Alfriston Primary School Attendance Policy 2026 - 2027

Senior Attendance Champion/ Senior Leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance: Name – Tanya Fitzgerald Email address - bursar@alfriston.e-sussex.sch.uk
School staff member that pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is: Name – Tanya Fitzgerald Email address - bursar@alfriston.e-sussex.sch.ukdetails
School staff member that pupils and parents should contact for more individual support with attendance: Name – Tanya Fitzgerald Email address - bursar@alfriston.e-sussex.sch.uk
Linked Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is: Name: Michele Owens
Updated: August 2026 Due for review: August 2027
Ratified by the Governing Board: 17th November 2026

Alfriston School Pupil Attendance Policy

This Attendance policy is easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, and is published on the school's website. When new pupils join Alfriston School, parents are provided a copy with any initial information. At the beginning of each school year and following any updates, we will highlight this to our community.

Contents

Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance 6

Understanding Types of Absence 10

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA) 12

Absence Procedures 13

Lateness 14

Understanding Attendance Barriers & Early Intervention 15

Pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or SEN/Disabilities 15

Support Systems 16

Local Authority Attendance Support Team 17

School Attendance and the Law 17

Granting Leave of Absence – Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances 17

National Framework for Penalty Notices 18

Notices to Improve (NtI) 19

Attendance Contracts 19

Attendance Recognition & Interventions 20

Appendices 21

Appendix A: East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Procedures for Schools and Academies 21

Appendix B: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents (see below) 21

Appendix C: Attendance Codes (see below) 21

Appendix D: NHS Guidance: Is my child too ill for school? 21

Appendix E: East Sussex County Council Attendance Intervention Pyramid (see below) 21

Appendix F: East Sussex County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthroised Absence (Youtube) 21

Appendix G: DfE & Children's Commissioner: 'Illness Absence Guidance' for parents 21

Appendix H: DfE Guidance Summary Responsibilities for School Attendance 21

Appendix F: Attendance Management Flowchart 27

Background and Aims

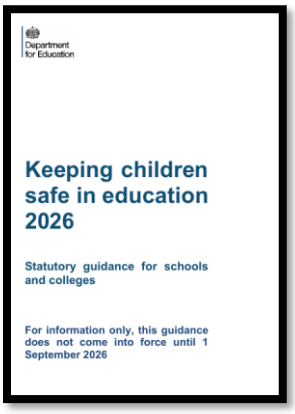
At Alfriston Primary School, improving school attendance is a shared responsibility, and a priority that underpins every child's right to learn, thrive and achieve, therefore benefiting their wider life chances. We value the attendance of all pupils. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and can put them at risk of wider harm. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity possible. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

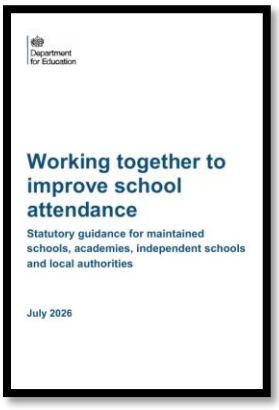
For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and several extra-familial harms.

Aims: To give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils and governors about attendance to:

- Promote a positive and welcoming environment and culture in which pupils feel safe, secure, a sense of belonging and are valued.
- Promote strong attendance to support pupils' achievement by maintaining the highest possible standards of attendance and punctuality.
- Acknowledge the vital role all staff play in encouraging/sustaining good attendance.
- Establish a clear system for monitoring and responding to pupil absence, taking prompt action to address emerging patterns.
- Build and maintain positive relationships with families to ensure pupils receive the support they need to attend school regularly.
- Encourage effective support structures and champion multi-agency collaboration to improve attendance outcomes.
- Ensure parents understand their legal responsibilities and that all children can access the education to which they are entitled.

This policy is based on the statutory guidance: DfE's Keeping children safe in education, and Working together to improve school attendance.





