



Southampton City Council Attendance Policy

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Forward:

Despite a considerable amount of excellent work to support children's attendance at school, as a city we are still lagging behind our statistical neighbours, and the national average. Our aspiration for 2014 is to achieve an absence rate of 5.1%.

We need to be building on existing good practice and introduce new measures to help tackle the issues facing Southampton in relation to unacceptable high absence rates.

Promoting positive school attendance is everyone's responsibility and in Southampton, tackling absence will be raised across all agencies and will become a shared responsibility. It is a priority for all council services and partner agencies and needs to become a priority for all communities.

In striving to achieve excellent levels of school attendance across the City it is imperative that Southampton delivers a co-ordinated strategy for attendance that involves schools, partner agencies and colleagues throughout the directorate. Southampton's Attendance Policy seeks to ensure this collaborative partnership is in place.

Attendance is a critical factor in ensuring improved attainment and future life outcomes. It is central to social inclusion and has a major impact on a child's future life opportunities. All children and young people in Southampton should be receiving their full entitlement to education; so that they are equipped to fulfil their potential and make good choices as young adults and citizens for themselves and their communities.

The foundation to ensuring that children, young people and their families within Southampton achieve their full potential, is to create an ethos in which excellent school attendance is developed and nurtured. This will involve a partnership between the young people themselves, families, schools, all colleagues in Children's services and the range of agencies and groups that work within the City to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

Alison Elliott
Director of People

Councillor Sarah Bogle
Cabinet Member

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1. INTRODUCTION

Southampton City Council is committed to improving schools attendance and it is a high priority for both the council and the schools. Whilst attendance has improved, our absence rates are consistently behind the national rates and those of our statistical neighbours; which impacts significantly on the educational outcomes for our children and young people, and the future economic future of our city.

It is important that children and young people are successful at school, leaving with the skills and qualifications that enable them to secure employment, continue with their education or access appropriate training courses. To achieve this ambition we need to maximise their educational and social achievements and enable them to develop self-discipline, organisational skills and preparedness for the work environment.

It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children; contributing to keeping them safe from harm and reducing their engagement in risky behaviours, anti-social behaviour and juvenile crime. It is therefore important to ensure that schools and other settings offer a safe environment, positive relationships, high-quality teaching and learning, and opportunities to develop social and emotional skills.

The primary responsibility for ensuring that children and young people attend school rests with their parents / carers. However promoting attendance and tackling absence is the responsibility of all agencies within the local authority and of schools. It is the role of schools to ensure that, with the support of the Local Authority, they personalise learning and create an environment in which all children and young people want to engage. Schools and the Local Authority need to work together with children and young people, parents and multi-agency partners to ensure that non-attendance is tackled robustly.

Families Matter and School Attendance

Families Matter is a 3-year (2012 to 2015) multi-agency programme that provides targeted support to families with multiple or complex needs who require extra help. In Southampton, Families Matter is delivering the government Troubled Families initiative.

Families Matter will support families who experience at least 2 of 3 factors:

- At least one adult is out of work
- A child in the family is excluded from school or has poor school attendance
- There is youth offending or anti-social behaviour caused by a member of the family

Reducing school absence is a top priority and key outcome for the Families Matter programme. Within the cohort of 384 families currently identified (who meet the eligibility criteria) 78% have at least one persistently absent child (421 children in total). 18% of the 384 families have at least one child who has received 3+ fixed term exclusions in the last calendar year. Persistently absent children within the Families Matter cohort have at least 23,500 sessions of absence between them in a full year. 82 families have a child currently or recently at a pupil referral unit.

2. SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES 2013-15

1. Adopt a zero tolerance of absence for term time leave of absence
2. Raise awareness of school attendance issues, with key partners, especially Health.
3. Deliver a hard hitting communication strategy to all residents that promotes the benefits of school attendance with parents and community groups.
4. Engage with key professional groups, such as Housing, Public Health, the Police and others to ensure that school attendance is a priority and that families are challenged with consistent messages from all.

3. CURRENT POSITION

Table 1 shows Southampton's total absence has reduced by 2.1% to 5.9% in 2012 from its peak in 2007 at 8.1%. Despite this reduction a challenge remains as Southampton are still 0.8% above the National average. This 0.8% gap equates to in excess of 38,000 days of absence above the National average across primary, secondary and special schools.

Table 1.

