



Policy Name	Attendance
Date Created	October 2021
Date Reviewed	September 2024
Review Date Due	January 2025
Policy Creator	Peter Kirby-Bowstead

Imagine... Believe... Achieve

Rationale

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Children who are persistently late or absent may develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related expectations.

Heathfield Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities in ensuring that pupils attend school and are punctual, therefore allowing pupils to access learning for the maximum number of days and hours. This policy applies to all children registered at this school and it is accessible to parents/carers on the school website. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence (DfE 2022)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (DfE 2022)
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2024)

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and Governors at this school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Our Attendance Team:

<u>Senior Attendance Champion</u>	Mr Peter Kirby-Bowstead <i>Headteacher</i> <i>Designated Safeguarding Lead</i>
<u>Attendance Officer</u>	Mrs Janine Lowther <i>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead</i>
<u>Home School Learning Mentor</u>	Mrs Linda Carvey <i>Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead</i>

Procedure Aims and Objectives

Improving school attendance is everyone's business, and at Heathfield Primary School we acknowledge that good attendance begins with school being somewhere children want to be due to its calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment. Some children find it harder to attend school than others, therefore the importance of collaboration between school, families and any external agencies is vital in order to get it right for everyone.

At Heathfield, we know that if our curriculum is right, behaviour is good and support for all learners is effective then high levels of attendance will reflect this and children will get the most out of the breadth of opportunities on offer.

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in this school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Key aims and objectives are:

- To work in partnership with families to find supportive routes to improve attendance.
- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all pupils, excluding children who have, for example, significant health issues, are from a traveller family or who have left school within the academic year.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise the awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality, at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Early Years children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff – but especially class teachers – in promoting good attendance.

The school maintains and promotes good attendance and punctuality by:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality, appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Heathfield Daily Attendance Procedures

The attendance strategy below outlines the actions in supporting pupils' attendance at Heathfield Primary School.

At the beginning of the school day...

The school doors are opened at 8.45am for children to make their way into their classrooms. Doors are closed at 8.55am, at which point children must enter school through the main entrance. Registers close at 9.00am; any child arriving after this time is marked as late (L) – the number of minutes late, alongside the reason, is recorded on SIMS.

If a child arrives after 9.30am, this is marked on the register as an unauthorised absence (U) – the number of minutes late, alongside the reason, is recorded on SIMS.

For the afternoon Nursery session, the doors open at 12.15pm and close as soon as children are through. The register is completed by 12.30pm.

Daily attendance checks...

Between 9.30am and 10.00am, the admin team will conduct attendance checks across the school to ensure registers are accurate and all children accounted for. The attendance spreadsheet will be completed and sent to SLT/Home School Mentor/Attendance Officer.

For the afternoon Nursery session, between 12.30pm and 12.45pm the admin team will conduct an attendance check to ensure the afternoon register is accurate and all children accounted for.

If a child is absent from school...

By no later than 10.30am, the admin team will make a first day call (FDC) if parents/carers have not contacted school regarding their child's absence; if no-one answers, a message will be left on the primary contact number and calls will be made to the other numbers held on the system. If contact is still not made, a member of SLT will decide whether a welfare check (home visit) is required, which will be completed by SLT/Home School Mentor/Attendance Officer. If the parents/carers are not at home for the welfare check, a compliments slip is left alerting them to the fact that someone from school has made a visit. This occurs for every day of absence. If a family is open to services, the attached worker will be made aware of the absence. In some circumstances, the police may be requested to make a welfare check as well.

For the afternoon Nursery session, FDC takes place by 1.00pm.

Reporting and Recording Absences and Punctuality

Parent/Carer Communications

Parents/carers are expected to inform school of any absence/potential late arrivals as soon as possible and by no later than 8.45am to ensure registers are accurate. In addition to the school telephone system there is an option to leave a voice message to report absences. It is not advised to use the school Messenger app to report absences/late arrivals in case messages are not picked up prior to registration.

Holidays in Term-Time

Holidays during term-time will not be authorised by the Headteacher. If families have a holiday booked during term time, parents/carers are required to complete a Leave of Absence form, **prior** to the absence. If a Leave of Absence form is not completed, school reserve the right to complete it on behalf of the parents/carers and without their signature. All holidays requested will be referred to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued. Parents/Carers will receive a letter from school informing them that the holiday has not been authorised.

