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35. Attendance Policy

Date adopted: September 2024

Next review: September 2026

See EOTAS policy control document (held by the Business Manager) for status, notes and actionsabout this policy

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Attendance Policy

Version	Status	Date	Title of Reviewer	Purpose/Outcome
1.0	adopted	September 2024	Headteacher	Adoption of Attendance Policy
1.1	Review	September 2025	Headteacher	Update DFE guidance
1.2	Review	September 2026	Headteacher	Update DFE Guidance

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Introduction

We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to strive for excellence and enjoyment in education. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually.

At EOTAS, our objectives are to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

EOTAS Attendance Policy is in line with Swindon Children's Services Attendance and Inclusion Strategy and should be read alongside Keeping Children Safe in Education and our Behaviour Policy.

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for effective learning and children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Key people

EOTAS Strategic Attendance Lead: Juliette Baldwin

Fernbrook
School Attendance Lead: Eleanor Hatchett
School Attendance Officer: Jenna Putman

Riverside
School Attendance Lead: Kate Hooper
School Attendance Officer: Chevonne Smy

Oakfield
School Attendance Lead: Ioana Scanlon
School Attendance Officer: Julia Richardson

Medical
School Attendance Lead: Lisa Macdonald
School Attendance Officer: Alison Andrews

Why Regular Attendance is important:

1. Learning

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning. When a pupil is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that pupil but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

2. Safeguarding

At EOTAS, we believe every pupil should be able to learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.
Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places your child at risk of harm.

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses:

Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti- bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Many pupils attending EOTAS are more vulnerable and have greater needs than the majority of their mainstream counterparts. This means that they may have more genuine absences from school for medical reasons or experience greater social need than others. It is our responsibility to do all we can to encourage and support aspirations.

<u>In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.</u>

It is also important for parents to let school know of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances. If you are uncertain about what would be considered a vulnerability please speak with the attendance for the college your child attends.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Our target for student attendance is currently 95%, and it is recognised that many of our pupils come to the school with already entrenched patterns of poor attendance. In these cases, smaller, more manageable targets will be set on the way to reaching the full 95% target.

Parents and carers, pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence. Opportunities to maintain awareness through weekly tutor contact, newsletters, Parent / Carer Consultation Days, reminder letters (see Appendix 1 and 2) and student reports will be used. Parents will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding punctuality and attendance.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide parents / carers with details on attendance in the school Newsletter;
- Report to parents at least half-termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Monitoring Attendance and graduated response

Whole school attendance is monitored by all staff with regular reports being submitted to the Management Committee. Individual student attendance is monitored by SLT at weekly attendance meetings. Pupils with attendance considered to be significant (below 50%/20%) are discussed weekly at PRISM meeting. The school works very closely with a number of external agencies so positive attendance can be promoted, and students and families can be supported.

Where a student's attendance is a concern, reminders and discussion will be had with the young person and parent. A parent/carer will be sent a Stage 1 formal letter of concern (Appendix 1) when a student has missed 6 sessions and in some instances invited in for a stage 1 meeting.

If a student's attendance does not show improvement and has missed 10 sessions then a Stage 2 formal letter (Appendix 2) will be issued outlining the parent / carer's legal duty to ensure school attendance, and seek to facilitate a formal meeting with parents.
The purpose of the meeting will be to establish the reasons and what intervention and support can be offered. The meeting will set out clear expectations to the parents/carers. The date and actions will be logged on SIMS.

If a student's attendance does not show improvement and is deemed to have persistent non-attendance, and parents do not engage in support meetings and interventions then the case will be referred to the EWO who will follow the WPA policy processes relevant with current Government guidance and will issue a £80 fixed penalty notice and/or refer for legal proceedings if this is felt to be the appropriate course of action.