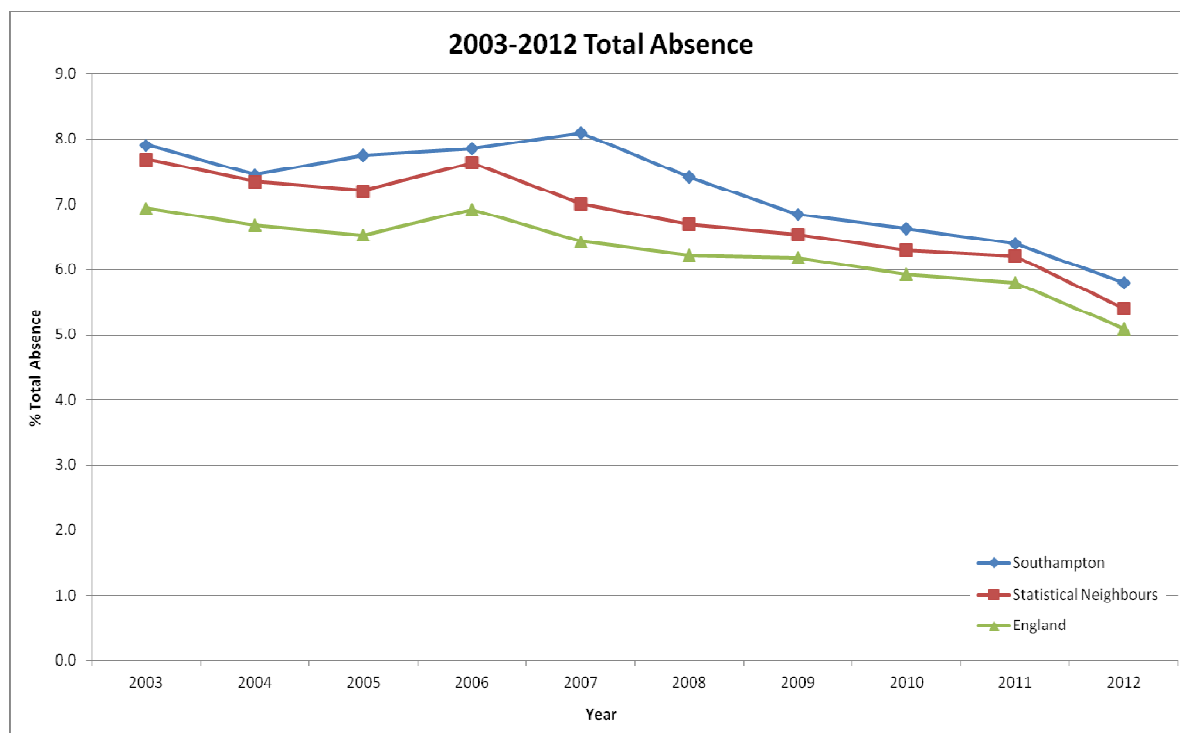
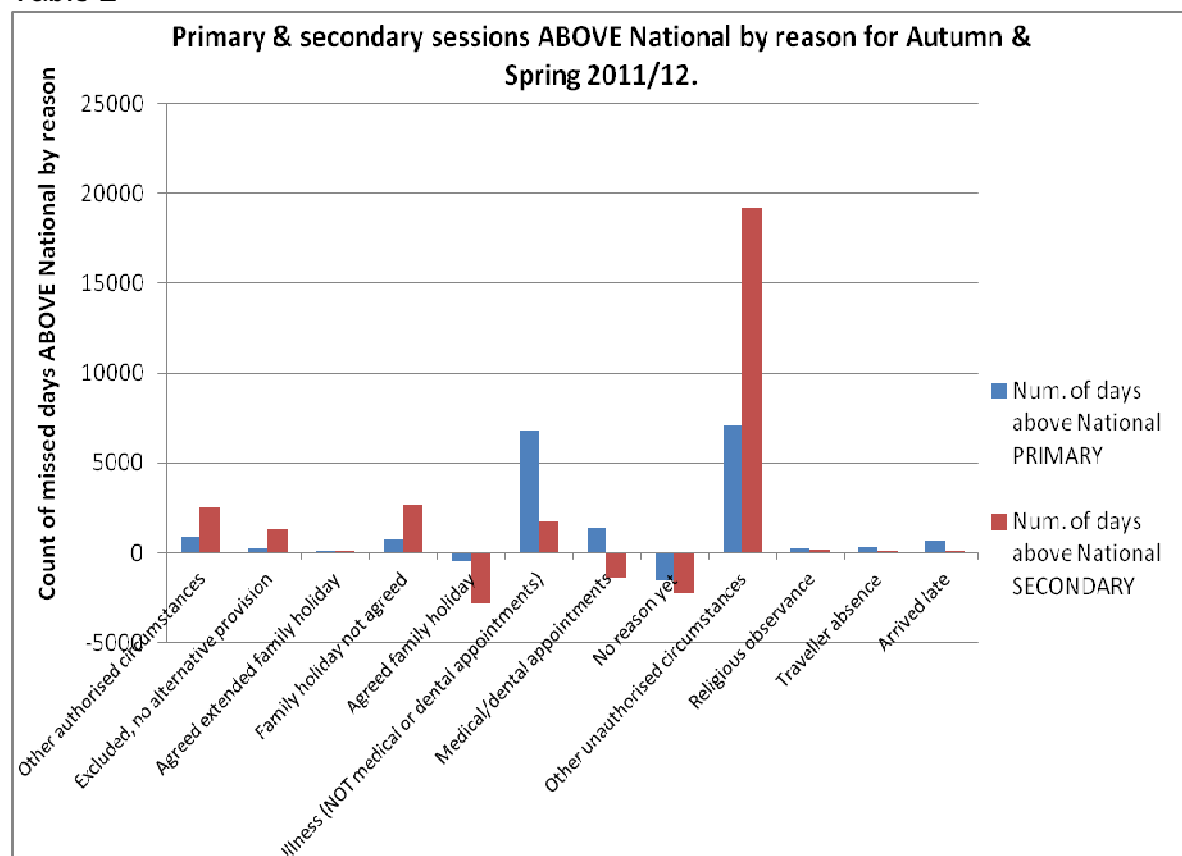


