

DECEMBER 2020



ATTENDANCE POLICY

HORIZONS EDUCATION TRUST
AMERICAN LANE,
HUNTINGDON
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
PE29 1TQ

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of our pupils at Spring Common Academy have patterns of good attendance because they enjoy coming to Spring Common Academy for their education. Parents and carers of pupils at Spring Common Academy have over time been supportive to maximise attendance.

The DFE has set out clear guidance to promote full attendance and expects all pupils to achieve 95% attendance and below 90% attendance is persistent absence therefore triggering a cause for concern.

In making decisions about pupil attendance the school will appropriately take into account medical reasons and exceptional circumstances in discussion with parents and when appropriate seek guidance from Cambridgeshire Local Authority Educational welfare officer.

As a school we are flexible with the planning of our arrangements for return to school and will support families to enable access to education after operations using a team approach with Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and medical advice. In some cases attendance for a few hours per day can be organised with a bespoke plan to support moving and handling and positioning.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Registration: Roll call registration (electronic SIMS) takes place twice a day and registers close at 9.30am and 1.30pm.

LATENESS

At Spring Common Academy we appreciate most pupils arrive by education transport and travel to Huntingdon can be subject to unavoidable delays. Any student arriving in school after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after registration period has finished they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence) if there is no acceptable reason.

We expect pupils to begin lessons immediately after registration in all cases.

Any child arriving after 9.30am or 1.30pm without an acceptable reason will be marked as unauthorised. Parents and carers should be advised that lateness at the beginning of the day is particularly detrimental to academic and social progress because they rely upon predictable routines, especially pupils with autism and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the Educational Welfare Officer.

Persistent lateness will be followed up for all our pupils because we believe that all children have a right and entitlement to a full education offer at Spring Common Academy.

ABSENCES

Absences from school will be either Authorised or Unauthorised depending upon circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a student has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school via the teacher or school office.

The school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum so each pupil can maximise full attendance and not fall below 95% satisfactory attendance.

Any routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays when possible.

Where absence through illness has led to attendance of below 90%, parents/carers will be contacted and be expected to provide medical information and/or appointments evidence.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents and carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school.

Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, shopping or going on holiday.

The school, using DfE. guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as Authorised or Unauthorised.

SAFEGUARDING

The school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns,

This could be to follow up a range of child protection concerns of significant harm such as child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation.

In addition if the school suspects that a pupil may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the Safeguarding designated teachers for Spring Common Academy reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies which will be social care or police using the child protection procedures.

The school will notify parents / carers if a referral is to be made. However, the school may be advised this is not appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

The school recognises that when a child is missing from education at school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect or a risk indicator of sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows the LSCB procedures.

Under section 8 h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with 10 days continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time.

A referral will be made to the Local Authority Education welfare that a trace cannot be established to enable this to be investigated further by the police.

Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well. Parents and carers should be advised this may include home visits by the EWO / Police to establish a child is safe and well. Please see Appendix A; CME flowchart for school procedures.

The school will contact relevant agencies after first day of absence without confirmation from parents / carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' plan or due to risk assessment is considered extremely vulnerable.

RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL

Sometimes pupils seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from the things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school immediately to speak to the class teacher or Assistant Head.

HOME EDUCATION

On rare occasions parents and carers make enquiries about home education in schools. Spring Common Academy has supported families to move their children back into the school system when special education needs have not been met previously. In all instances the child found it difficult to adapt to a new placement due to lack of routine attending school.

The Local Authority will determine whether or not to accept home education requests or challenge the request due to parental capacity to meet the special educational needs provision required to enable a child to make expected progress overtime.

Parents should be advised they are unable to withdraw their child from any school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'.

Any request for home education must be put in writing to the Head Teacher in the first instance to enable the school to arrange an Education Health and Care Plan review with the Local Authority. It will not be deemed acceptable to withdraw a child for any reason prior to an EHCP review and agreement from the Local Authority.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PUPIL ATTENDANCE AT SPRING COMMON ACADEMY

We expect all staff to be excellent role models by having outstanding attendance and punctuality records. The following people can help with any concerns or questions regarding attendance & punctuality:

Simon Paynter – Assistant Head

Julia McIntosh – Head of School

Jon Panther – School Secretary

Schools Education Welfare Officer

PARENTS/CARERS

If your child is absent from school for any reason (appointments, illness or other) or is going to be late, you should inform the school office before 9.00 am on the morning.