It should be read alongside the following statutory DfE guidance documents, and other East Sussex LA Attendance guidance:

- East Sussex Attendance Delivery Plan 2026 – 2027: Attendance | Czone
- Providing remote education: guidance for schools (August 2024)



Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance in six steps:

- **EXPECT**: Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality by aspiring to high standards for all pupils and families;
- **MONITOR:** Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently, with registers taken at the same time for all children daily, twice in the school day;
- **LISTEN and UNDERSTAND**: Listening and understanding barriers to attendance from the pupil and family's perspective and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them;
- **FACILITATE SUPPORT:** Outlining how the school's Attendance Team will work with families to remove barriers in school and helping pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school (i.e. Early Help Support or a whole family plan);
- **FORMALISE SUPPORT:** Formalise support where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or being engaged with;
- **ENFORCE:** Communicating the school's duty to enforce statutory intervention i.e. a penalty notice or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

East Sussex LA
Attendance Partnership Working

Working together for every child, every day.

1 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.



2 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.



3 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.



4 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.



5 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.



6 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.



Attendance is everyone's responsibility. Working together, we can identify barriers early, provide the right support, and ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive in education every day.

EXPECT → MONITOR → LISTEN → FACILITATE → FORMALISE → ENFORCE

A graduated response focused on support first and enforcement only as a last resort.

Schools | Families | Local Authority | Early Help Services | Health Services | Police | Youth Justice | Voluntary & Community Sector

Stronger together for every child, every day.

Roles and Responsibilities for Attendance

The government expects all parents and carers to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child is has unplanned absence (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so with good notice.
- Book any medical appointments outside of the school day where possible.

A "parent" is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not.
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.
- In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and the Local Authority to ensure that they are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

The government expects all schools to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance, with high expectations of attendance for all pupils.
- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete daily admission and attendance registers, at the same time each day for all pupils. Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, LA and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- 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.
- Recognise 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.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance, who ensures all staff are trained on attendance matters.

At Alfriston School, to manage and improve attendance effectively, we will:



The government expects all local authorities to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team, with a named single point of contact (SPOC) to provide core functions: communication and advice and targeted support meetings (TSMs).
- Offer multi-disciplinary support for families at the earliest opportunity.
- Support schools with legal intervention, using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School, and that of young carers.



Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of Alfriston School staff.

To help us all at to focus on this at Alfriston School, we will:

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools.
- Monitor attendance data rigorously to implement effective early intervention;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership to remove them.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers at the same time each day, and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters and website, providing clarity about the individual circumstances in which leave of absence may be granted;
- Be transparent with families about the legal intervention available to Alfriston School which is enforceable for unauthorised absence where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Share information and work collaboratively with the local authority, other trusts, schools and other local partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe;
- Share attendance data regularly to the Governors to enable strategic improvements for our pupils.
- Promote the benefits of high attendance;
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance,
- Report to parents/carers regularly on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress,
- Share information and work collaboratively with other school in the area, East Sussex local authority, and other partners where a pupil's attendance is at risk of becoming persistent or severe absent.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance. Where absence intensifies, the level of support provided by school will also increase, to work in tandem with East Sussex LA and other partners.
- Reward good or improving attendance;
    - We use the HERO (Here every day ready and on time) attendance initiative.
    - The school has adopted Power Pig and Rocket Rabbit as incentives for good attendance. Each week in celebration assembly, these are presented to the class with the best attendance (Power Pig) and for the class with the least amount of children coming into school late (Rocket Rabbit).

All staff will:

- Promote good attendance in interactions with pupils and parents.
- Work to foster a sense of belonging with all pupils.
- Build positive relationships with pupils and families.

All teaching staff will:

- Accurately record attendance, and complete registers at the same time each day.
- Monitor attendance within their class.

- Play a vital role in promoting good attendance by noticing patterns of absence, speaking with pupils and raising concerns early.

All office staff will:
- Ensure registers are completed at the same time for all pupils each day and accurately record reasons for absence.
- Follow up any 'lates' or unexplained absence.
- Maintain accurate attendance records.

Here at Alfriston School we treat school attendance as a vital safeguarding issue, not just a pastoral or administrative matter. We expect pupils to achieve attendance of 96% or above wherever possible.

We request that Alfriston Schoool parents:
- Ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time at 8.40am for children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 (Pearl & Ruby Class) and 8.45am for children in Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 (Sapphire & Emerald Class).
- Report any instance of absence by 9.15am on the first day and every day thereafter, if applicable.
- Inform the school of the reason for absence and the expected date of return, following this with evidence if requested to do so.
- Avoid unnecessary absences, for example, by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours / school holidays.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their schoolwork or home and family life. Act early to ensure we can work collaboratively to resolve issues before they escalate.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact negatively on their child's attendance.
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues.
- Work with the school to improve their child's attendance where necessary.