Leave of Absence

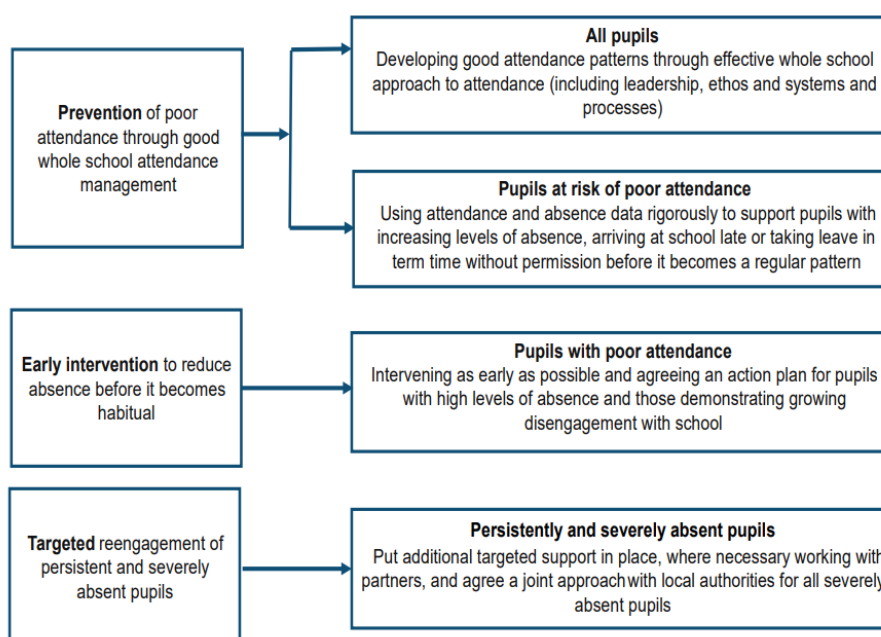
If a child is required be absent from school for an exceptional circumstance, then parents/carers must complete a Leave of Absence Form **prior** to the event. Leave of Absence submissions will be reviewed by the Headteacher. Please note that these absences may not be authorised.

Lateness and Punctuality

Heathfield Primary School employs a flexible arrangement at the start of the school day. School doors are open from 8.45am and all children need to be in class no later than 8.55am. If a child arrives at school after 8:55am, they must enter via the main reception doors and a note is added onto their morning mark. A late mark (L) will be noted on the child's record alongside the reason for being late and the number of minutes lost for any arrivals after 9.00am. Any child arriving after 9:30am will be signed in and an unauthorised absence mark (U) will be recorded (alongside reasons and minutes lost), which could result in a referral to the Local Authority and legal action taken.

Heathfield Absence Support Procedures

Effective school attendance improvement and management



Prevention: When a pattern of absences, or low attendance, is identified during weekly analysis

Parents/carers will receive a phone call from the Attendance Officer and/or Prevention Letter (Appendix A) informing them that their child's attendance is below the satisfactory level, providing information in the form of 'days of learning lost' and how close they are to becoming a persistent absentee (PA) in number of days. If there is no improvement to attendance over a 3-week period (monitored via the Attendance Tracker), parents/carers will then be invited into school for an Attendance Planning Meeting with members of the Attendance Team to discuss next steps moving forwards. If parents/carers do not attend this meeting, it will be conducted in their absence and minutes sent home to parents.

The admin team will run a report weekly to show which children fall within this bracket; the Attendance Officer will maintain a spreadsheet to track and monitor improvements in attendance or to determine if subsequent action is required.

Early Intervention: If a child's attendance does not show improvement

Parents/carers will be sent an Early Intervention Letter (Appendix B) inviting them to attend an Attendance Planning Meeting with members of the Attendance Team; during this meeting, an Attendance Improvement Plan (Appendix D) will be compiled which will detail the support to be implemented alongside the expectations of parents/carers and pupils and the intended impact. If parents/carers do not attend this meeting, it will be conducted in their absence and minutes sent home.

Targeted Reengagement: when a pupil becomes persistently absent

Continued regular Attendance Planning Meetings will be held, including the headteacher and other members of the Attendance Team, which will include discussions around voluntary referrals to the local authority and Early Help, and referrals to children's social services alongside potential legal proceedings.

