# St Cuthbert's Primary School Attendance Policy 2022

**Vision:**

In our family school, we strive to be the best for today, for tomorrow, for ourselves, for each other, the wider world and for God.

As a Christian family we nurture an understanding that we are all of equal value and infinite worth.

In the safety of our unique family we will flourish and grow towards being Global Citizens and Courageous Advocates.

('You are now citizens together with God's people and members of the family of God'. Ephesians 2:19)

**Mission statement:**

Learning to love, loving to learn in the family of Christ.

('Encourage one another and build each other up'- 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

## Introduction

We aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available. Regular, punctual attendance is valued and positively encouraged for all of our pupils.
We believe that, through attending school every day on time, children and young people will get the best possible start in life.

## Aims

- To improve the overall attendance of children at school.
- To improve children's attainment through good attendance.
- To encourage parents to ensure that children arrive at school on time.
- To make attendance a priority for all those associated with the school, including parents, pupils, teachers and governors.

To achieve these aims for our pupils, we are committed to:

- providing a welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environment
- ensuring all staff to feel happy to come to school to work with pupils, developing them to their full potential
- having high expectations of our pupils and all staff
- offering a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum
- recognising and celebrating achievements in all areas of school life
- providing equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life
- providing high-quality teaching using a variety of teaching strategies
- providing a range of resources to support and challenge learning effectively
- giving pupils experiences that will develop their spiritual, moral and cultural understanding
- offering support, guidance and training for all those who teach and work with our children
- fostering and maintaining links with our wider community.

## Legislative framework

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (section 444) to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the education authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

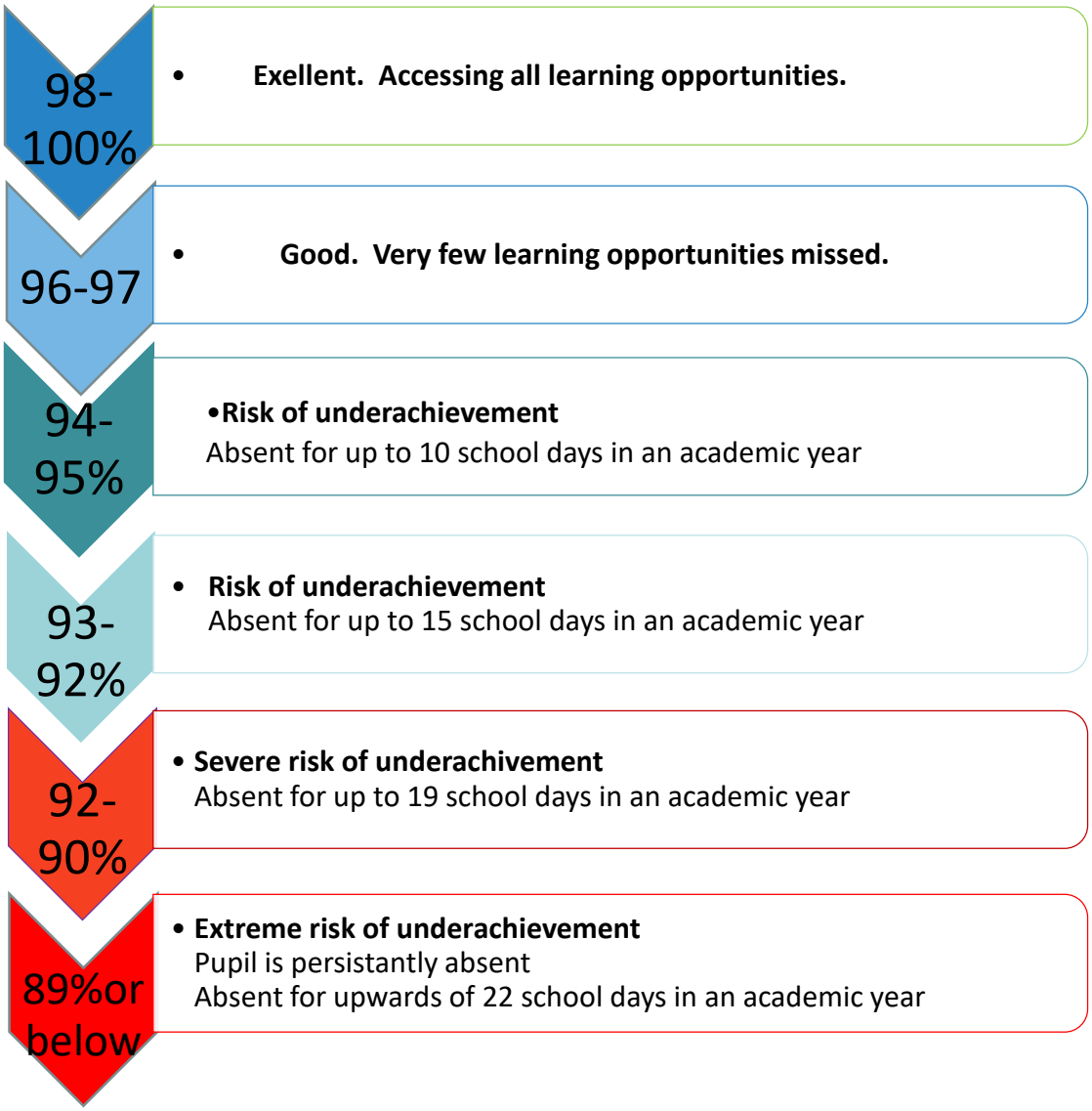
All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education that is suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Local authorities have a duty to establish, as far as it is possible to do so, the identity of children of compulsory school age who are missing education in their area.