We request that Alfriston School pupils:
- Speak to a trusted adult if they are experiencing issues with coming to school.
- Attend all lessons on time and ready to learn.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

Understanding Types of Absence

Any absence affects the routine of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning journey and ability to progress. Any pupil's absence or late arrival sets them up for a disrupted start to their day, disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and allowing absence from school, without a good reason, creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Sessions
Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised Absence
Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Please note, in the first instance, the school will always endeavour to request you to seek medical or dental appointments outside of the school day/holiday where possible.

Unauthorised absence
Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- absences which have never been properly explained.
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however is counted as an absence for the session.
- shopping trips.
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- their own or family birthdays.
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes', including any arranged by other family members or friends.
- day trips.
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Appendix H outlines the DfE Guidance Summary Responsibilities for School Attendance for parents, schools, trusts and local authorities.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SA)

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) – 90% attendance and below

- A pupil is defined by the Government as a **'persistent absentee'** when they miss 10% or more (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year) schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence.
- Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.
- All pupils who have attendance levels of 90% or below are considered to be a persistent absentee.
- Through careful monitoring, where attendance **drops below 92%,** the school will initiate working closely with families to mitigate attendance falling to **persistent absent levels (below 90%)**.
- All persistent absent pupils will be expected to meet with the school's attendance champion to implement informal support, and where appropriate, ***an Attendance Support Plan*** will be developed collaboratively.
- Information (Youtube clip) on East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence can be found **in Appendix F**. NHS guidance related to 'Is my child too ill for school?' can be found in **Appendix D**. These aim to provide parents with helpful information to support school attendance.

Severe Absenteeism (SA) – 50% attendance and below

- A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as **'severely absent'**.
- These pupils are absent from school more than they are present. Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.
- All severe absent pupils will have a bespoke attendance plan in place, in conjunction with working multi-agency support.

Formalising Attendance Support with East Sussex LA

- If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, the local authority, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect.
- Our school has a clear strategy for reducing PA and SA through accessing wider support services to support removing barriers to attendance and formalising support in conjunction with East Sussex LA. Alfriston Schoolll may exercise its right to pursue legal intervention using the full range of parental responsibility measures. **See Appendix E for the Attendance Intervention Pyramid.**

The full range of legal interventions include:

- Penalty notices (a Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for parents to engage in attendance support before a penalty notice)
- Attendance Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders (ESO)
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting Orders

Absence Procedures

We monitor and review all pupils' absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly, as part of our statutory duty to the Department of Education.

Absence Procedures:

- If your child is absent, contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.15am, when our register closes. Attendance registers will be taken at the same time each day, regardless of circumstances.
- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call, or you may call into school personally and speak to the office staff. Please be aware that, if you leave a voicemail to report your child's absence, you may receive a call from the school so that we can discuss the absence before making a decision as to whether the absence is to be recorded as authorised;
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.15am; please note that where a school has not had confirmation of the whereabouts of absent pupils, a welfare check may be made to the home to investigate any unexplained absences as part of our legal safeguarding duty;
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence may be requested where your child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained within the NHS and East Sussex County Council Guidance on School Absence and Childhood Illness [What to do if your child is ill | East Sussex County Council]. Also see **Appendix D**: NHS Guidance: Is my child too ill for school? And **Appendix G**: DfE and Children's Commissioner 'Illness Absence Guidance'.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first, and every subsequent day of absence, if we have not heard from you. However, it is your responsibility to contact us.
- If we are unable to make contact with parents by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made, as part of the school's safeguarding duty. Please ensure all contact details, including emergency contact details are kept up to date.
- A referral will be made to East Sussex Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be "missing from education."
- For anticipated absences for exceptional circumstances, parents are required to complete a **'Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances'** form (**Appendix A**), at least 14 days ahead of the absence. This will allow the Headteacher to complete the necessary paperwork and communicate a response to parents, whether authorised or unauthorised. Where parents have not made an application, all absences will be unauthorised.