Targeted Interventions to Support Persistent Non-Attenders

Use Pastoral/family support worker
Apply for transport support.
Bus passes for young people provided.
Given positive rewards – home and school (postcards home/vouchers)
Tutor daily focus – (reset – recover- rebuild)
Parenting support – 1:1 or group offered
Referral to external agency support offered
Youth engagement worker or other student focused intervention used to support engagement in learning.
Parenting contract

The Law Relating to attendance and safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education act 1996 states that:

> *the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:*
> *(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*
> *(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have either at school or otherwise*

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Working together to improve school attendance provides guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance including roles and responsibilities.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments (appointments should be made outside school times where possible)
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Education Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a Penalty Notice Fine or initiate court proceedings. The school may apply for an absence enquiry. The Local Authority will issue a Police and Criminal Evidence Questionnaire (PACE 1984) providing you with opportunity to explain the absence and provide a defence or medical evidence. You will have 14 days to respond to the PACE questionnaire should you wish. The Local Authority will then make a decision following a graduated response as to the appropriate outcome. The fine is £80 if paid within 21 days; thereafter the fine doubles to £160 if paid within 28 days. A fine is issued to each parent for each child.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes it can be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is considered to be a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that level is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the School Attendance Officer.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, medicine packaging or hospital letter.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and give an expected return date. You need to call at least every 2nd day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who may arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Headteacher, EWO if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Service.

Family Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have current telephone number / email contact – if we don't then something important may be missed. This is especially important for your child's health and safety. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. You are also asked to provide two other contacts in case of emergency where we are unable to contact you.

The School Attendance Officer (SAO)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems affecting or likely to affect attendance together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the their Education Welfare Officer (EWO). He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. They may also apply for an Education Supervision Order through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Swindon

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information / instructions and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the child. This can encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

Before the start of the school day, between 8.00am and 8.30am, pastoral support workers will make phone calls and / or send text messages to targeted students who have a track-record of low or declining attendance to support families and young people.

Individual school start times can be found in Appendix 5.

All pupil arrivals between **9.15am** to **10.00am** will receive a 'late' mark.

At **10.00am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time, they will receive an unauthorised absence mark that shows them to be on site but **not** counted as a present for statistical / legal purposes. This means that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Head of College to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Where a pupil is to attend twilight curriculum at 3pm in line with the procedures outlined within the Trauma informed relational policy, the pupil will be marked with an authorised attendance for that session. Students arriving after 3.30 will be given a U mark and time of arrival recorded on SIMS. Pupils following alternative curriculum pathways are expected to attend the bespoke timetable given to them. Pupils who arrive 20 minutes late will be marked as "L"; pupils who arrive 40 minutes late will be marked as "U".

It is the responsibility of the parent / carer to contact the school on the first morning of the child's absence. This can be done by leaving a message on the answer phone, sending a text or calling when the school office opens at 8.00am. In all cases a parent / carer should contact prior to 9.30am; a 'carer' also includes foster carer, social worker or residential carer – the expectation around attendance is the same for all of our students.

If this contact is not made by parents, business support staff will contact the parent / carer by telephone, or a 'Keep Kids Safe' (KKS) text message, and responses are checked and entered onto SIMS. For students considered at risk or where attendance is a cause for concern, the pastoral support workers will follow up with a call or a home visit. If this fails to provide an explanation, pastoral support team and tutors will discuss with parents during weekly check in calls and inform them of each young person's attendance and next steps if there is an attendance issue.

Leave in Term Time

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.
Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made in advance to the Headteacher and will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances. In making a decision the school will consider the

circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

Full details of our procedures are on the EOTA school website with the application form available to download..

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child's school place may be also be at risk.

School Targets and Initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

We have set a whole school attendance target of **95%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.
Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home - School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

People with attendance responsibilities

Head teacher : Juliette Baldwin
Governor: Paul Holroyd
Attendance lead: Juliette Baldwin

Summary:

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Stage 1 Attendance Letter
Name
Address
Date
Name of child
DOB

Dear Name,

I am very concerned that your child's attendance has fallen to **%**. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed. This is a cause for serious concern and is well below the government's national target of 95%. Your child has now had 6 sessions absence or more, one session is AM or PM, one school day is two sessions; it is important to highlight that 10 sessions absence could lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice which will incur a fine of £80. It is a safeguarding concern for us that your child is missing out on their education and we would expect that their attendance should improve with no further sessions missed wherever possible.