## Expected levels of attendance

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the life chances of pupils. Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success.

At Saint Cuthbert's CE Primary School, we expect all children to achieve attendance that is at least 95%.

Certificates and prizes are presented annually for children who have achieved full or 99% attendance.



## Attendance partnership expectations

**We expect the following from all of our pupils:**

- To attend school regularly.
- To arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day wearing the correct clothing eg PE kit/ Outdoor learning clothes/ full school uniform.
- To tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

**We expect the following from parents and carers:**

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure contact is made with the school, as soon as is reasonably practical, whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, wearing the correct clothing eg PE kit/ Outdoor learning clothes/ full school uniform.

**Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Follow-up support if needed.

## Roles and responsibilities for attendance

- St Cuthbert's Primary School has a named senior member of staff with responsibility for attendance issues.
- Members of school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have responsibility for attendance issues in school. For detailed roles and responsibilities, please see Appendix 3
- Attendance matters are reviewed by the Headteacher and members of the senior management team.
- Attendance issues are reported, on a termly basis (as a minimum), to the governing body.
- The school uses BwD Inclusion Support Services to support the school with the processes associated with children's attendance at school. The school employs BwD to provide legal monitoring services and support that will help to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent and improve whole-school attendance.

**Procedures**

We will follow the procedures set out below for rewarding attendance and addressing attendance concerns of all pupils.

**Absence**

If a child is absent from school, parents should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence to inform the school of the reason for absence. Parents are expected to maintain contact with the school throughout the absence.

At 9.30am, school registers are checked for any absences where there has been no contact by parents and reason given.

School staff will send text messages/ contact parents by phone to ascertain a reason for the child's absence from school.

If staff are concerned about a child's absence or there is no response to text messages, they will follow the process in detailed in Appendix 1. This includes telephone calls to parents, other emergency contacts, home visits, and referrals to the BwD Inclusion Service.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated. This may include referral to CSC. (see the Department for Education's attendance guidance, 2019)

**It is imperative that up-to-date contact numbers and details are provided to the school.**

**Schools are required to hold more than one emergency contact per child (Department for Education, *Keeping children safe in education*) Emergency contact numbers should be provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides.**

**Illness**

Not all illness requires an absence from school. For minor childhood ailments such as coughs, colds and ear aches, we would not expect children to be absent. However, when a parent makes the assessment that their chid is unfit for school, they should follow the absence process above.

It is a school's decision whether to accept the reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases, a parent's explanation of their child's illness can be accepted without question or concern. In circumstances where

there are concerns about a child's attendance or reason for absence, further evidence of a child's illness may be requested.

The school will challenge parents' statements or seek additional evidence if they have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

It is good practice to have clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing additional services such as the School Nurse in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long-term illness. In some cases, it may be that we offer Early Help to support families where attendance is an issue.

**The types of scenarios where medical evidence may be requested include:**

- Attendance is less than 90%.
- There are frequent one-day absences due to reported illness.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.
- Where there is a particular medical problem, the school may need evidence in order to seek additional support/provide support.

**Medical appointments**

Parents should avoid making routine medical appointments and dental appointments during the school day. In the majority of cases, appointments can be made outside of the school day/during the school holidays.

