlock will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Where appropriate, this will involve referring to and working with other agencies.

Medlock Primary school believes that good pupil attendance will be seen when there is a concerted effort across all staff doing their bit - pupil attendance is a whole school approach. As such, this Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school life and is therefore supported by our policies on SEND, safeguarding, behaviour and learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend.

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 (primary school) have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Nationally, at the end of primary

school, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had, on average, worse attendance than those who met the expected standard.

School attendance is also an important protective factor. National data shows those children with the best attendance are also those who are the safest. They are far less likely to be linked to safeguarding concerns or serious crime.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June if they are 16 by the end of the summer holidays.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

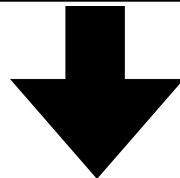
The Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

3. Working Together to Improve Attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

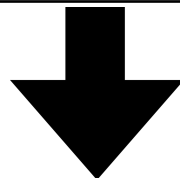
Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



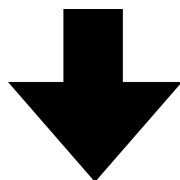
MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



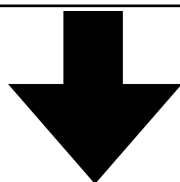
LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



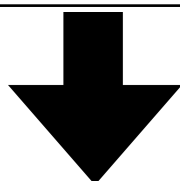
FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

4. Whole School Culture

Good attendance is a learned behaviour. Medlock Primary School recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset and that good attendance is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. To ensure this to be the case Medlock Primary School;

- recognises the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- recognises the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a

designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities should include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.

- ensures all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- sets high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicates these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels whilst ensuring the consequences for non-attendance are also communicated.
- recognises and celebrates both good attendance and improved attendance with children and families.
- recognises that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process of regularly reviewing and updating practices and strategies.
- recognises children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

5. Leave of Absence Requests

The law states that only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Medlock will always consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, relevant background context and presented evidence before granting any request. Exceptional circumstances are defined as being significant events in a child or family's life that can not be planned for or avoided. Even when leave is granted, the number of days will be kept to the minimum possible as presented in evidence.

Holidays will not be granted a leave of absence.

Requests for leave of absence should be made in writing (letter or email) and addressed to the headteacher. Requests should be made at the earliest opportunity and all accompanying evidence should be submitted at this time. A formal response to the request will then be returned in writing within 5 days working days of the request.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases it is likely a local authority issued Penalty Notice will be triggered. Other legal sanctions (including prosecution in the magistrates court) may result.

6. Day to Day

School opens at **8.45am** Monday to Friday. Children need to be sat in their classrooms ready to learn by **8.55am** as this is the start of the school day. Formal learning begins at **8.55 am** every day.

Late Arrival

6. Day to Day

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The gates to the pupil entrance will be locked at 8.55 every day.

Late Arrival

Registration begins at **8.45am** and closes at **8.55am** pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving **late (code L)**. The register will close at **9.10am** pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as **late - absent, (code U)** this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

Evidence to support such explanations is routinely sought - **it is expected that appointment cards are presented in the case of any absence or late arrival that is attributed to a medical or dental appointment. Failure to present an appointment card will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised.**

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received. All decisions made by the headteacher are made in line with official guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority.

Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of an absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. Evidence supporting the parents / carers explanation for the absence should be provided where appropriate.

Reporting Absences

When a family knows their child will not be attending, for instance due to ill health, a family member needs to report this to school at the earliest opportunity. Families should contact the school office and report the absences, the reason for the absence and the expected return date. The office Attendance lead is Ms Hart. Families are asked not to report absences to class teachers via Seesaw as it is not possible to communicate said absences to the office in a timely manner.

First Day Calling

Where a child is absent and the reason for the absence has not been communicated to the school, families will be called to find out why their child is not in school. If school is unable to make contact with families at this time, further calls will be made until contact is established. If a child returns after an absence and no explanation has been given / contact has not been made during the absence, families will be contacted to establish the reason for the absence. If, after repeated efforts, contact has not been made or is hard to establish, it is likely a home visit will be made to establish the reason for an absence as well as checking that a child is safe and well.