As I am sure you are aware, regular attendance and punctuality at school is vital to help children achieve and improve life chances. As a school, we are keen to make sure that all of our children benefit fully from their education as regular attendance is a legal requirement.

We understand that there are occasions when being absent is unavoidable, for example through illness, but missing school is disruptive to children's learning and social development.

Your child's tutor will be in touch to discuss strategies to improve attendance going forward and these will be logged in your child's Individual Attendance Plan.

Yours sincerely

Name of staff member

All parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other appropriate arrangements. Where parents and carers are not fulfilling this responsibility, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to uphold the rights of children and young people to education. Where necessary, this includes taking legal action against parents.

Appendix 2 - Stage 2 Attendance Letter

Parent Name

Address

Date

Dear **Parent name**,

I am writing to invite you to a School Attendance meeting to discuss **child name** attendance at school. At EOTAS we take attendance very seriously and know that good attendance is directly linked to good outcomes for young people. Young people whose attendance is poor often underachieve at school, often find school more challenging and struggle to make and maintain friendships with peers.

Child name attendance is currently **%** which is a serious cause for concern and significantly below the government's target figure of 95% and as such we have called a School Attendance Meeting to explore the reasons for poor attendance set targets to improve attendance and offer support to improve this. Failure to attend the meeting and continued poor attendance could mean the case is referred onto the Education Welfare Officer. Minutes from the meeting may, in future, be used in future legal proceedings should attendance not improve. Noncompliance may mean we need to seek advice through referral to the Social Care Team.

We want to work closely with you in order to support attendance and look forward to seeing you on **Meeting date** at **time**. Please inform the school office as soon as possible if you are unable to attend this meeting. We may however need to hold the meeting in your absence in order to support your child in their learning and would subsequently share the outcome of the meeting with you in a letter.

Yours sincerely

Name of staff member

Appendix 3 - Pupil Absence Monitoring Procedure

1. ALL registers will be completed on SIMS during AM and during PM sessions

2. All absent pupils will be contacted on their first day of absence by either KKS message, phone call or letter. Initial contact home will be by 9.30am.

3. Records of late arrivals will be made on SIMS.

4. Students entering or leaving site outside of registration times will be recorded by business support teams.

5. If by the end of the afternoon session (at the latest) on the first day there is no reason for absence, then a letter will be sent home requesting the family to contact the school as soon as possible to explain why the pupil is not at school. External agencies will be informed.

6. On making contact with the pupil's family, they will be informed that for every day the pupil is absent the family must contact the school to inform them of the pupil's progress. If they do not, then the school will contact them each and every day of absence.

7. The pupil's family will also be informed that they must write a letter explaining the absence and this will be kept on file. Students will have a return to school meeting to support safeguarding and see if support is needed.

8. If a pupil is absent for more than 5 days without contact by the family a home visit will be arranged and external agencies if applicable contacted

9. CME – EOTAS will inform the EWS if a young person is missing for 10 consecutive days.

10. Individual absence records for each pupil are monitored and recorded. Fortnightly data is collated by the Attendance officer and discussed with the SLT member responsible for Attendance in the weekly Case Management meetings. Statistics will be produced to show the performance of response times to a student's absence. It will be used to inform individual student's families of any patterns forming. The information will also be used to inform the Senior Leadership Team and School Management Committee and, if necessary, the Attendance Improvement Officer for the school.

Appendix 4 - Registration Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved educational activity
K	LA arranged provision at a place other than a school	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity
C	Absent with leave (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
C1	Absent due to participating in a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence
C2	Part-time timetable	Authorised absence
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J1	Interview	Authorised absence
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Not counted in possible attendances
Q	Lack of transport or boarding access arrangements arranged by LA	Not counted in possible attendances
X	Untimetabled sessions for	Not counted in possible

	non- compulsory school-age pupils	attendances
Y1	Transport normally provided by LA or school not available	Not counted in possible attendances
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel due to local, national or international emergency	Not counted in possible attendances
Y3	School partially closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y4	Whole school site unexpectantly closed	Not counted in possible attendances
Y5	Pupil in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendances
Y6	Travel or attendance contrary to public health guidance or law on transmission of disease	Not counted in possible attendances
Y7	Unable to attend due to unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils (planned closure)	Not counted in possible attendances