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is causing concern, and/or where punctuality is a concern.
- Arrange a meeting so that you may discuss the situation with our Senior Attendance Champion.
- Create a personalised action/support plan, such as an Attendance Contract (**Appendix A**), to address any barriers to attendance and make clear each person's role in improving the attendance patterns of your child.
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services, if appropriate (**Appendix D and G).**
- Refer the matter to East Sussex Local Authority for relevant legal sanctions, if attendance deteriorates following the above actions (**Appendix E**).

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

- The school day starts at 8.40am for children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 (Pearl & Ruby Class) and 8.45am for children in Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 (Sapphire & Emerald Class). This is when the gate is opened and children come into school;
- Registers are taken at 8.45am for children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 (Pearl & Ruby Class) and 8.50am for children in Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 (Sapphire & Emerald Class). Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late – L code (Late before the close of register);
- All children arriving after the start of the school day are required to come in through the main gate and report to the school office.
- At 9.15am, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site – 'U', but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence;
- The school may contact parents/carers regarding punctuality concerns; as 'U' codes count towards unauthorised absence, 10 lates could trigger the school issuing a penalty notice and/or legal proceedings to East Sussex County Council so it is imperative that morning routines provide ample time to arrive on time.
- If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with a member of staff, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and, as a school, we celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

- When registers are taken, the appropriate national attendance and absence code (**Appendix C**) must be entered for every pupil (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) whose name is listed in the admission register at the time. The codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics. The data helps schools, local authorities, and the government gain a

greater understanding of the delivery of education and the level of, and reason for, absence.

Registers will be taken at the same time each day for all pupils.

Understanding Attendance Barriers & Early Intervention

Early intervention is key to providing the right support at the right time. Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. NHS Every Mind Matters provides effective support for mental health.

Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support at the earliest convenience.

We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as:

- the School Nurse,
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support services,
- Early Help Key Worker team,
- a Family Support Worker or
- the relevant East Sussex Local Authority Attendance Support Team (AST/SPOC)

Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a meeting to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed. We will work with families to support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or SEN/Disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils; however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

Anxious Feelings

Many children may experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. These pupils are still expected to attend school regularly – in many instances,

attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. We will work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. Some useful DfE's non-statutory guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance can be found here Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK and Children's mental health - Every Mind Matters - NHS

Complex Barriers – physical or mental ill health
Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance, for example: pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil where the school may need to provide additional support. Keeping the school updated with any relevant information or need will enable the implementation of support through other agencies, at the earliest opportunity.

To support long term physical or mental ill health, the school will:

- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance, whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the need of pupils struggling to attend, and make formal reasonable adjustments. Adjustments are agreed and regularly reviewed with the pupil and parents.
- Consider a time-limited phased return to school.

Support Systems

We recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example: bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns, housing issues, mental health concerns etc. This will help the school to identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to achieve good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Holistic Support - We will work with families to understand and remove barriers to attendance (e.g., minor ailments, medical conditions, SEND, or bullying).
- Early Intervention - Rather than waiting for absence to become severe, we will use data to monitor patterns, conduct regular reviews, and implement joint action plans with parents.
- Clear Communication - We will use positive, clear, and consistent messaging to set expectations and celebrate attendance improvements.

- Collaboration - If your child is struggling to attend, parents should reach out to the school's senior leader responsible for attendance to establish what help and adjustments can be put in place.

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Local Authority Attendance Support Team

Local Authority Attendance Support Team (AST) work strategically by offering support, advice and guidance to schools, to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. Parents are expected to work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice (see Appendix E: Attendance Intervention Pyramid and Appendix F: East Sussex Penalty Notice Code of Conduct) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

School Attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Granting Leave of Absence – Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances

- For anticipated absences for exceptional circumstances, parents are required to complete a **'Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances'** form (**Appendix A**), at least 14 days ahead of the absence. This will allow the Headteacher to complete the necessary paperwork and communicate a response to parents, whether authorised or unauthorised. Where parents have not made an application, all absences will be unauthorised.
- Only a Headteacher may grant a **Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances** at their discretion, for exceptional circumstances. Where

every application will be considered on its individual merits, we do not operate a blanket policy that results in leave of absence being granted automatically.