If your child is late to school they will need to be signed in at the school office in Lower School at reception.

Any child taken out of school due to illness or appointments need to also be signed out at the school office reception in Lower School and also signed back in in on their return. The school should be notified in advance of all known appointments so that children with autism can be prepared for a change of routine in their school day.

TRACKING ATTENDANCE

We know that data part of school information enables school senior managers to have a discussion with teachers and to ask questions to seek wider school improvement. That constant questioning is more likely to affect change and to help the school to become more responsive to pupil circumstances.

The school has an electronic attendance system that closes at 9.30am and 1.30pm for separate sessions on SIMS. The advantage of this system is that the office can respond to any queries about pupil attendance and provide immediate replies.

The school tracks attendance for Early Years class, main school and Post 16 using the DFE codes (see annexe 1) as follows:

- On a daily basis by the teacher with parents and carers
- Half termly to measure performance:
 - ❖ Tracking information for Early years, Main school and Post 16
 - ❖ Tracking using inclusion indicators for Pupil premium, LAC, FSM, ethnicity and our vulnerable groups identified as Autism and PMLD.
- Annual end of year performance:
 - ❖ End of year reporting to Trustees to compare actual end of year attendance with school target and national performance data for special schools in School dashboard.
 - ❖ Tracking using inclusion indicators for Pupil premium, LAC, ethnicity and our vulnerable groups identified as Autism and PMLD.

WE FOLLOW UP PUPIL ATTENDANCE USING A 'THREE LETTER SYSTEM'

The school follows the Cambridgeshire Local Authority procedures using a three letter system and template letters are attached to this policy. (See annexe 2)

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her.

When a child is absent from school, he or she misses not only the teaching provided but is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return.

There are only 190 statutory school days in one year and 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Therefore every school day counts!

KEY INFORMATION

Prior to June 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed for head teachers to grant leave of absence for a term time family holiday in 'special circumstances' and for extended leave in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to these regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

At Spring Common Academy we appreciate there might be very rare occasions that parents and carers may wish to apply for absence to be authorised for exceptional circumstances. Parents and carers are invited to apply with reasons in advance to the Head Teacher and mark the envelope confidential.

Holidays in school term time will not be sanctioned as an exceptional for reason.

KNOWING THE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Parents will receive the annual percentage achieved by the child as part of the Annual report summary which at Spring Common Academy is part of the Learning Journey.

YOUR PARENTAL AND CARER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If your child is registered at school you must ensure that s/he attends regularly to aim for full attendance. Parents should be aware we will always contact the parent where the child lives to follow up attendance matters because we recognise that in cases of any shared parental responsibility this is pragmatic.

The DFE regulations make it clear that parents, carers or relatives do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday or other any other reasons unless they are exceptional.

If parents take their child on holiday in term time this will be counted as unauthorised absence and listed on your child's school record. This will be considered the same as truancy and you will be at risk of a Penalty Notice being applied and a fine.

If parents wish a relative or adult to pick up their child at the end of the school day to suit their family circumstances we require notification and proof of identification for safeguarding purposes.

REVIEWING THE IMPACT OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Executive Head Teacher will report the overall progress with pupil attendance and any issues arising to the Board of Trustees.

GOVERNANCE

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustees every two years unless regulations for attendance from the DfE change.

ANNEXE 1 – SCHOOL REGISTER CODES

The DfE. offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

/ \ - Present am/pm

B - Educated off site - Approved Educational Activity.

C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - Authorised Absence.

D - Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) - Approved Educational Activity.

E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - Authorised Absence.

F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence.

G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - Unauthorised Absence.

H - Family holiday during term-time (provided this has been agreed by the school) - Authorised Absence.

I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.

J - Interview - Approved Educational Activity.

L - Late (before registers close) - Present.

M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.

N - No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence.

O - Unauthorised Absence.