Table 2 shows more detailed analysis of the DfE Autumn and Spring term 2011/12 absence data, identified which absence codes are overrepresented within Southampton when compared to National. It is clear that the number of days missed in primary schools recorded as Illness (not medical or dental appointments) and other unauthorised circumstances represent the greatest challenge. As in primary, days missed coded as other unauthorised circumstances are by far the greatest challenge when considering secondary school absence.

Table 2



4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Parents and Carers

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Once on a school roll, **parents must ensure** that:

- Their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and ready to learn.
- They notify their child's school if he/she is absent. This should be done as soon as possible - preferably on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed, preferably in writing, when the child returns to school.
- They do not arrange medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- They understand that leave of absence will not be granted during term time.

To enable their children to make the most of the educational opportunities available to them, it is advisable that **parents should**:

- Instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- Be aware of the attendance policy of their children's school.
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.

- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
- Work in partnership with their children's school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.

4.2 The Local Authority:

4.2.1 The Education Welfare Service fulfils the statutory duty of the local authority in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Each maintained school in Southampton has a link Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will work in close partnership with the school. Academies may choose to buy this service as part of a service level agreement.

All schools and academies can purchase additional services from the Education Welfare Service over and above their statutory role; including:

- Individual casework with pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties, including reviews and information updates on actions taken.
- Develop individual action plans between the school and the EW service, to address attendance issues.
- Identify areas of concern and of good practice in relation to attendance matters
- Interventions to address systemic attendance issues and help schools to develop a whole school approach.

Once a referral has been agreed this will form part of the statutory role, and the EWO will undertake casework with pupils and their parents to support their return to full time education or we will follow through with the enforcement if deemed appropriate.

Some key elements of individual case work include conducting home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken, arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupils and enabling the pupil and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies through the use of an Integrated Assessment of Need.

Another function of the EW service is the provision of safeguarding training for school based personnel.

The Education Welfare Service has the delegated power, in consultation with SSC legal department to take the legal proceedings against families who fail in their duty to ensure regular school attendance and is deemed to be in the best interest of the child and the local authority.

4.3 Schools

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems that may lead to absence.

For pupils of compulsory school age, schools are required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised.

