



## **Water Mill Primary School**

### **Attendance Policy**

**Updated: April 2026**

## **Introduction**

Water Mill Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that regular attendance is essential in enabling pupils to make the most of their education, supporting academic achievement as well as promoting emotional wellbeing, resilience, confidence, and the development of essential life skills.

We understand that some pupils may face challenges in maintaining regular attendance. This policy outlines how we work in partnership with pupils, parents, and external agencies to promote, support and sustain high levels of attendance, while identifying and addressing any barriers that may arise.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The **Head Teacher** has overall responsibility for attendance and ensures compliance with statutory guidance
- Mrs. Hoyer, the **Attendance Champion**, provides strategic oversight, monitors attendance, and coordinates support and intervention
- **Attendance and Well-being Officer**, Mrs Lynch, works with families to provide Early Help, guidance, and support to improve attendance
- **Pastoral Lead Teaching Assistant**, Mrs McMahon, provides relational and pastoral support to pupils to promote engagement and regular attendance
- **Class Teachers** - complete accurate registers and identify early concerns
- **Governors** – monitor attendance data and hold school leaders to account
- **Parents/carers** – are responsible for ensuring their child/ren attend school regularly
- **Pupils** – are expected to attend school regularly and engage with their learning

More detailed information on roles and responsibilities can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## **Aims**

- To set clear expectations and high standards for attendance and punctuality
- To support pupil attainment and wellbeing through regular attendance
- To ensure attendance is a priority for the whole school community
- To identify attendance concerns early and respond promptly
- To work in partnership with pupils, families, and external agencies to remove barriers to attendance

## Our Approach to Attendance

The school follows a ‘**support first**’ approach, working in partnership with pupils and families to promote good attendance and address any barriers.

Our approach is based on:

- Setting clear expectations
- Monitoring attendance closely
- Understanding barriers
- Providing early and targeted support
- Escalating concerns where necessary

Further detail on the Birmingham Support First framework can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### Our Three Pillars

Our approach to attendance is rooted in shared culture, early action and consistent communication. Every member of teaching staff contributes through three simple commitments:

#### **1. Belong First**

Create a classroom culture where pupils feel valued and want to attend.

- Prioritise strong relationships and predictable routines.
- Make learning purposeful and welcoming from the moment pupils arrive.
- Notice absence patterns and ensure pupils know they were missed.
- Reinforce that attendance is about belonging, not compliance.

**Key message: *Your classroom climate is a powerful attendance strategy.***

#### **2. Notice Early**

Spot concerns quickly and act before patterns become entrenched.

- Log concerns such as lateness or emerging absence patterns promptly.
- Share information with pastoral or attendance leads — do not carry concerns alone.
- Use low-level check-ins to understand barriers early.
- Be professionally curious about changes in behaviour or engagement.

**Key message: *Small signals matter — early action prevents bigger problems. Just like any other safeguarding concern!***

#### **3. Speak as One**

Staff should use consistent, positive language to ensure pupils and families receive the same clear message about attendance from all adults (see **Appendix 3** for shared staff language relating to attendance discussions).

- Use shared phrasing about attendance expectations.
- Balance warmth with clarity when speaking with families.



- Direct parents towards support, not punishment.
- Align with whole-school systems to ensure fairness and predictability.

**Key message: *Consistency across adults builds trust and improves attendance.***

N.B. These triggers are designed to guide the process not restrict it. It is important to acknowledge that attendance patterns can shift rapidly. Leaders have the freedom to be responsive to individual need.

## **Attendance Expectations**

- Pupils are expected to attend school every day unless they are unwell or there is an authorised reason for absence
- The school office must be contacted on the first day of absence by 9.00am, providing the reason for absence and the expected date of return
- Where there are concerns about attendance or patterns of absence, the school may request medical evidence to support absence
- Absence for religious observance may be authorised for one day on each occasion, where appropriate

### **Expectations for Punctuality**

The school is aware that persistent poor punctuality can be a contributing factor for poor rates of attendance and can have a considerable impact on children's engagement in learning and sense of belonging. As such we have developed systems that encourage all pupils to access learning from 9.00am, and ideally through the pre-registration sessions from 8:40am.

We have created a 'soft start' structure of mini lessons, designed to both meet pupils SEMH needs and also make clear to parents the urgency of pupils arriving punctually.

Pupils arriving after the register closes at 9.00am will be recorded as late, in line with statutory requirements. Pupils arriving after 9.00am will receive an 'L' code. Pupils arriving after 9.30am will receive a 'U' code for their attendance.

Senior leaders monitor punctuality daily and are present at the school gate to support a positive and timely start to the day.

## **Daily Attendance Procedures**

### **Safeguarding and First-Day Response**

The school operates a robust first-day response system for all unexplained absences. Where no reason is provided, every effort is made to contact parents or carers on the first day using all available contact details. If contact cannot be established, or there are concerns about the absence, safeguarding procedures are followed. This may include escalation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), home visits, and referrals to external agencies where appropriate. Attendance is monitored daily as part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities, and any concerns or patterns of absence are followed up.

A coordinated, graduated, and targeted approach to support is central to our policy.

Pupils are grouped using a colour-coded system based on attendance levels:

- **Red** (Significant Harm: <80%)
- **Pink** (Significant Concern: 80–90%)
- **Orange** (Cause for Concern: 90–95%)
- **Green** (>95%)

These categories are based on the previous term’s attendance but are used flexibly. For example, where attendance improves, support will not automatically be withdrawn; leaders will remain responsive to individual pupil needs.

