

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

You will be aware that several times last year I have wrote to you regarding pupil attendance at school. There has been a significant drive from the Government, the Local Authority and our Trust over the past year following attendance rates within schools declining since the country came out of the pandemic. Before the pandemic the national average for pupil attendance in primary schools was 96% and last academic year ended with it being at 94%. For Silverdale Primary Academy, our end of year average was 93%.

Here at Silverdale Primay Academy, we truly believe that pupils can only take full advantage of their education if they attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils need to attend school as much as possible to benefit from the education that they are entitled to. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Evidence shows that many children with poor attendance tend to have lower attainment in both primary and secondary school phases of their education.

The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- act early to address patterns of absence
- parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- ensure all pupils to be punctual to their lessons

From September 2024 there is once again a renewed focus about pupil attendance and schools, academies and local authorities will be adhering to the Department for Education's statutory guidance entitled 'Working together to improve school attendance'. This document was published in February 2024 and applied from August 2024. The link for this is below should you be interested in reading its content.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_applies\\_from\\_19\\_August\\_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

In recent weeks we have been provided with information from the local authority in relation to the steps we have to adhere to should a pupil's attendance decline or become a concern. So that parents and carers are aware of the processes we have to follow, you will find a flowchart attached which details the various steps that we are required to put in place. It should be noted that there is an expectation for intervention to commence at an early stage (Emerging Risk). Academy leaders continually monitor children's attendance from the beginning of the academic year. Being absent for medical conditions is taken into careful consideration when monitoring individual children's attendance records. We are also sensitive to particular family circumstances and any challenges that parents and carers may be faced with. We take our responsibility for ensuring that all children receive a high-quality education very seriously and want to support families who may be finding it difficult to get their child to school regularly.

### **Arriving late to school**

Children's punctuality will also be a focus from September. Children arriving late to school impacts upon their learning experiences and the learning experiences of other children. The Academy gates open at 8.30. All children are expected to be in class ready to start learning by 8.45am. Registers close at 9.05am. Arrival after this time will be recorded in the register as late. All parents and carers arriving late with their children after 8.55am will need to enter through the Academy office, the time and reason for being late must then be recorded on our Inventory system. If a child is frequently late, parents and carers will be invited to a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss steps that can be taken to reduce lateness.

### **Absence from School**

#### **Illness**

Parents and Carers have the responsibility to telephone or email the Academy on the first day of illness. If no notification is received initially, it will be recorded as unauthorised. The academy will then follow the processes expected of us and will make contact to establish the reason for absence. The following link is useful when deciding whether or not your child should attend school <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Whilst the Academy appreciates young children are often unwell, attendance levels are monitored regularly. Where there is a pattern of absence, this will be explored with parents and carers initially through discussions and any assistance will be offered where needed. In cases of excessive absence due to illness, the Principal has the right to request a medical certificate be provided.

#### **Medical appointments**

If possible, doctor's, medical or dentist's appointments should be made outside of the Academy day. However, it is recognised that sometimes the dates and times of medical appointments are determined by medical professionals and may take place during the academy day. In all cases of medical appointments, please ensure the Academy is informed in advance of any scheduled medical absence, and where possible evidence of this is provided to the academy. This could be in the form of appointment cards, letters or online bookings.

#### **Withdrawal from Learning/holiday in term time**

You may recall that I wrote to you in June regarding requests for absences during term time. This year the academy has received an unprecedented number of requests for absence during term. The majority of these were for family holidays and a high number have been requested during term 6. Twenty percent of our cohort were withdrawn from learning due to attending a family holiday this year.

We need your support in ensuring that planned leave is not taken in school time so that your child has the very best opportunity to succeed. The DfE only allows a Principal the discretion to authorise an absence if they believe that there are exceptional or unavoidable circumstances.

Taking a pupil on leave during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can disrupt educational progress. Before completing the Withdrawal from Learning form, parents and carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education. There are up to 190 statutory school days in one year and up to 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Your child may miss out on valuable group work with peers or miss key topics and themes that cannot be repeated. This could lead to gaps in learning. It may also be disruptive for other pupils in lessons when your child needs extra help to catch up.