Schools should have a range of strategies to identify pupils who may be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee;

- Work actively to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils, vulnerable groups and the school as a whole. This will include the effective analysis of attendance data.
- Support parents in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance.
- Be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and pupils this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Schools should recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications and many parents will have a reluctant to come into school.
- Offer additional support and scrutiny for children from vulnerable groups such as children Looked After, Travellers, Children with Special Needs are at higher risk of poor attendance.
- Produce school attendance policies, which are agreed and regularly reviewed by their governing bodies; and are consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, pupils and staff.
- Maintain a list of pupils with a pattern of persistent absence (PA,) from September 2011 defined as less than 85% attendance and those at risk of becoming PA and ensure that individual plans are in place to remedy this.
- Be compliant with The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006, regarding the marking of register and the removal of pupils of compulsory school age from the school roll.

Local Guidance on term time leave of absence

1.

Southampton City Council actively discourages leave of absences during term time and encourages all schools adopt this policy.

The school Attendance Policies should state that term time leave of absences is not acceptable.

Parents should be given a clear message at every opportunity, e.g. at parents evening, in newsletters, school brochure and bulletins, about leave of absence during term time This should be maintained as a child moves through from Reception to year 11.

Good practice suggests that parent requesting term time leave of absences should be invited into school to discuss the proposed leave and implications for their child of missing education.

Schools may wish to agree joint policies within their local area to provide consistency. This will ensure parents are aware of consistent practice and ensure that schools are operating on a fair basis.

Appendix xx sets out decision making process where a parent has applied for leave of absence. Southampton City Council is following the Government's recommendations and will not be authorising any leave of absence.

1.1 Procedural flow charts for schools

No parent can demand leave of absence as a right.

Exceptional circumstances will still remain at the discretion of the Head Teachers.

The Local Authority recommends that family holidays should be taken during the 13 weeks of holidays built into the academic year and the following are examples of unacceptable reasons for applying for leave of absence:

- Availability of cheap holidays.
- Availability of desired accommodation.
- Prevailing weather conditions.

Only in '**exceptional circumstances**' may any leave of absence, including extended leave of absence be granted.

It is for Head Teachers to decide on what are exceptional circumstances, however, the LA considers the following examples may be appropriate:

- For armed forces personnel who are prevented from taking leave during school holidays.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a significant trauma.

Each request for term time leave of absence should be considered individually. It is the responsibility of the head teacher and governors to decide whether or not to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 2 is a suggested proforma for parents who wish to apply for leave in term time

Appendix 3 sets out the process to be followed if leave of absence is agreed and the process if the child returns to school on agreed date

Appendix 4 set out the process if the application is declined

1.2 Extended leave of absence

Regulation 8(1)(f) must apply to any removal from roll:

(f) in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation 7(3), that —

(i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

(iii) both the proprietor and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;

Good communication should exist between schools to ensure consistency when dealing with children from the same family in similar circumstances.

1.3 Failure to provide a return date

Requests for term-time leave of absence where parents are unable to provide a return date should be refused and parents advised that their child will be removed from the school roll on their last date of attendance and they will need to re-apply for a school place if they return to the country.

If schools have concerns about a parental commitment to return to school on a specified date, proof of travel should be requested.

1.4 Failure to attend school when leave of absence has been declined.

Schools should give serious consideration to the issue of a Penalty Notice for Non-Attendance at School. The application for a Penalty Notice is available electronically from Education Welfare Service.

Parents should also be informed of the risk of removal from the school roll if the leave is taken, having been declined by the school in advance.

Note: Schools should decide which of these routes to follow. If a Penalty Notice is requested we would not expect the pupil to be removed from roll.

Guidance on other issues around attendance coding

2 PUNCTUALITY

Schools should take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness should be monitored and followed up.

School policies and brochures should clearly state the time at which each school session begins and finishes, including the time at which registers open and close. DfE guidance state no longer than 30 minutes.

When a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as 'late' but, statistically, is counted as present for that session.

When a pupil arrives after the register has closed he/she should be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

When a pupil arrives late having missed registration, his/her presence on site should be noted in a book in the school office for purposes of emergency evacuation, etc.

3 REMOVAL FROM SCHOOL ROLL

The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 states that:

3.1 Legislation

A pupil of compulsory school age may only lawfully be removed from roll in compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006.

3.2 The "20 School day" rule

The most widely misused regulation is 8(1)(h), more commonly referred to as the "20 school day rule". The full text of this regulation governing removal from roll is:

That he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than 20 school days and —

(i) at no time was his absence during that period authorised

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

(iii) both the proprietor of the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;

Therefore, removal from roll without the intervention of an EWO or the Tracking Officer is unlawful and if the location of the pupil is known then he/she cannot be removed from roll.