Where appointments have to be taken during the school day, only the time for the appointment and travel will be classed as an authorised absence. Pupils are expected to return to school for the remainder of the day/attend school prior to the appointment.

Parents are required to provide a copy of the appointment letter or card before the day of the appointment.

**Other reasons for absences**

Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school on each occasion. Notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. The school will follow Department for Education guidance and not authorise absences for shopping, birthdays or childminding.

**Early Help and Safeguarding**

We understand that lateness and poor attendance can be an indicator of vulnerability, abuse, neglect or exploitation and therefore, we refer to our school's safeguarding policy when dealing with poor attendance and punctuality. Children with an attendance below 90% will be monitored via the school's vulnerability register. We therefore will

offer Early Help to children and families where attendance is a concern. This may include referrals to other agencies such as the school nurse, Children's Social Care, Transforming Lives Panel amongst others.

**Religious observance**

The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. However, parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. Religious bodies may be contacted to verify these occasions.

**Traveller absence**

The school's aim for Traveller children, as for all other children, is that they will attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

The school can only operate effectively as the child's base school if it is engaged in ongoing dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen, and inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

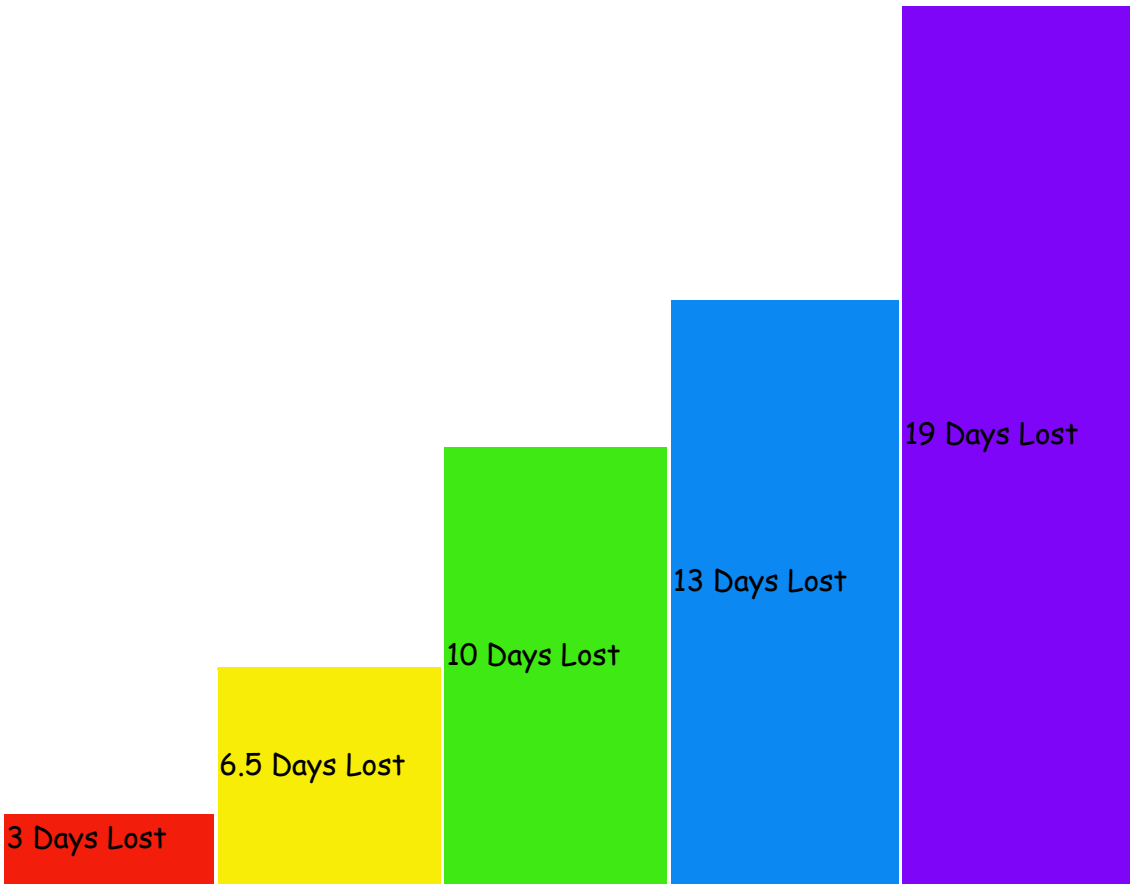
The school will authorise absence of Traveller children if their parents are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place and have indicated that they intend to return.

