Stowe Valley MAT Secondary Attendance Policy

2022/23

Reviewed and approved : 19th July 2022

Next Review Date: Annual

Person responsible for overseeing the implementation: CEO and Director of Safeguarding

Chair of Trustees signature:

Content

1. Policy statement

<u>Philosophy</u>

<mark>SCHOOL NAME</mark> is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance. It is the policy of our school to celebrate both.

All staff will work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually. We recognise that parents have a vital role and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems. We will provide effective and efficient communications with students, parents, and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support to meet our objectives.

This policy is based on current government guidance, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022' and Statutory Regulations.

<u>Objectives;</u>

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, students and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

2. **Definitions**

In this policy there are some key definitions which will be used, we have referenced the meaning of these terms below for ease of understanding:

Persistent Absence - Where a student's attendance figure reaches 90% or below, they are deemed as 'persistently absent' from school.

Severe Absence - Where a student is absent from school more than they are present, therefore with an attendance figure of 50% or below, they are deemed as 'severely absent'.

Parents - For the purpose of this policy a parent means; All natural parents, whether they are married or not, any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person and any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child).

Vulnerable students - For the purpose of this policy vulnerable students are those who;

Have a social worker or previously had a social worker;

Is a Child looked after;

Are Children with an Educational health care plan;

Are Children who are severely absent (their attendance in school is 50% or below).

3. **Statutory/Legal Guidance**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school[1].

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations in 2013 only allowing Head Teachers to authorise leave of absence (for any purpose) in **exceptional circumstances. Holiday requests will not be granted.**

---

[1] The education Act 1996, part 1, section 7. Additional legal requirements may be found in *The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006*.

4. Key Staff and Contacts

School-based contacts

Role	Contact Details
Headteacher	
Designated Safeguarding Lead	
Attendance Senior Leader	
Attendance Manager	
School Absence reporting line	
Nominated Attendance link Governor	
All of the above can be contacted via the School office on XXXXXXX	

Other useful contacts

Agency / Contact	Contact Details
Ranjit Samra-CEO Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Ranjit.Samra@stowevalley.com
Samantha Godfrey-Director of Safeguarding Stowe Valley Multi-Academy Trust	01926 812560 Godfrey.s@stowevalley.com
Warwickshire Attendance Service	01926 476600
Access to Education team	01926 736323
Children's Social Care – Integrated Front Door Warwickshire County Council	01926 414144

5. <u>Safeguarding</u>

Knowing where children are during school hours is an extremely important aspect of safeguarding. Absence can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about other safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will always follow up with parents/carers when students are not at school. This means we need to have a least two up to date contact numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the school as soon as possible if their numbers change.

<mark>SCHOOL NAME</mark> recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence as it will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

<mark>SCHOOL NAME</mark> will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school and evidence of absences may be requested, such as medical evidence.

5.2   Children missing education

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) leaders have ensured that:

1. Staff understand what to do when children do not attend regularly.
2. Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for students who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions) are in place.
3. Staff know that travelling to conflict zones could be an indicator of FGM and forced marriage.
4. Procedures are in place to ensure that we always inform the local authority when we plan to take students off-roll or when they:
   a. leave the school to be home educated
   b. move away from the school location
   c. remain medically unfit beyond compulsory school age
   d. are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to school afterwards); or are permanently excluded

We will ensure that students who are expected to attend the school but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.

When a student leaves, we will record the name of the student's new School and their

expected start date.