3.3 Home Education

Parents cannot remove a child from the school roll unless they intend to take responsibility for their child's education and plan to home educate. This would be in

compliance with Regulation 8 (1)(d) of the above regulations.

Once the school received written confirmation from the parent that they intended to home educate the child must be removed from the school roll and the letter passed to the LA.

If the school are aware that the child is subject to Child Protection Planning and/or has a named Social Worker, this professional should also be advised of the child's withdrawal from school.

3.4 School Refusers

There are no lawful grounds for a pupil to be removed from the school roll on the basis that they are a school refuser. Such cases should be referred to the school EWO.

3.5 Deportation

If the school is made aware that a family has been removed from their home because they are to be removed from the UK, they should not be taken off roll until confirmation from the UK Border Agency that they have actually been removed from the country.

It is not uncommon for families to be returned home and then detained again at a later date.

Whilst in an Immigration Removal Centre, the Detention Centre Rules 2001 state that:

Regime and paid activity

17.—(1) All detained persons shall be provided with an opportunity to participate in activities to meet, as far as possible, their recreational and intellectual needs and the relief of boredom.

(2) Wherever reasonably possible the development of skills and of services to the centre and to the community should be encouraged.

(3) Detained persons shall be entitled to undertake paid activities to the extent that the opportunity to do so is provided by the manager.

(4) Detained persons undertaking activities under paragraph (3) shall be paid at rates approved by the Secretary of State, either generally or in relation to particular cases.

(5) Every detained person able to take part in educational activities provided at a detention centre shall be encouraged to do so.

(6) Programmes of educational classes shall be provided at every detention centre.

(7) Arrangements shall be made for each detained person to have the opportunity of taking part in physical education or recreation, which shall consist of both sports and health-related activities.

(8) A library shall be provided in every detention centre, which will meet a range of cultural, ethnic and linguistic needs and, subject to any direction of the Secretary of State in any particular case, every detained person shall be allowed access to it at reasonable times.

In these circumstances, therefore, children may be "B" coded until confirmation has been given that the child has been removed from the UK.

The Tracking Officer or EWO can support schools with such cases.

3.6 Sabbaticals

Head Teachers retain discretion regarding whether to authorise such leave of absence.

The LA, however, would not wish to endorse such periods of extended absence from school for a specific group of children and believe that such children should be removed from the school roll whilst they are living in another country and accessing education provision overseas.

Parents should be advised that they must re-apply for a school place upon their return to the city and if the child cannot re-join their original school, they will be offered a school place at the closest school with places available.

3.7 Dual Registered Pupils

When a pupil is jointly registered at a mainstream school and another education provision, the pupil should not be removed from the register of either the school or the subsidiary establishment without the consent of both providers.

3.8 Fixed Term Exclusion

Pupil remains on the school roll. Absence is authorised as it results from a school decision.

3.9 Permanent Exclusion

If permanent exclusion is confirmed the pupil's name should be removed from the school roll on the school day either:

- On expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made following a governors hearing, or
- After the appeal committee's confirmation of permanent exclusion, or
- If before that, when the pupil takes up a school place elsewhere

3.10 Custodial Sentences

Regulation 8(1)(i) applies to such cases:

- that he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period.

4 Traveller Children

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller: Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (Fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

To help ensure continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling if it is the base school.

If the pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision (at a school or other provider), the absence should be authorised and recorded using code T.

If the pupil is known to be dual registered and present at another school during the session in question, the attendance should be recorded using code D.

If the pupil is known to be absent from other provision for reasons other than traveling (e.g. illness, unexplained absence) the appropriate code should be used.

Children from "traveller" families are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of required to attend school. However, there is a defence available to traveller families if prosecuted for non attendance provided that the child has attended a school for at least 200 sessions in the 12 months ending when legal proceedings are started.

5 Teenage Pregnancy and School aged Parents

Guidance on Coding of Absence for Pregnant Pupils and School Aged Parents.

All pregnant pupils should have a Personal Education Plan, this should be done with the pupil, their parent or carer, a Year/House Head or equivalent. The PEP will detail plans for support in school during pregnancy, expected dates of maternity absence and plans for alternative provision of education during maternity absence. A planned date for returning to school should be included.