Working Together to Improve Attendance

Heathfield is committed to working with all stakeholders in order 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 and 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 an attendance 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: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

In order to do this, we will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them
 - From Early Years we build positive relationships with our families through home-school communication books, stay and play sessions, termly parent/carer consultations, supporting families with parenting challenges and signposting to services such as the Early Years Inclusion Service, school nurse, Early Bird programme and parent/carer networks and forums.
 - Throughout school these relationships are built upon through further parent and community events, parent/carer book looks, special assemblies and further support from both our own staff and signposting to external agency support when necessary. Curriculum newsletters and the school Facebook page are used to keep parents fully involved in all aspects of school life, alongside a termly newsletter from the headteacher. Marvellous Me is used to keep parents fully up to date of school information on an almost-daily basis, including whole school messages, signposting to school and community events and individual celebration of children's achievements.
 - Attendance is discussed as a standing item at parent/carer consultations to ensure families have a secure conception as to what 'good' attendance looks like. This is strengthened through our half termly attendance newsletters, and the attendance/punctuality posters displayed throughout school.
 - When attendance and punctuality become a concern, or a pattern of absences is determined through attendance data analysis, school will discuss this with parents/carers to determine the reasons and what subsequent action or support is required. Should there be concerns that a child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee, an Attendance Improvement Plan will be compiled to clearly lay out support and expectations.
 - Should absence intensify, a referral to Early Help services will be considered. If persistent absence becomes severe and there is lack of engagement with support, a referral to the local authority and/or children's social care will be considered which may involve an official 'notice to improve' and prosecution.

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance
 - Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of all adults across school, led by the headteacher who acts as the School Senior Attendance Champion. Further support in this comes from the Home School Mentor and the Attendance Officer, who meet weekly with the headteacher to monitor and evaluate progress.

- Attendance is discussed as a standing item at Senior Leadership Team Meetings, in addition to at parent/carer consultations to ensure families have a secure conception as to what 'good' attendance looks like. This is strengthened through our half termly attendance newsletters, and the attendance/punctuality posters displayed throughout school.
 - Children are regularly reminded about the importance of good attendance during registration and in assemblies, where the highest attending class each week is awarded with an additional session on the outdoor play equipment.
 - An attendance focus forms part of safeguarding training for all staff, making clear the links between poor attendance and wider concerns around neglect, abuse, CSE and CCE.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand
 - The school Attendance Policy is written in line with guidance within 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (DfE 2024). The full document can be found [here](#).
 - Further details around the Darlington Borough Council local code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence can be found [here](#).
 - The attendance policy is available on the school website. It is updated at least annually and ratified by the Local Governing Body at each spring board meeting, however may be updated at other times in line with new initiatives, evolving practices/research and any feedback from stakeholders.
 - Should attendance become a concern, Prevention Letters (Appendix A) and Early Intervention Letters (Appendix B) are sent to parents/carers promptly as a result of weekly analysis. Should punctuality become a concern, a Punctuality Letter (Appendix C) is sent to parents/carers promptly as a result of weekly analysis.
 - In discussions with parents and carers, absence is discussed in terms of 'days of learning lost' to aid clarity of impact; punctuality is also discussed in terms of 'minutes of learning lost' for the same reasons. Key messages are reiterated in half termly newsletters, an also as a standing item in parent/carer consultations.
 - The importance of good school attendance is discussed regularly with pupils during registration and during assemblies across each half term.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow up absence
 - Information pertaining to daily registration, reporting and recording absences and first day calling is outlined in the 'Heathfield Daily Attendance Procedures' section on page 3.
 - A leave of absence is only permitted in an exceptional circumstance at the discretion of the headteacher. The need for a holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance. A leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.
 - The electronic management information system used at Heathfield is SIMS. We insist on parents/carers providing more than one emergency contact to store on SIMS in order to help ensure the safety of children – including following up any unreported absences.
 - The analysis of attendance data via SIMS allows the identification of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern, and for monitoring the impact of support and need for any relevant referral.
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
 - Attendance data from SIMS is analysed on a weekly basis by the Attendance Officer, and pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern is extrapolated onto the school attendance tracker. Here, a record of follow up actions is recorded; this may include informal discussions with parents, reminders of school attendance expectations, the dissemination of attendance letters and any referrals made.
 - The attendance tracker is reviewed each week by the Senior Attendance Champion (headteacher) where the impact of support is discussed and next steps determined.
 - Children with particularly low attendance are a key focus in Pupil Progress meetings between Senior Leaders and Teachers to ensure that any lost learning is accounted for via quality first teaching and learning interventions, so that good progress is maintained by these children and outcomes are good.
 - Regular analysis is reported to the Local Governing Body throughout the academic year, who will provide challenge and seek assurance from leaders that approaches and procedures are having the intended impact.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe
 - Where children within one family attend multiple schools, leaders at Heathfield will work collaboratively with those other schools when absence becomes a concern to ensure a holistic and supportive approach is in place.