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

**Punctuality**

It is important that pupils are punctual so that they do not miss out on the beginning of each school day. Children must attend on time to be given a present mark for the session.

If a pupil arrives late to school every day, their learning begins to suffer. Below is a graph showing how being late to school every day over a school year adds up to lost learning time.




(Over one academic year)

We ask parents to ensure that their children are at the school gates between 8.50am and 9.00am.

Children arriving after 9.00am will be late for school and have to report to the school office with a parent/ supervising adult.

If a pupil arrives after the register closes, this will be classed as an unauthorised absence.

School registration will close at 9.05am.

The registers are monitored daily to identify pupils who are arriving late. Regular late arrival for school will be challenged as not acceptable.

**Reintegration of long-term absentees**

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of students' learning, and positive strategies should be employed to minimise such effects.

Key principles

- We should always keep in touch with a student and his/her family during a long absence.
- We should always make sure he/she is welcomed back.
- We should never make sarcastic comments about an absence – a thoughtless word can destroy hours of work by staff.

The Headteacher and SENDCo should consider a phased return where appropriate. This needs to be considered in line with the local authority's process and procedure, which includes seeking expect advice from relevant professionals and coordinating a multi-agency meeting. Any special needs the pupil may have should be considered, and appropriate support identified. Consideration must be given to providing a package of support, which may include a mentor (staff member/student).

Class teachers should ensure that the pupil feels welcomed back to school in an appropriate way and take any necessary steps to support their re-integration.

**Attendance, safeguarding and children missing education**

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The school should follow its procedures for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

All schools are required to make the local authority aware of every registered pupil who fails to attend school regularly and any children who have been absent from school, where the absence has been treated as unauthorised for a continuous period of not less than 10 school days (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, regulation 12).

Schools are permitted to remove children of compulsory school age from the roll on the limited grounds set out in regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

Removing a child from the school roll is a very important decision. Children who fall out of the education system are likely to have poor outcomes and may be exposed to increased risk of harm. Schools must follow correct procedures to ensure that they do not breach their legal and safeguarding duties.

In September 2016, the Department for Education updated the statutory guidance to reflect the 2016 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the 15 grounds listed in the 2006 regulations (as amended).

Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the children missing education officer, before deleting the pupil's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii).

This attendance policy is part of a broader suite of safeguarding policies including the school's child protection policy and procedures.

**Alternative education providers**

On rare occasions, a small number of pupils may be accessing an alternative education provider agreed by the school for all or part of their timetable. In this instance, the pupil remains on roll at Saint Cuthbert's CE Primary School. Attendance to approved alternative providers is monitored and reflected on school registers. The responsibility of ensuring pupils are safeguarded and receiving appropriate education remains with Saint Cuthbert's CE Primary School.

**Registers**

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions.

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. Attendance registers will be kept in accordance with legal requirements, local authority guidelines and school regulations.

Every half day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence can be given only when the Headteacher has either approved in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by a person designated to do so by the Headteacher (see The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI No.2006/1751) – reg 7(1)).

There are procedures in place to resolve unexplained absences within two weeks.

The school complies with and uses the Department for Education's compulsory national attendance codes to categorise absence (Appendix 2).

**Use of attendance data**

All schools must provide their attendance data to the Department for Education. Most schools use their management information systems to send their data via school census. The figures returned are then published by the Department for Education as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

We collect, use and store attendance information about our pupils and may receive information about you from your previous school. The information we keep regarding attendance includes name, contact details, attendance records, late records and any relevant medical information.

Where there is cause for concern, this information is shared with BwD during regular attendance meetings held at school. BwD may then follow up attendance concerns with parents and carers on school's behalf.

In order to avoid the involvement of BwD Inclusion Services, the school has put the following procedures in place.

Stage 1- Where a child's level of absence is below 95% and/or they have 4 unauthorised absences (equivalent to two days), a phone call will be made to highlight this to families and offer support.

Stage 2- Where a child's level of absence is below 90% and/or they have 8 unauthorised absences (equivalent to four days), a letter will be sent to parents detailing the levels of absence and the expectation for attendance to improve significantly in the next fortnight.

Stage 3- Attendance has not improved following a letter so a meeting is arranged to discuss ways that school can support the family in improving the child's attendance. Further support with a range of concerns may also be put in place where appropriate.

Stage 4- Referral to Inclusion Service. Inclusion Service will consider support school has put in place and the impact this has had. They will assess the case and decide on the most appropriate course of action, this may be a phone call, letter or meeting.