The PEP will be reviewed every 6 weeks until the pupil is fully reintegrated to a full timetable.

Maternity Absence;

- A pupil who becomes pregnant is entitled to **no more than** 18 calendar weeks' authorised absence* to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. This absence should be coded **C**

AnteNatal/Scan Appointments*;

- These should be coded **M**

Ante Natal Classes*

- These should be coded **C**

Illness during pregnancy or on return to school

- As long as notified in usual way this can be coded **I**

Absence due to Illness of Baby*

- This should be coded **C**

Alternative Provision

- Where the pupil is receiving education from another source e.g. E-Learning, Home Tuition or a special course targeted at Young Parents, this can be coded as **B**

The **B** code can only be used for those sessions where the young person receives guided learning or has logged on for E-Learning. It cannot be used as a blanket code for whole weeks unless the pupil is engaged for all sessions in a week.

If there is no requirement to be in school for the other sessions during this time the **C** code should be used.

Part Time Timetables

- To ensure longer total attendance at school the use of part-time timetables may be offered later in the pregnancy and as part of a staged reintegration after the birth. Sessions when there is no requirement to attend should be coded C.

Young Fathers

- Where the young father is taking an active role in the pregnancy and parenting he may have authorised absence to attend ante natal appointments, scans and ante-natal classes. These can be coded the same as for pregnant pupils.
- He may also have **up to 2 weeks' paternity leave**. This should be coded **C**.
- This is not a legal right and could be offered if appropriate, perhaps on condition of good attendance, behaviour etc. and that school work is up to date before such leave is taken.
- Even where a Young Father is not actively involved he may have other support needs.

(ADD SCHOOL LOGO)

Application for leave of absence from school

Good attendance is linked to higher achievement. Poor attendance can be a cause of underachievement. **As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. Holidays should be taken during the school holiday period.**

Please fill in this form if you want to ask the Headteacher of your child's school to authorise a leave of absence during term time.

You must ask **well in advance** and you are strongly advised to request leave of absence **before** you confirm any holiday arrangements. **Under no circumstances** will absences for family holidays in term time be authorised after they have happened. Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice to each parent, for each child absent – **please see the note on the reverse of this form.**

The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the request carefully, and if deemed to be 'exceptional circumstances' your absence may be authorised. However our school is following Southampton City Council's zero policy on term time leave of absence.

Name of child:		Class:	
I am applying for leave of absence for my child from:		to:	
for the purposes of:			
Number of school days missed:			
This leave cannot be taken during the school holidays because:			
Has your child had leave of absence for a family holiday in the last 12 months?		YES / NO	
If YES, please give dates and details:			
Siblings also needing leave of absence:	↓	↓	
Schools they attend:			
Signed: (Parent/Carer)	Date:	Contact Number:	
Child's attendance level over the last 12 months:			
Our overall school target for attendance this year is		XX.X %	
Having considered your request carefully, my decision is that leave of absence is:			
Approved		The absence will be recorded as authorised.	
Not approved		The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.	
Explanatory notes:			
Signed: (Headteacher)		Date:	

The school reserves the right to request proof of travel including return date at any time

5 days of absence...

Good attendance is linked to higher achievement. Poor attendance can be a cause of underachievement. If your child has five days of authorised absence during the year for a family holiday **and takes no other time off** for illness or other reasons, their attendance over the school year will be **97.4%**.

Important Dates

The first few weeks of the school year are very important for learning routines, establishing relationships and expectations and building friendships.

End of Key Stage 1 Assessments (Year 2) and Phonics Test (Year 1)

We will not authorise leave of absence for a family holiday involving a child in **Years 1 or 2** during part of the summer term (**16 April – 29 June 2012 and 15 April – 28 June 2013**)

End of Key Stage 2 Tests

We will not authorise leave of absence for a family holiday involving a child in **Year 6** between February half term and the End of Key Stage 2 Tests (**25 February – 24 May 2013**).

Year 7 Progress Tests

We strongly advise that you do not apply for leave of absence for a family holiday involving a child in **Year 7** between February half term and the Year 7 Progress Tests (**25 February – 24 May 2013**).

Students in Years 9, 10 and 11

We will not authorise leave of absence for a family holiday involving any student in **Years 9, 10 and 11** due to the modular nature of coursework and examinations. Please **do not** book holidays which involve **Year 9, 10 and 11** students.