Staff will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the Local Authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day. Staff will be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.
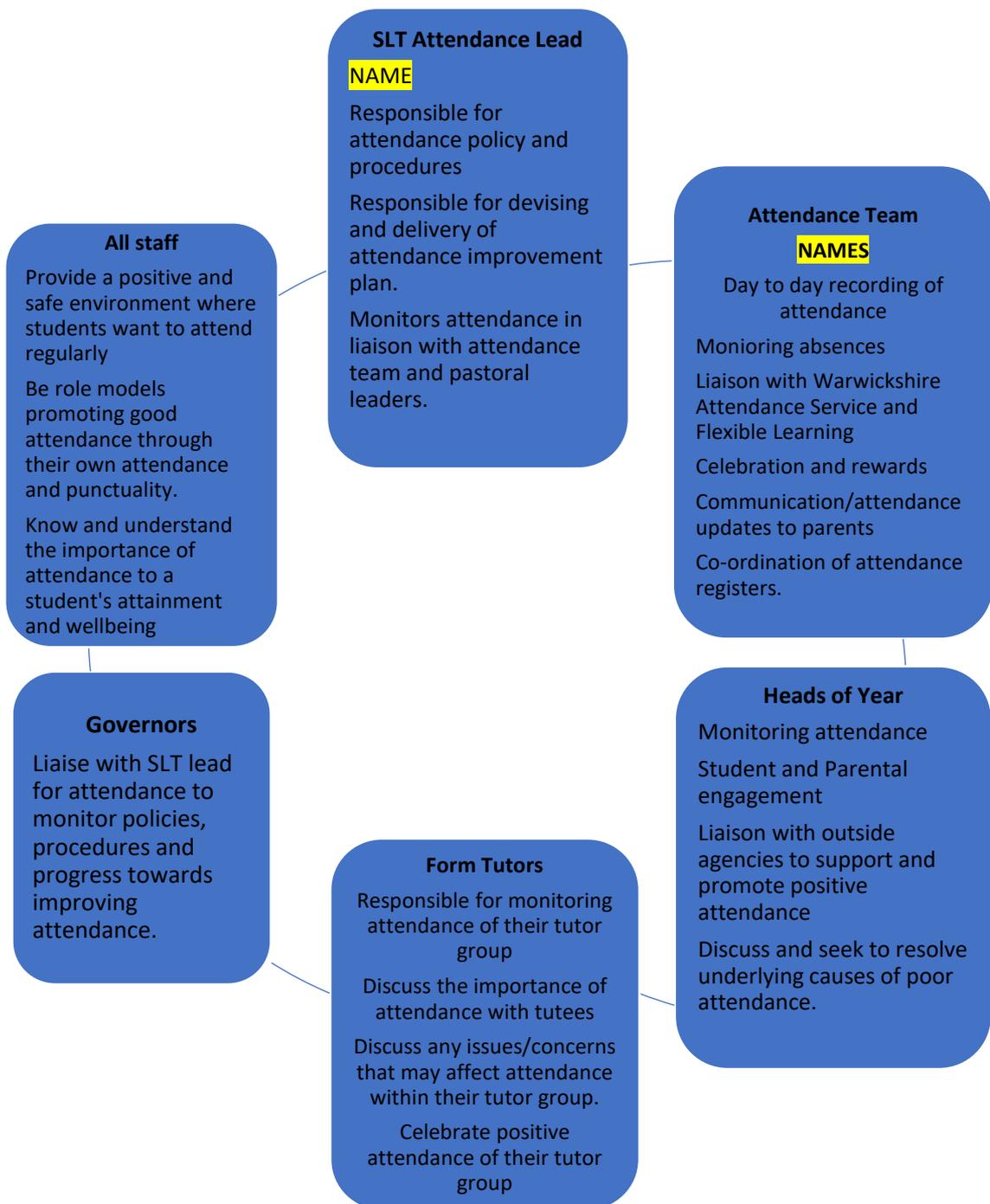

5.3 Vulnerable Students

SCHOOL NAME routinely monitors the attendance of vulnerable students. If we have concerns about students, we work closely with outside agencies to ensure parents understand the importance of good attendance and attendance procedures. There are a number of ways we may[2] monitor the attendance of vulnerable students in addition to the universal daily process of monitoring attendance for all;

   a. Watch List - Vulnerable students are included on the school internal 'Watch List', the attendance of these students is monitored on a lesson-by-lesson basis and absences are reported to the appropriate staff member immediately and contact is made with parents/carers as needed.
   b. Daily school contact from the attendance team to parents/carers (and any external professionals such as social workers) for absences of vulnerable students or those at risk of persistent or severe absence.
   c. Warwickshire Flexible Learning Team – Heads of Year are in regular communication with the flexible learning team to ensure Ill Health students are engaged and progressing. The attendance of these students is captured daily.
   d. Dual Registration – **SCHOOL NAME** maintains its responsibility to ensure that students who are dual registered are attending each day and progressing with their education.
   e. SEND – Students who have special education needs or disabilities who are poor attenders are monitored through the internal referral and monitoring panel (RAMP). At regular meetings, attendance is discussed and tracked and interventions are put into place by senior leaders.
   f. Severely Absent Students - Students who are severely absent are assigned an attendance case manager who makes regular contact with the child and family to support them in removing the barriers to attendance and engage them back in to school. All contact and agreed interventions are robustly recorded and the impact is monitored regularly.