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When deciding whether to authorise term-time leave, the academy will consider:

- the pupils age
- the time and duration of the leave
- the pupil's record of attendance, including any previous term-time absences
- whether there are exceptional circumstances relating to the request

Broadly speaking, exceptional circumstances could include;

- acute family trauma
- terminal illness or death of a family member
- rehabilitation from a physical or emotional matter that is supported with medical evidence
- mark of religious observation falling within term time (at discretion of the Principal)
- A family holiday is not an exceptional circumstance. Supporting evidence should be supplied prior to an absence, as absences cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Please be advised that in line with Local Authority expectations, term time holiday requests will not be authorised and a fixed penalty notice could be requested.

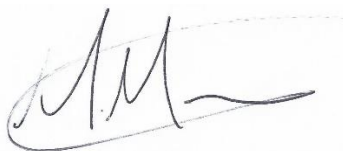
From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be increasing and further details can be found by using the following link: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/29/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/>

The updates detailed in 'Working together to improve school attendance' mean that our Academy's Attendance Policy has required some changes. This took place over the summer period and can be found on our website; [SIL AttendancePolicy 010924.pdf \(finalsite.net\)](#).

I hope the above information has been useful and do please contact the academy should you have any questions.

As we start the new academic year, please support your child's education by ensuring that they attend school as much as possible.

Kind regards



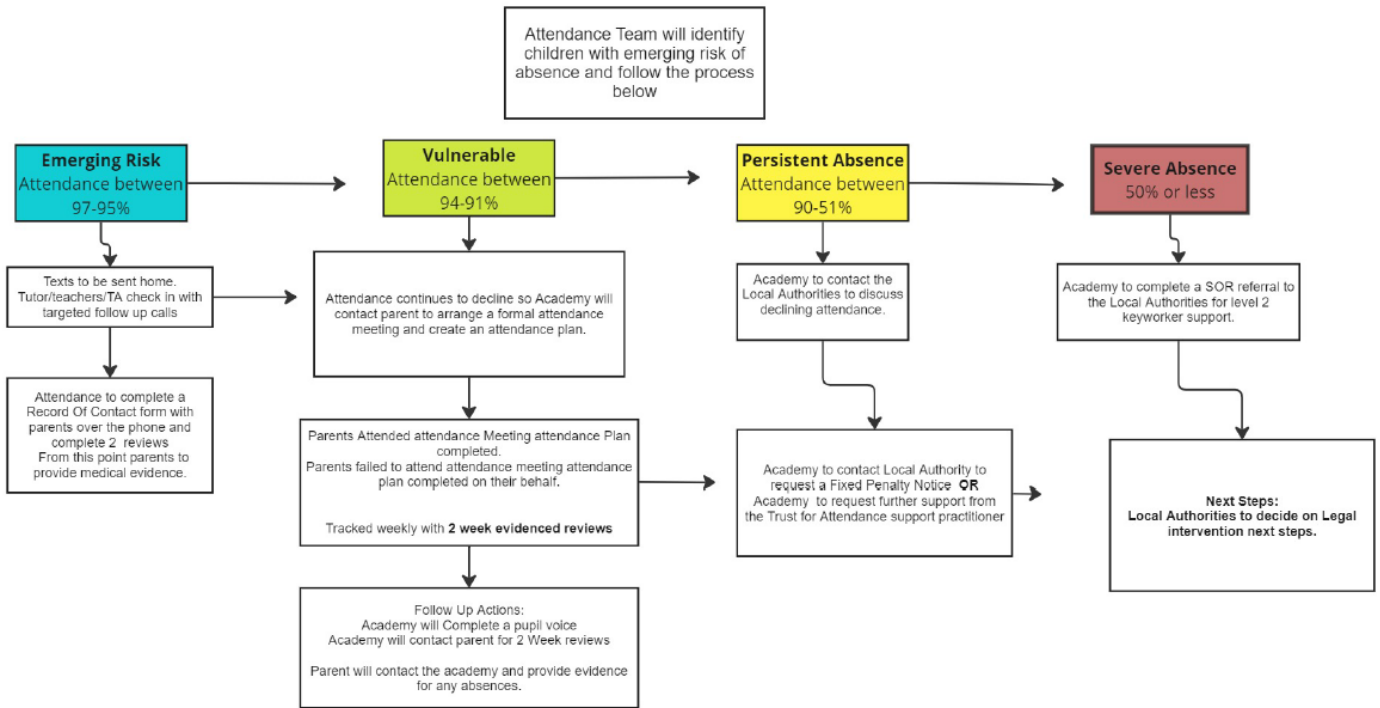
Mr Morris



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## Absence Management Flowcart 2024



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