Siblings with attendance causing concern

Each school checks the attendance of siblings with our partner schools and if one member of the family has attendance causing concern, any request for a family holiday will not be authorised.

Easter Break 2013

The Easter Break in 2013 is **Good Friday 29 March – Friday 12 April 2013 inclusive**. The Easter Weekend is **at the start** of the two week school break.

Penalty Notices

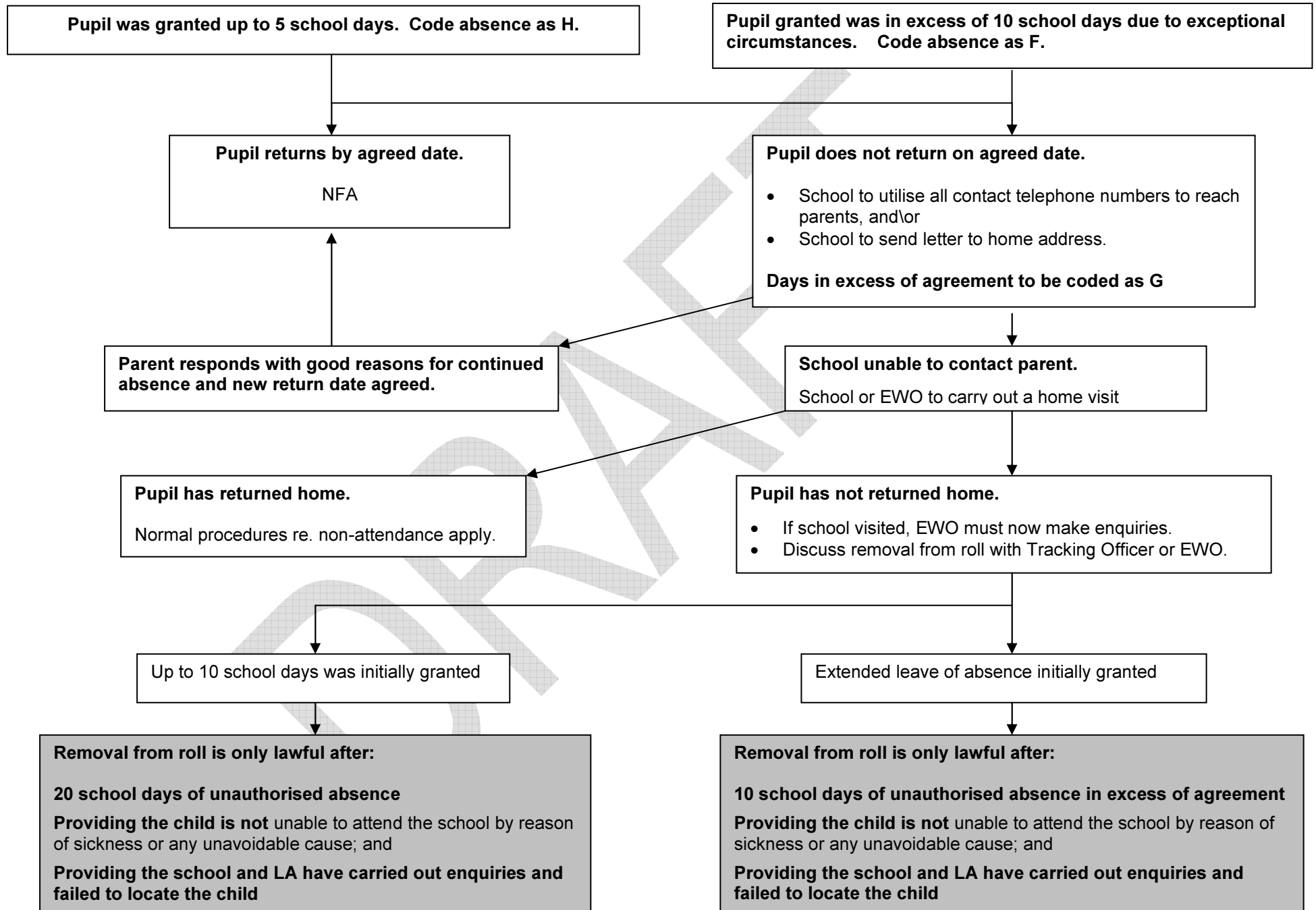
Unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in the issue of a **Penalty Notice** to each parent, for each child.