Appendix 5 - EOTAS school day times
(Apart from AUS)

Check in/Breakfast club	08.50 – 09.10
Registration	09.10 – 09.25
P1	09.25 – 10.15
P2	10.15 – 11.05
Break	11.05 – 11.20
P3	11.20 – 12.10
Lunch	12.10 – 12.50
Registration	12.50 – 13.05
P4	13.05 – 13.55
P5 Monday - Thursday	13.50 – 14.45
P5 Fridays	13.50 – 14.30
Twilight sessions:	15.00 – 16.30
Strive Plus	08.50 – 12.20
Strive	12.50 – 14.45

Registration times

AM Registration Opens	**0910**
AM Registration Closes	**1000**
PM Registration Opens	**1230**
PM Registration Closes	**1320**
PM Twilight Opens	**1500**
PM Twilight Closes	**1550**

Appendix 6 - Pupil Attendance Plan

Name of pupil	
Year group/class	
Staff supporting with attendance plan and roles	
Date plan was agreed	

Attendance history

Include details of attendance percentages (broken down by attendance code where appropriate), details of trends or patterns over time and any historical factors that might be relevant.

Current risk factors/current barriers to attendance

To help with this refer to the Right Help Right Time document

Targets	Milestones	Date each milestone achieved
Target 1 -		
Target 2 -		
Target 3		

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Strategies to be implemented by the school

Details of strategy (including date commenced)	Purpose of implementing strategy	Member of staff responsible
E.g. daily wake-up calls for two weeks, starting from 16th October • Attendance protocols i.e. absence texts/stage 1 letter/stage 2 letter & SAM/EWO (details in Attendance Policy on school website) • Staff-student face-to-face conversation and weekly tutor calls • CRD meeting – explicit attendance focus • Any illnesses registered as unauthorised unless medical evidence provided	*E.g. to establish an effective morning routine*	*E.g. parent support worker to carry out calls*

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Expectations of the pupil		
Details of expectations	**How this has been communicated to the pupil?**	**Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)**
E.g. set an alarm for 7 a.m. every day Expectation of 95% attendance	*E.g. discussion with attendance officer and ongoing reminders* Home-school agreement signed by student and parent	*E.g. attendance officer will monitor this daily*

Expectations of the family		
Details of expectations	**How this has been communicated to the pupil's family?**	**Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)**
E.g. for parents to phone school before 9 a.m. to report the reason for any absence • expectation of 95% attendance • expectation that parents will contact school daily to report absences • Notify the school of any absences on the day of that absence • Keep close contact with the school if a pupil is on extended leave due to ill health • Inform office staff if they receive any communication that a pupil will need to leave the school premises part way through the day by prior arrangement e.g. for a medical appointment. • • Provide a note from the GP after 5 days of absence.	*E.g. expectations explained during face-to-face attendance meeting and agreed by parents-signed plan* Home-school agreement signed by student and parent/carer at induction meeting and at CRD meetings Attendance leaflet provided to all parents & carers at induction meeting Attendance Policy on school website	*E.g. attendance officer /DT/DSL etc*

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External support		
Details of agency/partner	**Support being offered**	**Date support commenced**
E.g. social care	*E.g. Early Help referral has been made as mother is reporting that she feels overwhelmed*	*E.g. referral made 2nd November - currently awaiting first contact*

Record of attendance reviewing meeting	
Date of review	
Individuals present	
Situation since last review	
Milestones achieved since last review	
Areas discussed	
Outcome of meeting (tick as appropriate)	☐Continue with initial plan ☐Continue plan with new or supplementary strategies added ☐Escalate attendance plan to next stage
Date of next review	
Headteacher Signature	

Appendix 7 – Safeguarding response to children missing in education

Children who are absent from education

A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may be absent or become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school
- Come from new migrant families

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being absent, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.