- Attendance data will also be shared when a child is transferring from Heathfield to another school to ensure that up-to-date monitoring and support continues – whether this be a pupil moving to secondary school or through a mid-year transfer. We will also seek this information when children are joining Heathfield from another school.
- Heathfield will share attendance data with the DfE and local authority through SIMS; this includes with children’s social services when requested.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support
 - We acknowledge that some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance – particularly given the higher needs of some of our children at Heathfield (including those accessing the Speech, Language and Communication Base). These children have the same right to an education as any other pupil, and we maintain the same attendance ambition for all regardless of any Special Education Need or Disability, where reasonable adjustments are made to support improved attendance.
 - Similarly, we acknowledge that some children experience normal but difficult emotions about school. Again, these children have the same right to an education as any other pupil, and we maintain the same attendance ambition for all. We understand that prolonged absence for these children may actually heighten such feelings, and so improved attendance is an important aspect of support here.
 - The SEND team and/or pastoral team at Heathfield will play an important role in compiling the Attendance Improvement Plan for reduced absence in these cases; this may include the Senior Attendance Champion, Attendance Officer, Home School Mentor, SENDCo, School Counsellor and an identified key worker within school.
 - Referrals and signposting to external agencies will also be considered in these cases, for example to the School Nursing Team, Mental Health Support Team, School Counsellor, Early Help, children’s social services or the local authority.
 - In exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a part-time timetable to support a pupil in accessing as much education as possible. Any part-time timetable will be made under the agreement of both school and home, have a clear ambition in regards to wider support, be reviewed on a weekly basis, be in place for the shortest time period necessary and have a clear end date where it is expected that the pupil will return to full-time schooling.

date

Dear _____,

You are receiving this letter as we are concerned about _____'s attendance.

They have now missed _____ days of school this academic year, therefore their attendance is below the level expected at Heathfield Primary School.

Good attendance is directly linked to success – both now and in your child's future. Children with poor attendance are almost always the lowest achievers in their class.

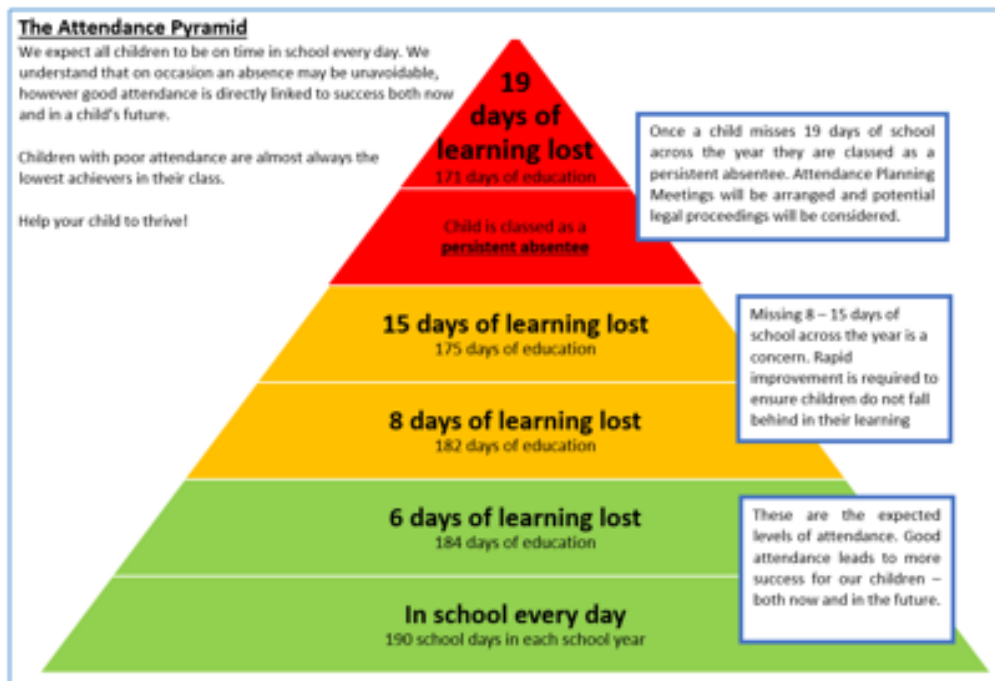
If your child misses _____ more days of school, they will be classed as a 'persistent absentee'. Therefore - if there is no improvement in their attendance over the next three school weeks - we will ask you to come into school for an Attendance Planning Meeting.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