- Exceptional circumstances considering specific facts and relevant background context behind the request will be considered.
- Where a **Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances** has been approved, the Headteacher will determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school as authorised absence.
- Where a **Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances** has been taken without permission, this absence is unauthorised.
- All penalty notice communication between parents and school and information related to penalty notices procedures can be found in **Appendix A**, along with a useful Youtube video from East Sussex County Council Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence (**Appendix F**).
- In line with DfE's guidance on ('Providing remote education') remote education should only be used as a last resort and as part of a reintegration plan.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours, regardless of individual needs. The Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

Exceptional Circumstances

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence *Withdrawal from Learning Application' (**Appendix A**) during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances".

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'. When making absence-related decisions, the head teacher will consider:

- a pupil's record of attendance for the current and previous academic years.
- time of absence being taken in the school year. If the request is made to extend the beginning or end of a school holiday period, it is unlikely to be considered exceptional.

10 in 10 Threshold for Penalty Notices

- Since 2024, the DfE introduced a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.
- The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers) - **See Appendix G**: Attendance Codes. The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Penalty Notice Sanctions

- Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence).
- A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child.
- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.
- If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

See Appendix A: Withdrawal from Learning Application for Exceptional Circumstances.

See Appendix F (Youtube video) outlines East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised absences.

Notices to Improve (NtI)

- A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. Once the threshold has been met and and offers of support have not been engaged with or have not worked, the school will issue a NtI outlining support offered and a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period of between 3 to 6 weeks.
- The school will always look to work supportively with families. Where improvements haven't be made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended, and school will notify parents in this instance, prior to issuing the penalty notice.

Attendance Contracts

- An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and school/ESCC to address irregular attendance, and allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support, where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate – See **Appendix E: Attendance Intervention Pyramid**. The school does not have to offer this but explores this route where deemed appropriate;
- It is not a punitive tool: it's a supportive mechanism and offers an alternative to prosecution. They do not have a set duration;
- Both parent and pupil voice is used to support the attendance contract by identifying the type of help needed to secure regular attendance;
- Attendance contracts usually bring about positive change when engaged with positively, however where non-compliance is evident, despite attempts to gain cooperation, an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention – Education supervision order - ESO) will be explored. The school will maintain records of non-compliance so that, as a last resort, it can be presented in court if necessary;
- An Education supervision order (ESO) is used for children from upper key stage 2 onwards as it requires elements of interactions with the order between parents, child and school.

An ESO can be a useful alternative for legal intervention without criminal prosecution. Voluntary support should be exhausted;

- ESOs are made through the Family or High Court, and provide the LA a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parents to ensure the pupil receives an efficient, full-time suitable education. For the duration of the ESO, the parents' duties to secure the child's education and regular attendance are superseded by a duty to comply with any directions given by the LA under the ESO;
- The ESO normally lasts up to 1 year, but can be extended up to 3 years;
- Where parents fail to comply with the ESO, ESCC is able to prosecute in the Magistrates Court for persistent non-compliance with the Order and parents will be liable to a fine, community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Attendance Recognition & Interventions

Alfriston School promotes good attendance by:

- Ensuring that all pupils feel they belong and are valued within the school community.
- Engaging early with families where attendance is a concern.
- Using attendance data to target attendance improvement in pupils/cohorts who most need it.
- Closely monitor pupils who are persistent and severely absent.
- Working with the local authority to obtain support and remove the barriers to attendance, formalising the arrangements when needed.

Appendices

Appendix A: East Sussex County Council's Penalty Notice Procedures for Schools and Academies

- Appendix 1: Withdrawal from Learning Form
- Appendix 2: Template letter to Parent - to accompany a declined absence
- Appendix 3: Request Form to Issue a Penalty Notice following a Planned Absence (i.e. holiday)
- Appendix 4: Template letter to Parent where it is believed a holiday has been taken but was not requested in advance
- Appendix 5: Template letter to invite parent to an attendance meeting
- Appendix 6: Template letter to parent following attendance meeting
- Appendix 7: Template of Attendance Support Plan
- Appendix 8: Template letter to parent who failed to attend attendance meeting
- Appendix 9: Request Form to Issue a Notice to Improve/Penalty Notice for persistent unauthorised absence.

Appendix B: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents (see below)

Appendix C: Attendance Codes (see below)

Appendix D: NHS Guidance: Is my child too ill for school?