Please ask in school if you are unsure about any particular dates and remember to apply for leave of absence before you make a holiday booking

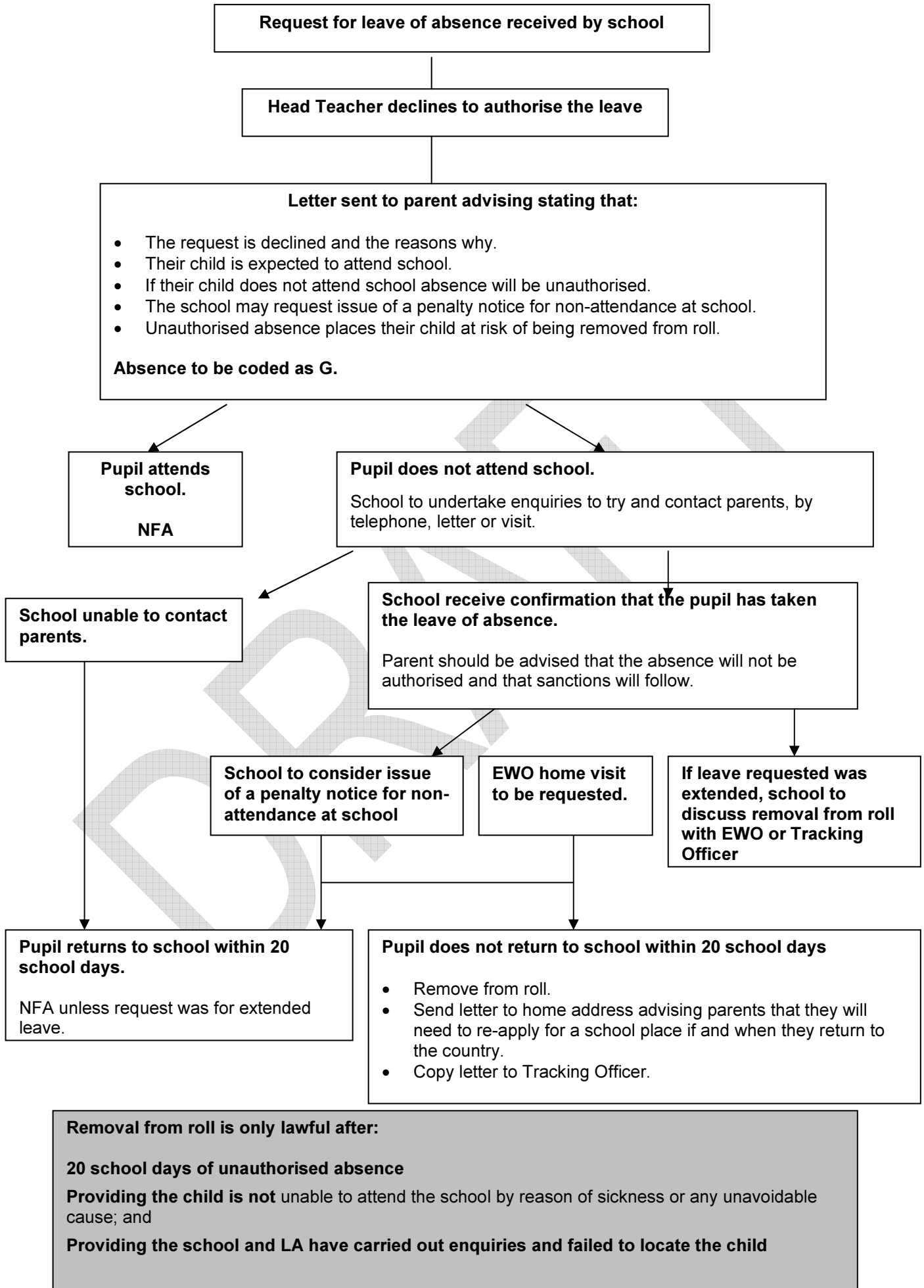
Penalty Notice Process and Code of Conduct

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TERM-TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE GRANTED BY HEAD TEACHER



TERM-TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE DECLINED BY HEAD TEACHER



National Legal Framework

1. The latest Guidance can be found at the following Link :

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attend>

- 1.1 The report from 'Improving attendance at school' was published on 16th April 2012 and, in terms of outcomes for children can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/a00208164/taylor-review>

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