6 Absence Categories

Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the headteacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should only be absent for the time of the appointment and the travel time to and from the appointment only. Parents must present the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

Suspensions (No alternative provision made) Suspension from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

Religious Observance Medlock acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. Where this occurs, parents may request leave of absence only for dates 'exclusively set apart by the religious body', meaning requests will only be granted for the day the festival is being observed. It can not be granted on days around the festival for travel etc. In responding to a request, Medlock Primary School may consult SACRE or other official bodies to confirm the legitimacy of a request.

Late Arrival L / U See section 6

Unauthorised absence Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the headteacher. **It is expected that appointment cards are presented in the case of any absence or late arrival that is attributed to a medical or dental appointment. Failure to present an appointment card will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised.**

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping (including shopping for school items like uniform or shoes)
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holiday

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

8 Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration - England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on an School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

Medlock will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

9 Roles and Responsibilities

Medlock treats all pupils and parents with dignity and staff model respectful relationships in order to ensure positive connections between home and school which are the foundation of good attendance. When communicating with parents, Medlock will discuss the link between attendance, attainment and wider wellbeing, while challenging parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like if this is necessary.

As such, the **Governing Body** will:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends as well as helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

The **Leadership Team** will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, Medlock will support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This will include meetings with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand the barriers to being in school they are experiencing and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This

may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions should be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure the school office is able to put the resources in place for daily 'first day calling' in which the office telephones the homes of all absent children on the first day of absence (and in some cases subsequent days of absence) to ascertain the nature and length of the absence.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named member of the leadership team to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through half termly reporting and tracking
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Class Teachers will:

- Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Contribute to the analysis of attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

Parents will:

- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family

6. What Support Can Look Like

Supporting families to ensure their children come to school every day can take many forms. Medlock Primary School will work with families on a range of strategies including but not only:

- home visits
- regular calls
- subsidised access to breakfast club
- link support staff
- Parental incentives
- Child incentives and rewards

10. Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority, Department for Education and other agencies as required.

The Attendance Lead (based in the school office) will monitor attendance. Half termly reports are produced to track groups in order for targeted action. Reports are then presented at Governors Meetings alongside actions for discussion.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Where a child is identified as Persistently Absent (PA), their attendance will be tracked and all the actions taken to engage with the family and move the child out of the PA category will be logged.

11. Support Systems

Schools recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and / or their behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Medlock also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used could include (but are not limited to):

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Referrals to support agencies
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Pastoral support - staff or peer delivered
- Taught session on attendance (whole class / small group / individual / assembly)
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Home visits
- Community support
- Paired parent support
- Reintegration support packages
- Early help assessments
- Liaison with the LA' attendance team.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Medlock will consider the use of legal sanctions.

12. Formal Support and Legal Sanctions

Formal support will be actioned where families do not engage with voluntary support. Formal measure can include;