---

[2] The way in which we monitor a vulnerable student will be on a case by case basis and these decisions are regularly reviewed between the attendance, safeguarding and pastoral teams in school.

6. School Responsibilities

SLT Attendance Lead

NAME

Responsible for attendance policy and procedures

Responsible for devising and delivery of attendance improvement plan.

Monitors attendance in liaison with attendance team and pastoral leaders.

Attendance Team

NAMES

Day to day recording of attendance

Monioring absences

Liaison with Warwickshire Attendance Service and Flexible Learning

Celebration and rewards

Communication/attendance updates to parents

Co-ordination of attendance registers.

All staff

Provide a positive and safe environment where students want to attend regularly

Be role models promoting good attendance through their own attendance and punctuality.

Know and understand the importance of attendance to a student's attainment and wellbeing

Heads of Year

Monitoring attendance

Student and Parental engagement

Liaison with outside agencies to support and promote positive attendance

Discuss and seek to resolve underlying causes of poor attendance.

Governors

Liaise with SLT lead for attendance to monitor policies, procedures and progress towards improving attendance.

Form Tutors

Responsible for monitoring attendance of their tutor group

Discuss the importance of attendance with tutees

Discuss any issues/concerns that may affect attendance within their tutor group.

Celebrate positive attendance of their tutor group

7. Day to Day Attendance Procedures

7.1 Registers

Registers are taken each AM and PM session, within the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Non-attendance is identified each morning and afternoon as well as within every lesson.

In the morning if the child has not arrived in school and we have not been informed of a reason the following actions will be taken;

- A text message will be sent to the parent/carers

If no appropriate response is received

- A telephone call will be made on the second day of unexplained absence

If no appropriate response is received

- A home visit will be completed on the 3rd day of the unexplained absence.

The DSL notifies Children's Social Care if a child with a child protection plan is absent for more than two consecutive days without explanation.

7.2 Absence and Punctuality

Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible to inform us if a child is to be absent or late on **EACH** day that the child is eligible to attend.

This can be done via;

1. **Telephone** XXXXXXXXXXX - press XXXXXX for attendance
2. **Text** XXXXXXXXXX
3. **Email** XXXXXXXXXXXX
4. **Online** XXXXXXXXXX

Students are late if they are not in their first session by XXXXX

The attendance team and tutors will monitor lateness and punctuality. Sanctions and parental contact will be used as appropriate.

Where parents are phoning in daily to report student absence the school will follow an 'Explained absence process'. An explanation from a student's parent does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If a student is absent from school for more than 5 consecutive days, on the 6th day the absence will automatically be unauthorised until medical

evidence is provided by the parents to the school or the parent makes contact with the school to discuss further. An explained absence that reaches a 6th consecutive day without medical evidence may then result in a home visit so that the school safeguarding team and the attendance team can speak to both the child and the parent and support can be put in place as needed.

7.3 Authorisation of Absence

We are advised by government legislation and Local Authority guidance that attendance can only be authorised if the following applies:

- Medical reasons - please note medical evidence and/or a parental written note will be asked for upon return to school for students whose attendance falls below the schools expected threshold (95%). **Medical evidence will always be required on the 6th day if a student has five consecutive days absence from school due to illness or the student's attendance is below 90%. Notes are to be returned to XXXXXXX.**
- Religious celebration observation
- If transport provided by the school/Local Authority cannot bring the child to school.

Absences may also be authorised for the following reasons, but this will be at the discretion of the attendance team and the Head Teacher:

- Where a Leave of Absence has been completed by parent/carer and is agreed by the Head Teacher
- Where a student has a medical appointment that cannot be changed e.g. a consultant appointment
- When the student has no fixed abode, their parent is engaged in a trade which requires them to travel, the student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and the student has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months
- Other exceptional circumstances e.g. family bereavement and for a limited period.