P - Approved Sporting Activity - Approved Educational Activity.

R - Religious Observance - Authorised Absence.

S - Study Leave - Authorised Absence.

T - Traveller child travelling - Authorised Absence.

U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - Unauthorised Absence

V - Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity.

W - Work Experience - Approved Educational Activity.

X - Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted as possible attendances.

Y - Enforced closure – not counted in possible attendances.

Z - Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances.

- School closed – not counted in possible attendance.

Teachers are required to use these codes using the SIMS online electronic register system for accurate recording.

The Local Authority Education Welfare officer will be consulted in cases of any query.

ANNEXE 2 – THREE TIER LETTERS, SUSPECTED HOLIDAY LETTER

LETTER 1

<<DATE>>

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: <<name>> School Attendance

I am writing to advise you that <<name>> school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to <<attendance percentage>>% and as a result we are becoming concerned that <<name>> is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of <<name>> attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor <<name>> attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on <<name>> attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Assistant Head teacher
Cc Education welfare officer

LETTER 2

<<DATE>>

Dear Parent/Carer

RE: <<name>> School Attendance

I am writing to inform you that <<name>> Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting <<name>> progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should <<name>> attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996, and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve <<name>> attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above. Yours Sincerely

Assistant Head teacher
Cc Education Welfare Officer

LETTER 3

<<DATE>>

PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: <<name>> School Attendance

As the attendance officer for Spring Common Academy, it has been brought to my attention that <<name>> has been absent from school for <<number of sessions>> sessions this school year/over the previous <<number of weeks>> weeks. I enclose a record of <<name>> attendance.

As parent it is your legal responsibility, as stated under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which <<he/she>> is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next four weeks the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a penalty notice fine to be issued.

Yours sincerely

Assistant Head teacher
CC Education Welfare Officer

SUSPECTED HOLIDAY LETTER

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: <<name>> <<DOB>>: Spring Common Academy:

I am writing about <<name>> absence from school from <<date>> to <<date>>.

From information received from other sources we believe that this was due to a family holiday. You have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, <<name>> absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/care in respect of each child who is absent from school. However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