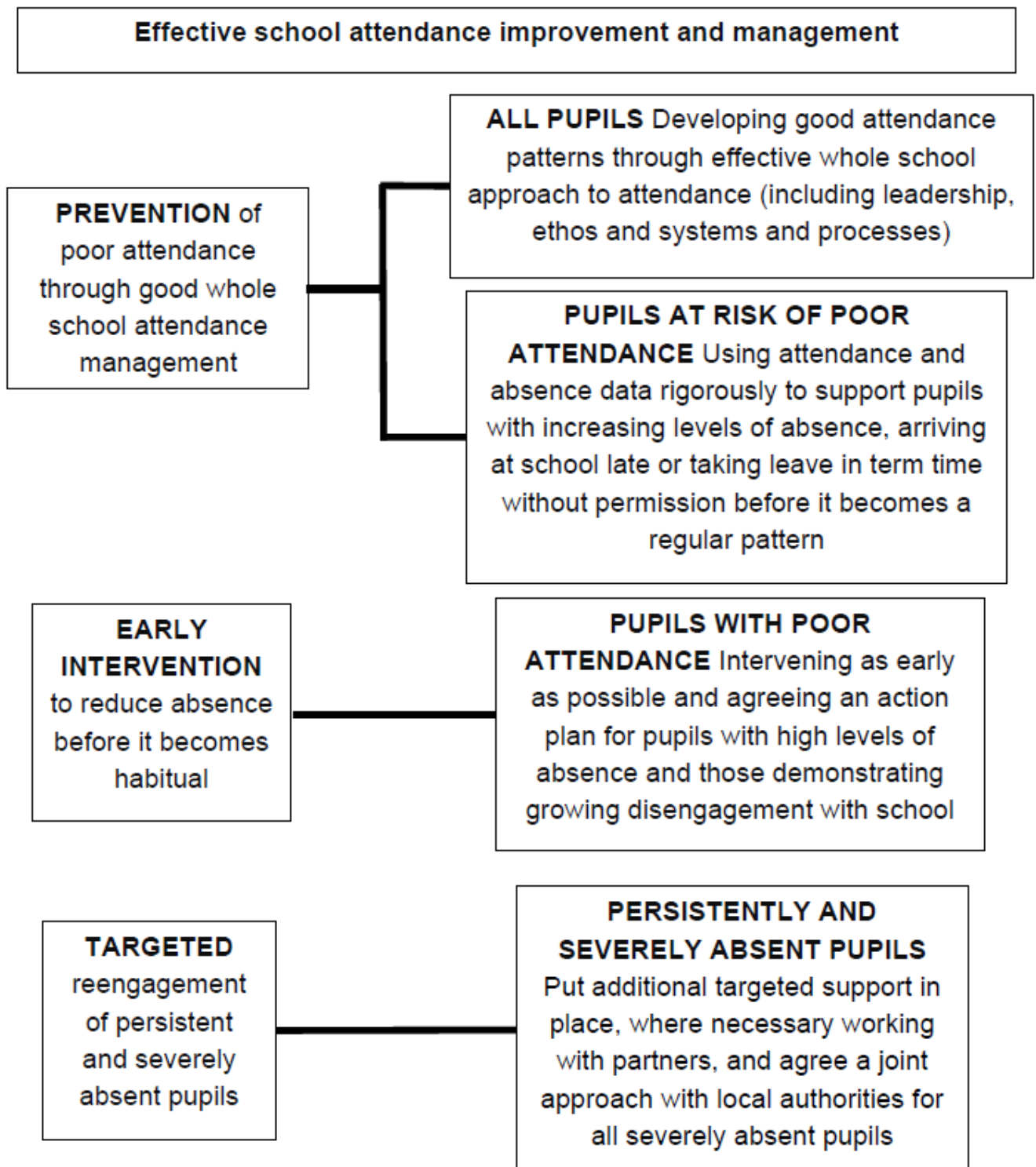
- parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