7.4 Medical Appointments

Where possible, appointments should be made out of school hours or in school holidays. However, we realise this is sometimes not possible. Students should come into school before and after appointments to ensure they miss as little lesson time as possible. Students should sign out and in at the attendance office before leaving/upon their return to school.

8. Leave of Absence During Term Time

Arranging holidays during term time causes issues for many reasons:

- the student's education suffers;
- lessons and extra-curricular activities are missed;
- there is often no opportunity for teachers to set additional work or to assist a child in catching up on their return from holiday; and
- Parents may be in breach of their legal obligation to send their child to school.

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- ➢ Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.

- ➢ Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

- ➢ Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.

- ➢ The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent, i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

- ➢ Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

- ➢ Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as "unauthorised". This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

- ➢ All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council.

- ➢ The Warwickshire Attendance Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council's Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance).

- ➢ If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal

Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

9. **Attendance Intervention**

Intervention will follow a staged approach and students will be monitored and different strategies will be used depending on the stage they are at in the process outlined below and their personal situation. SCHOOL NAME tracks attendance data forensically and uses this data to regularly decide upon the strategies as listed below.

Stage 0
- **100-97% attenance**
- Tutor monitoring; Tutor will discuss absences with students to identify any informal support.
- Stage 0 letter sent as a reminder if attendance below 100%
- Tutor level rewards (for those with 100% attendance but also for improved attendance)
- HAPs awarded and postcards/texts sent home for those with 100% attendance and improving attendance.

Stage 1
- **96% and below**
- Stage 1 letter sent
- Mentoring for these students from tutors or HOY
- Motivational Interview may be used to encourage and promote improved attendance.

Stage 2
- **95% and below attendance**
- Stage 2 letter sent. Actions can include; Motivational interview, internal target set, HOY meeting or contact, attendance lead meeting or contact, Medical evidence letter sent.
- Barriers to attendance will be discussed and support put in place to remove these
- Referrals to external agencies as needed
- Praise postcards used if attendance improves following intervention.

Stage 3
- **90% and Below - PERSISTENT ABSENCE**
- Stage 3 letter sent. Compulsory medical evidence required for every absence.
- Actions at this stage can include; Attendance lead panel meetings, Case manager assigned by school to support overcoming barriers to attendance, Casework from Warwickshire attendance service, internal target, WAS letter outlining potential next steps if attendance does not improve.
- Barriers to attendance will be discussed and support put in place to remove these barriers
- Referral to external agency as needed
- Praise postcards used if attendance improves following intervention
- **If there is no improvement a stage 3 final letter will be sent which may lead to WAS casework and prelegal target issued. Parents may face legal action and a Fixed penalty notice (FPN).**

Stage 4
- **50% and below - SEVERE ABSENCE**
- Compulsory medical evidence required for every absence
- An attendance case manager will be assigned and have weekly contact with the child and family.
- Barriers to attendance will be discussed and formalised support put in place to remove these barriers.
- Referral to external agency as needed
- Stage 4 letter sent which may lead to WAS traded casework, pre-legal targets set by WAS
- Parents may face legal action and a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

This flow chart is a guide and each case will be assessed and reviewed depending on each students' individual needs and which interventions will be most effective in supporting them to improve or maintain positive attendance. Early intervention will be sought so students can be supported meeting their attendance targets. The nature of student absence is crucial when applying this approach and individual circumstances will be considered.

9.1 Attendance Incentives

SCHOOL NAME promotes and incentivises good attendance on a continual cycle throughout the school year as we know it is vital to celebrate attendance on a regular basis. Examples of the way SCHOOL NAME promotes good attendance includes:

-Messages to parents and students on the school website

-Praise postcards sent home for improved attendance

-Assemblies celebrating individual, tutor or year group attendance

-Prizes given to individuals, tutor groups or houses based on attendance. This is not based solely on the highest attendance, but may include the most improved attendance over a set period of time.

-Reward afternoons such as 'pizza party' or 'film afternoon'

-Stickers, stamps, postcards or other forms of recognition for excellent or improved attendance.