Yours sincerely

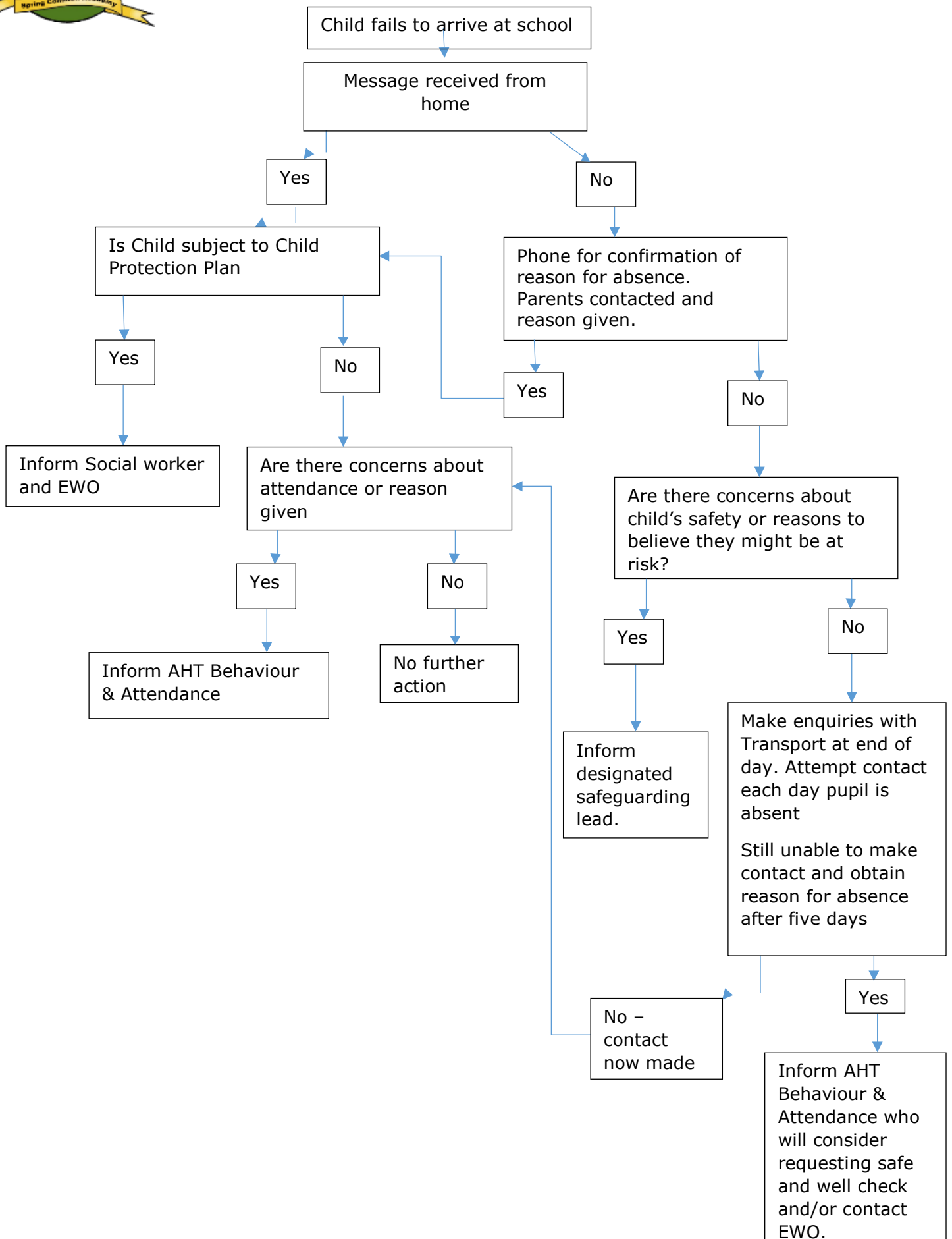
Head of School

cc Education Welfare Officer



APPENDIX A

Child Missing from Education Flowchart



Policy agreed on: _____

Signed on behalf of the Trustees _____

Committee: _____

Author: _____

Review date (optional): _____

Website Y/N

Addendum COVID-19

In line with the DfE guidance, as of September 2020 all students are expected to attend school as normal. The addendum below is in addition to the current school policy.

School attendance is compulsory again from the beginning of the autumn term.

This means from September 2020, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence.
- the availability of local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

It is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in all school settings.

Students who do not attend school because of illness due to Covid-19 symptoms will receive a mark according to the guidance issued by the DfE.

If there is a need to shield or self-isolate, contact must be made with the school. The following government principles and guidance will be used to decide if your child should be shielding or self- isolating.

- child or young person who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting.
- children or young people should not attend if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household or support bubble.
- If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I – illness, as would usually be the case. Code 8 should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

- If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. Code 8 should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive they should be recorded as code 7 until they are able to return to school.

What you should do....	Action needed	Return to school when....	Attendance code
<p>If your child displays one or more of the following symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Temperature - This will include the child being hot to touch on their back and chest • A new, continuous cough: This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours • A loss or change in their smell or taste senses. This will include not able to taste or smell anything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home • Get a test • Keep in daily contact with the school • Inform the school of the test result immediately 	<p>A negative result is returned</p>	<p>Code 8</p>

<p>If your child tests positive for coronavirus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay at home • Keep in daily contact with the school • Self-isolate for at least 10 days • Inform the school of the test result immediately 	<p>If they feel better, they can return to school after 10 days even if they have a cough or loss of smell/taste. These symptoms can last for several weeks once the infection has gone</p>	<p>Code 7</p>
<p>If someone in your house has coronavirus symptoms</p>	<p>Stay at home</p>	<p>The member of your household with coronavirus symptoms tests negative</p>	<p>Code 8</p>

If your child returns from a location abroad which requires quarantine	Stay at home	Once the quarantine period is over	Code 8
If your child is requested to Shield by Public Health England	Stay at home	Once the shield period ends as advised by Public Health England	Code 9
In the event of a local Lockdown (including school closures)	Students to be directed not to attend	This will be directed by the school	Code 8