P. Kirby-Bowstead

Mr Kirby-Bowstead
Headteacher



date

Dear _____,

You are receiving this letter as we are highly concerned about _____'s attendance.

They have now missed _____ days of school this academic year, therefore their attendance is below the level expected at Heathfield Primary School. Missing more than 19 days of school across an academic year means that a child is classed as a 'persistent absentee'.

Good attendance is directly linked to success – both now and in your child's future. Children with poor attendance are almost always the lowest achievers in their class.

It is therefore vital that there is a rapid improvement in your child's attendance, and as such we would like you to come into school for an Attendance Planning Meeting. The details of the meeting can be found below:

Date:

Time:

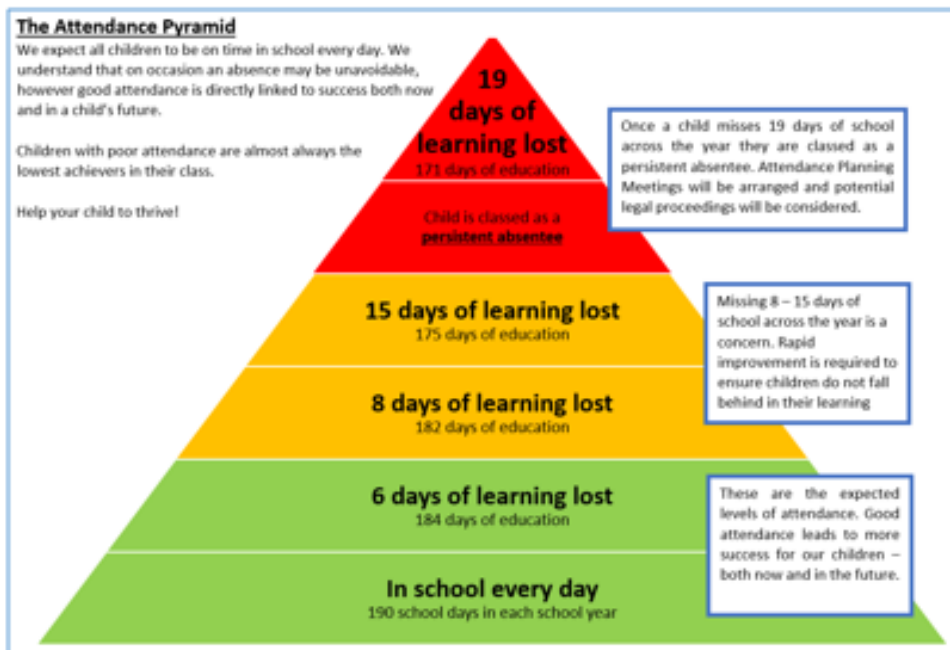
Venue:

If you do not attend this meeting, it will be held in your absence.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Kirby-Bowstead
Headteacher



date

Dear _____,

You are receiving this letter as we are concerned about _____'s punctuality.

This half term they have been late to school _____ times.

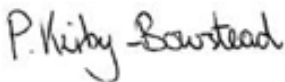
They have missed _____ minutes of lessons.

Being late means that your child misses out on a settled start to the school day, in addition to interventions and additional support to help them be successful in their learning.

It is therefore vital that there is a rapid improvement in your child's punctuality. If there is no improvement, you will be invited into school for an Attendance Planning Meeting.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Kirby-Bowstead
Headteacher

On time in school – that's our motto; that's our rule!

Being late means that your child is missing out on a settled start to the day, in addition to interventions and additional support to help them be successful in their learning.

Help your child to thrive!



Appendix D – Attendance Improvement Plan



ATTENDANCE ACTION PLAN

Child/Children		
Year group/Class		
Date of meeting		
Attendees		
Current attendance		
Current punctuality		
Parent views		
Child/Children views		
Any specific needs (Medical/SEND/Vulnerable)		
Actions/Targets	By Whom?	By When?