Appendix E: East Sussex County Council Attendance Intervention Pyramid (see below)

Appendix F: East Sussex County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthroised Absence (Youtube)

Appendix G: DfE & Children's Commissioner: 'Illness Absence Guidance' for parents

Appendix H: DfE Guidance Summary Responsibilities for School Attendance

Appendix B: Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

Alfriston School's Attendance Policy Quick Guide for Parents

We expect pupils to attend school 96%+ of the academic year.

How can I support my child's attendance and punctuality?

- Ensure your child arrives early or on time for school every day and is ready to learn. Arriving after registration is recorded as an unauthorised absence. Pupils must be in class ready to be registered by 8.45am for children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 (Pearl & Ruby Class). For children in Year 3, 4, 5 & 6 (Sapphire & Emerald Class) registration takes place at 8.50am.
- If your child appears to be only slightly unwell, send them in to school. We have staff who will contact you if their condition deteriorates.
- Book any medical appointments outside of school hours or during the school holiday where possible. If this is unavoidable, please book for as late in the afternoon as possible and inform the school of appointments in advance.
- Supply a copy of the appointment card or hospital letter prior to them leaving school, if your child has an appointment during school hours.

What should I do if my child is not 'fit' to go into school?
'On the day' absences:
On each day your child is unfit to come to school, please report this absence by contacting the school office on 01323 870203 to let us know. In the message you must leave your child's full name, class, year group and give the specific reason for absence. The information you give will be recorded on our official register.

Leave of Absence
There may be exceptional circumstances where you need to request a leave of absence for your child.

Please use our 'Leave of absence request' form to make these types of requests, this can be obtained from the school office. The form should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of the leave of absence. You will receive a letter in response, to advise if the request has been approved or not approved.

Appendix C: Attendance Codes

School attendance codes

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances	Authorised Absence
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Authorised Absence
C2	Leave of absence due to a part-time timetable	Authorised Absence
E	Pupil is excluded with no alternative provision made	Authorised Absence
I	Illness (NOT a medical appointment)	Authorised Absence
M	Medical/dental appointments	Authorised Absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
J1	Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised Absence
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved Educational Activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
V	Approved educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity
W	Approved work experience	Approved Educational Activity
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Approved Educational Activity
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/ description	Unauthorised Absence
U	Pupil arrived after registers closed	Unauthorised Absence

School attendance codes

Code	Description	Meaning
D	Dual registered (at another establishment)	Not counted in possible attendance
X	Non-compulsory school age children, not required to be in school	Not counted in possible attendance
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendance
#	Planned whole or partial school closure	Not counted in possible attendance
Q	Lack of access arrangements provided by local authority	Not counted in possible attendance
Y1	Transport normally provided not being available	Not counted in possible attendance
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Not counted in possible attendance
Y3	School premises partially closed	Not counted in possible attendance
Y4	Whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Not counted in possible attendance
Y5	Pupil is in criminal justice detention	Not counted in possible attendance
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Not counted in possible attendance
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	Not counted in possible attendance

Present
Authorised Absence
Approved Educational Activity
Unauthorised Absence
Not counted in possible attendance

N.B: The Department for Education states that if a pupil's absence is recorded using codes B or K, the nature of the approved education activity (in the case of code B) or education provision (in the case of code K) must also be recorded in the register.

Appendix D: [NHS Guidance: Is my child too ill for school?]



Is my child too ill for school?