Stage 5- Where the Inclusion Service have been involved but agreed actions have not been carried out, the Inclusion Service may consider more formal, legal proceedings.

**Policy written February 2022**
**Policy review February 2023**
**To be ratified by Governors Spring 2022**

**Appendix One: Saint Cuthbert's Attendance Policy**

- Parents are expected to notify the school on the first day of a child's absence before 9.30am.
- Reasons for absence are kept with the register. (Telephone messages are written down and passed to the class teacher.)
- Any absences that are still unexplained are followed up by texts / requests from the attendance coordinator.
- School have the right to refuse to authorise any absence, for example an absence due to illness without a doctor's note. This right will only be exercised in extreme cases and only after a warning letter has been sent to parents or carers.
- Parents are discouraged from taking family holidays within the school year. In exceptional circumstances a holiday form must be completed before the holiday and the Headteacher will consider the request in light of DFE guidelines. Requests are unlikely to be authorised and any absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The Inclusion Officer – formerly the Education Welfare Officer, may be consulted and a penalty notice may be issued.
- Parents who take their child out of school during the day for appointments or medical reasons must sign them out and in again at the receptionist's office.
- Good attendance will be encouraged and praised by class teachers at all times.
- If, despite expressions of concern school still has on-going concerns about a child's attendance the family may be referred to the Inclusion Officer. This may happen:
  If a child's attendance drops below 90%.
  If a child misses the equivalent of 4 days to unauthorised absence.
  If a child is persistently late.

The Inclusion Officer has several courses of action under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act of 2003, including issuing and enforcing a Parental Contract. In some cases of ongoing poor attendance, the Inclusion Officer may issue a penalty notice. This gives a family 15 days to improve a child's attendance, if this does not happen a fine of £60 rising to £120 may be issued. Again this will not happen without warning letters being sent home.

**Appendix 2**

## ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| / | Present (AM) | Present |
| \ | Present (PM) | Present |
| B | Educated off site (NOT dual registration) | Approved education activity |
| C | Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) | Authorised absence |
| D | Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) | Approved education activity |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made) | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorised absence |
| H | Family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| I | Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) | Authorised absence |
| J | Interview | Approved education activity |
| L | Late (before registers closed) | Present |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments | Authorised absence |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence | Unauthorised absence |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description) | Unauthorised absence |
| P | Approved sporting activity | Approved education activity |
| R | Religious observance | Authorised absence |
| S | Study leave | Authorised absence |
| T | Traveller absence | Authorised absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) | Unauthorised absence |
| V | Educational visit or trip | Approved education activity |
| W | Work experience | Approved education activity |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Y | Enforced closure | Not counted in possible attendances |
| Z | Pupil not yet on roll | Not counted in possible attendances |
| # | School closed to pupils | Not counted in possible attendances |

**Appendix 3**

**Roles and responsibilities for school attendance: Saint Cuthbert's CE Primary School**

| Name | Role | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| Governor representation | School governors | Ensure compliance with relevant legislation (e.g. pupil registration, attendance registers)<br>Reviewing school attendance<br>Agreeing and reviewing school policy |
| Emily Coolican | Headteacher | Compliance with relevant legislation<br>Data analysis and strategic plan for attendance.<br>Implementing school policy and leading on whole school approach.<br>Authorising/unauthorising absences<br>Leave of absence request<br>Line management<br>Evaluation of interventions.<br>Promoting school attendance.<br>Responsibility for links with Inclusion Support Services and the LA statutory team.<br>Attendance at attendance panels |
| Class teachers | Class teachers | Marking registers<br>Promoting importance of regular school's attendance<br>Providing early warning of attendance concerns<br>Positive role modelling<br>Following policy and procedures consistently. |
| Anisa Ali | Attendance Lead | Liaise with School Office regarding absences and punctuality.<br>Contact with parents<br>Overview of clear and escalating interventions<br>Communication with Inclusion Support Services.<br>Offering Early Help where appropriate.<br>Home Visits<br>Promoting school attendance.<br>Responsibility for links with Inclusion Support Services and the LA statutory team. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Jackie Hargreaves/<br>Justine Moorhouse | School office | Maintaining registers<br>First day calling/text messages<br>Identifying children whose absence needs further follow-up action in line with the school absence procedure.<br>Late arrivals<br>Process for clearing registers<br>Administration of school attendance letters, leave of absence letters etc.<br>Producing attendance reports |