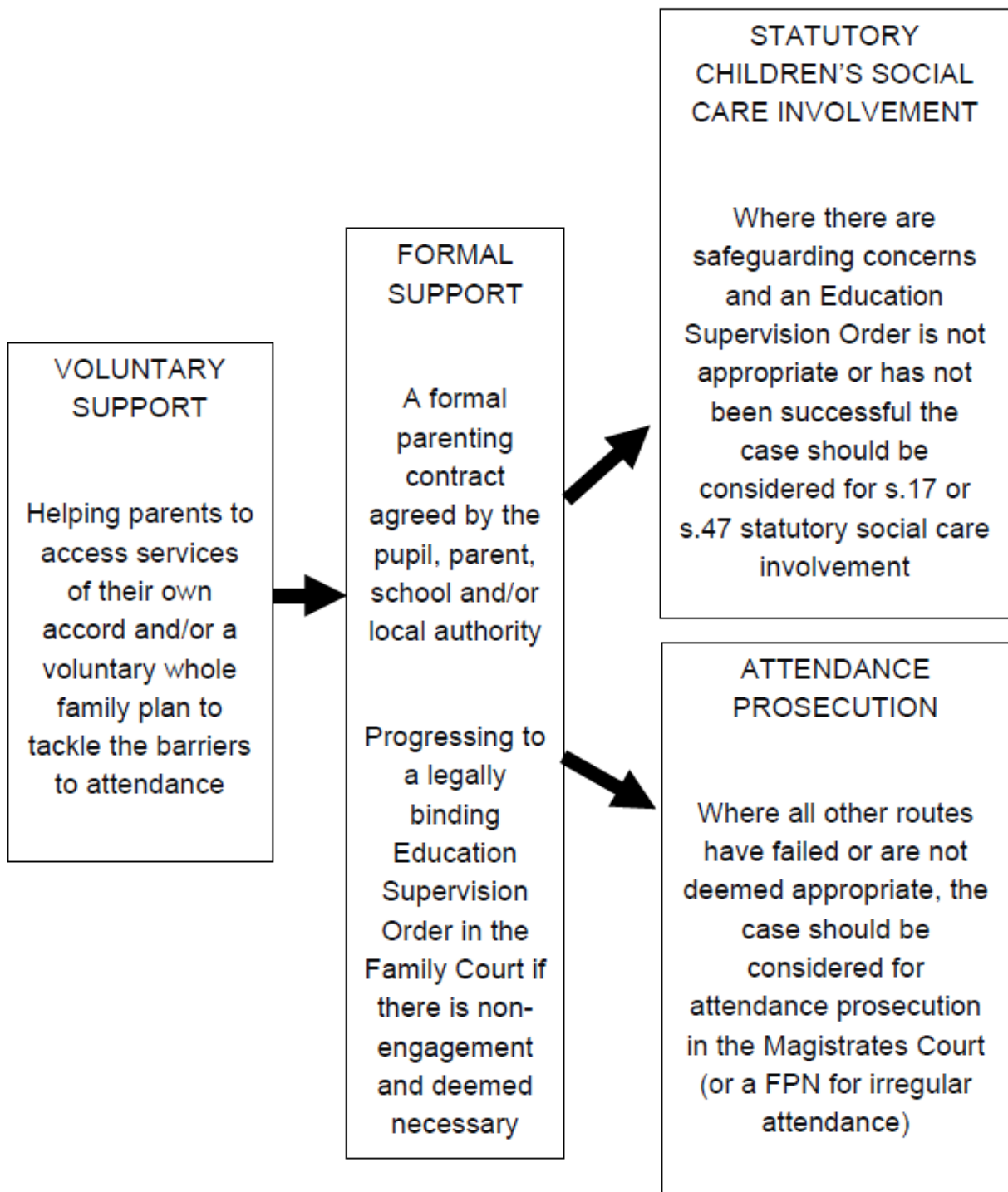
13. Incentives

Medlock primary school recognises the effort children make in achieving both good attendance. Equally, we recognise the effort made by those who work hard to make significant improvements in their attendance where needed. We also recognise the effort made by their families in helping them achieve their goals. Therefore rewards for attendance are embedded in the school's systems.

An attendance cup is awarded each week to the class with the best attendance. Teachers will give 'dojo' points to individual children who need encouragement to improve attendance and / or punctuality. The office attendance lead will also target children with praise and rewards on the door. Further to this, Medlock will listen to families while setting up incentives for their child and, where appropriate, instigate specific incentives matched to their interests to motivate them.

Appendixes





Escalation of Attendance Interventions

Pupils with attendance are identified as at risk of becoming Persistent Absence (PA)

Class teacher will speak to the pupil to:

- Confirm with the pupil the reason for any absences and offer any support that may be required
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required
- Liaising with home and attendance lead, set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties are confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Parenting contract agreed
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

The class teacher will be responsible for all action at this level. Class teachers will liaise with the attendance lead to ensure the whole school approach. Actions and outcomes to be recorded.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Where this is ineffective and pupils are still identified as being at risk of Persistent Absence (PA).

Attendance lead will liaise with home to:

- Identify underlying home / school issues that may be causing the pupil's absence
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance eg. If you attended all your classes you could achieve...
- Make arrangements for the pupil to catch up on work they have missed

- Implement a Pastoral Support Plan or review other existing pupil plan to include support to improve attendance
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Agree a review date

In addition, where unauthorised absence has occurred or attendance has not improved following the review with the pupil, a letter will be sent to parents advising of concern and outlining the parents' responsibilities.

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Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Early Help referral
- Refer to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings

Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a minimum of two home visits with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Pupils who have become Persistently Absent (PA) 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. The Attendance lead will then:

- Ensure that the pupil has already spoken to a member of staff at the stages proceeding intervention.
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in AMBER and escalate accordingly.
- Ensure that weekly contact occurs with the pupil either individually or within a small group to address themed issues.
- Ensure weekly contact with the parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.

- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above.
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs.
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team and Governing Body where pupils causing concern are discussed alongside actions taken.