UK Government NHS

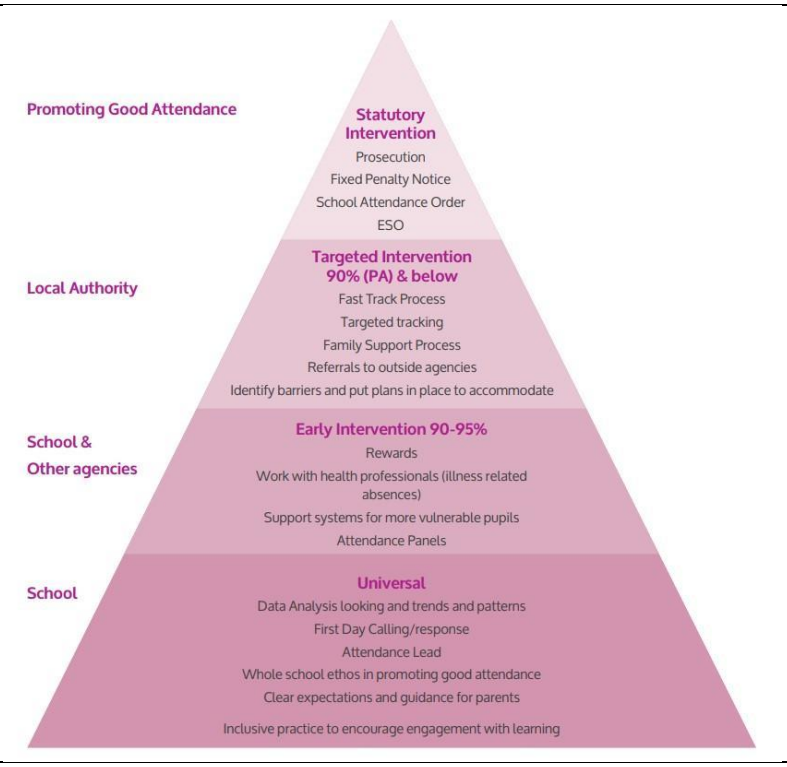
Does your child have a high temperature (38°C or more)? YES Keep them off school until it goes away. NO Follow the guidance below.

Your child can usually go to school with a mild cough or cold if they are otherwise well. If you do keep your child at home, it's important to phone the school or nursery on the first day and give them the reason.

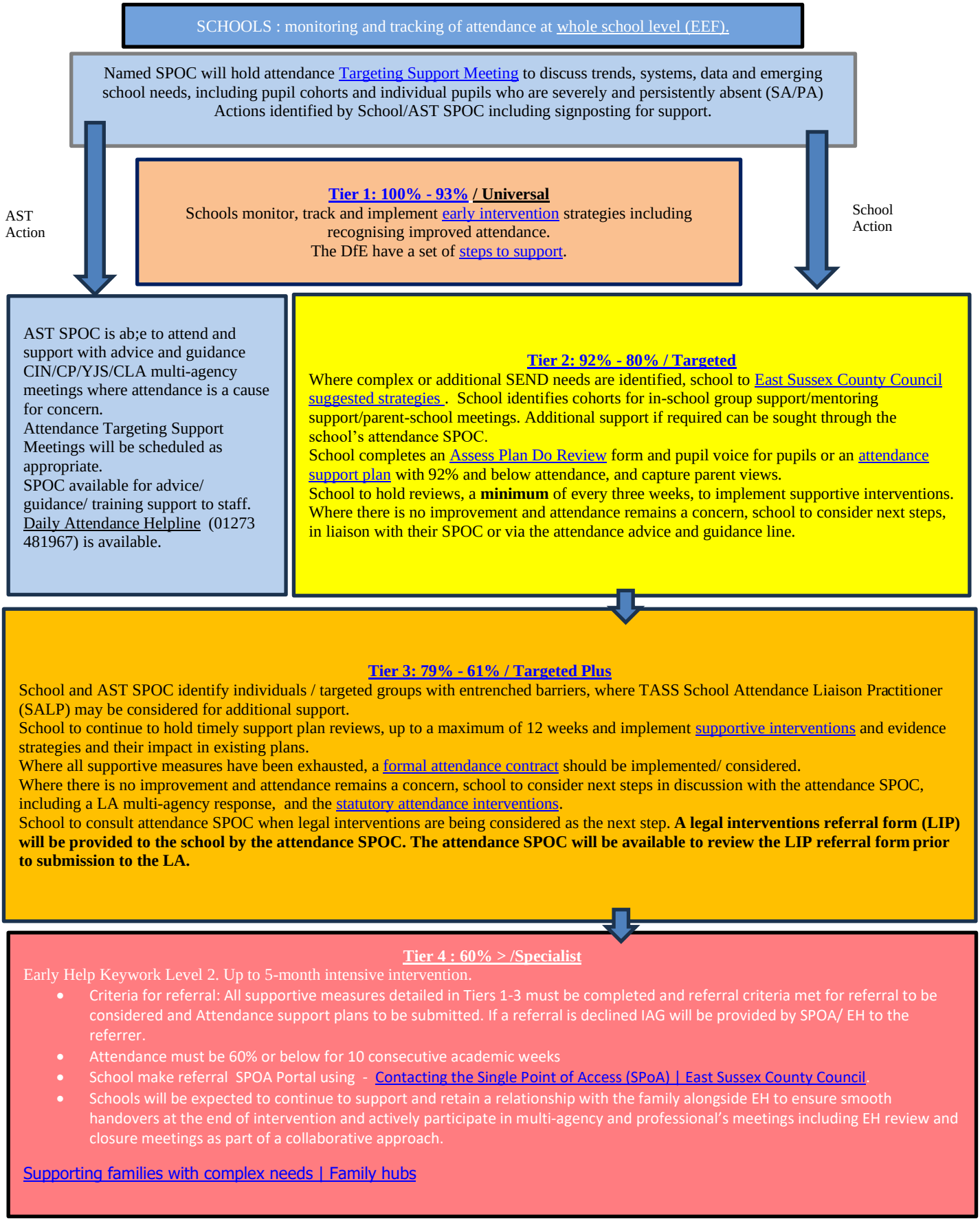
Should go in	Should go in (let the school know)	Seek treatment before returning to school	Keep them off (at first)
A cough, cold or sore throat Fine with slight cough or common cold symptoms, such as a runny nose, sore throat or headache, as long as they're otherwise well and do not have a high temperature.	**Cold sores** Encourage them not to touch the blister or kiss anyone while they have the cold sore, or to share things like cups and towels.	**Impetigo** They'll need treatment from a pharmacist or GP, often with antibiotics. Keep them off school until all the sores have crusted over and healed, or for 48 hours after they start antibiotic treatment. Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly and not to share things like towels and cups with other children at school.	**Ear infection** If your child has an ear infection and a high temperature or severe earache, keep them off school until they're feeling better or their high temperature goes away.
Threadworms Speak to your pharmacist, who can recommend a treatment.	**Conjunctivitis** Fine unless they are feeling very unwell. Seek advice from your pharmacist. Encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.	**Ringworm** See your pharmacist unless it's on their scalp, in which case you should see a GP. It's fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.	**Measles** They'll need to see a GP. Call the GP surgery before you go in, as measles can spread to others easily. Keep your child off school for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears. They should also avoid close contact with babies and anyone who is pregnant or has a weakened immune system.
	Head lice & nits You can treat head lice and nits without seeing a GP.	**Scarlet fever** They'll need treatment with antibiotics from a GP. Otherwise they'll be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks. Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.	**Vomiting & diarrhoea** Stay away from school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea due to illness for at least 2 days (48 hours).
	Hand, foot & mouth disease If they seem well enough to go to school, there's no need to keep them off. Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues straight away and to wash their hands regularly.	**Chickenpox** Keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually about 5 days after the spots first appeared.	
	Slapped cheek syndrome Once the rash appears, they're no longer infectious. Let the school or teacher know if you think your child has slapped cheek syndrome.		