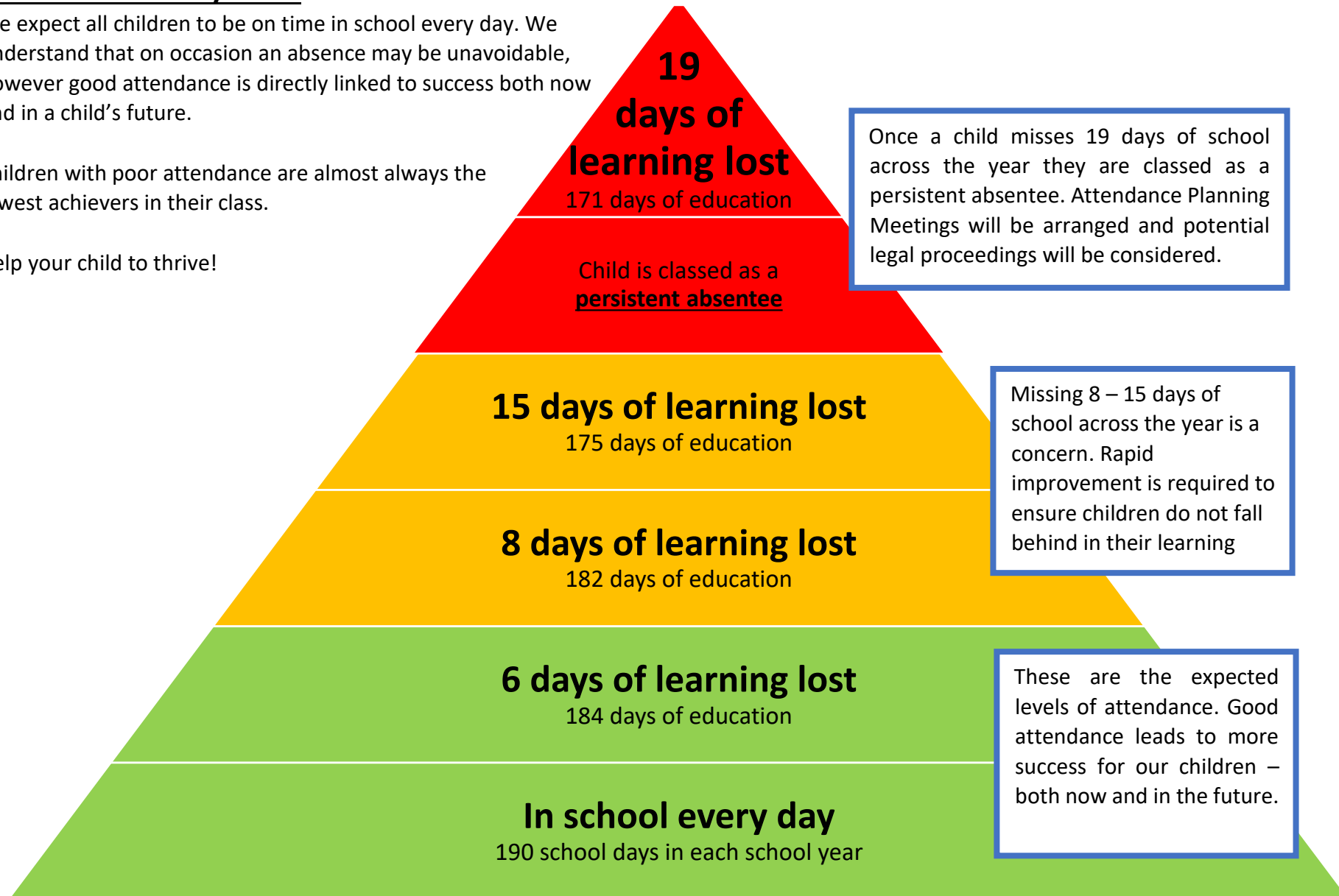
Parent Signature	
Attendance Team Signature	
Review date	

The Attendance Pyramid

We expect all children to be on time in school every day. We understand that on occasion an absence may be unavoidable, however good attendance is directly linked to success both now and in a child's future.

Children with poor attendance are almost always the lowest achievers in their class.

Help your child to thrive!



On time in school – that's our motto; that's our rule!

Being late means that your child is missing out on a settled start to the day, in addition to interventions and additional support to help them be successful in their learning.

Help your child to thrive!