Feeling worried or anxious: It's normal for any of us to feel worried sometimes. We may get a tummy ache or headache, or have problems eating or sleeping. Avoiding school can sometimes make a child's worries about going to school worse. If your child is struggling, please speak to school as soon as possible to explore available help. If your child is still struggling and it's affecting their everyday life, you should contact GP or school nurse.

Appendix E: ESCC Attendance Intervention Pyramid



Appendix F: Attendance Management Flowchart







UK Health Security Agency

NHS

Should I keep my child off school?



Yes

	Until...
Chickenpox	at least 5 days from the onset of the rash and until all blisters have crusted over
Diarrhoea and Vomiting	48 hours after their last episode
Cold and Flu-like illness (including COVID-19)	they no longer have a high temperature and feel well enough to attend. Follow the national guidance if they've tested positive for COVID-19.
Impetigo	their sores have crusted and healed, or 48 hours after they started antibiotics
Measles	4 days after the rash first appeared
Mumps	5 days after the swelling started
Scabies	they've had their first treatment
Scarlet Fever	24 hours after they started taking antibiotics
Whooping Cough	48 hours after they started taking antibiotics

No

but make sure you let their school or nursery know about...

Hand, foot and mouth	Glandular fever
Head lice	Tonsillitis
Threadworms	Slapped cheek

SCAN ME

Advice and guidance

To find out more, **search for health protection in schools** or scan the QR code or visit https://qrco.de/minfec.

© Crown copyright 2022. Product code: NSCI IEN. 5K APRIL 2022 (APS) Gateway number: 2021451