Our first day response is set out below:

Action	Significant Harm (Red <80%)	Significant Concern (Pink 80-90%)	Cause For Concern (Orange 90-95%)	Others (Green >95%)
<b>Absent Day 1</b>	SLT Call (Mrs Hoye, or Mrs Rudd on Fridays)	Office Call Personalised Text if no answer	Personalised Text Message Stating Concern	Generic Text Message
<b>Absent Day 2</b>	If Call wasn't answered a Home Visit will be carried out	If Call wasn't answered a Home Visit will be carried out	Office Call Parents to confirm when the child/ren will return, if they haven't already told us	
<b>Absent Day 3</b>	Home visit if there wasn't one on Day 2 (even if absence authorised)	Home visit if there wasn't one on Day 2 (even if absence authorised).	SLT Call	Office Call
<b>Absent Day 4</b>			Home Visit	SLT Call

This sets out a minimum, where attendance concerns are combined with other safeguarding concerns, calls and home visits may occur at earlier stages.

### **Addressing Persistent Absentees as a group**

Where pupils are identified within the pink or red thresholds, the Head Teacher and Pastoral Lead Teaching Assistant provide additional positive, reward-focused support directed at the pupil. This may include stickers, certificates, personalised targets and regular check-ins, ranging from weekly to daily where required.

This is supported by targeted parental communication. For example, following holiday periods, families may be informed of short-term attendance challenges or incentives designed to support a strong return to school. Similar communication may be used during periods of religious observance or as a preventative response to emerging patterns identified through internal systems (Bromcom) or national data (VYED).

For pupils causing the greatest concern, the Head Teacher will lead a personalised

response, working with staff to design tailored strategies that directly address identified barriers to attendance.

## **Types of Absences**

### **Authorised Illness Absence**

The school will authorise absence where a pupil is genuinely unwell.

Parents should follow NHS guidance regarding common illnesses and keep children at home where appropriate. Please see the “Reasons to Keep Your Child Off School” document on the school website.

The school will work with families where there are frequent or prolonged illnesses to ensure appropriate support is in place.

### **Unauthorised Illness Absence**

Absences for minor illnesses such as mild coughs, colds, or headaches will not normally be authorised.

However, each case will be considered individually, and the school will work with families where there are ongoing health concerns.

### **Illness and Healthcare Appointments**

Parents and carers must make routine medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

Appointments during the school day should be avoided unless it is not reasonably possible to arrange them outside of school hours.

Where an appointment during the school day is unavoidable, parents must inform the school in advance and provide evidence of the appointment.

Pupils are expected to attend school before and after appointments wherever possible and should only be absent for the minimum time necessary.

### **Leave of Absence**

The school will only grant leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, in line with statutory guidance.

Requests for leave must be made in writing to the Head Teacher at least two weeks in advance and should include full details and any supporting evidence.

Each request will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the specific circumstances and the pupil's attendance record.

Leave will not be authorised for the purpose of a family holiday.

Where leave of absence is taken without prior approval, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Unauthorised leave of absence may result in a referral to the Local Authority and the issue of a penalty notice in line with national and local guidance.

The school cannot authorise leave retrospectively; therefore, any absence not agreed in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

### **Understanding the Impact of Absence**

**At Water Mill, we have set an attendance target of 97%.**

Frequent absence can significantly impact a child's learning and long-term outcomes. The table below illustrates how absence accumulates over time.

<b>Attendance during one school year</b>	<b>Equals this number of days absent</b>	<b>Which is approximately this many weeks absent</b>	<b>Which means this number of lessons missed</b>
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons

### **Rewards and Incentives**

We actively promote and celebrate good attendance through:

- Half termly certificates for high attendance
- Recognition of most improved attendance
- Extra playtime for the class with the highest attendance (above 95%)
- Termly raffle prizes (Smyth's Toy shop vouchers x3)
- Recognition for 100% attendance across the academic year

Rewards will be applied fairly and will not disadvantage pupils with medical needs, SEND, or agreed support plans.

### **Promoting Attendance and Preventing Absence**

Our school follows Birmingham's 'Support First' approach to attendance, in line with the expectations set out in *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)*.

We are committed to building strong relationships with pupils and families, understanding the reasons behind absence, and working collaboratively to remove barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity.

Our approach is based on the following key principles:

- **Expect** – setting clear expectations for high attendance and punctuality for all pupils
- **Monitor** – regularly reviewing attendance data to identify patterns, trends, and early signs of concern
- **Listen and understand** – working with pupils and families to understand barriers to attendance, including through pupil voice and parent engagement
- **Facilitate Support** – providing early help and targeted support to address identified barriers, including working with external agencies where appropriate
- **Formalise Support** – implementing structured support plans and reviewing progress regularly for pupils with ongoing attendance concerns
- **Enforce** – using formal interventions, including referral to the Local Authority, where support has not resulted in improvement

To implement this approach, the school will:

- Promote a positive and inclusive culture where good attendance is valued and recognised
- Ensure attendance is recorded accurately and consistently in line with statutory guidance
- Identify emerging attendance concerns at an early stage and respond promptly
- Work in partnership with families to agree strategies and provide support
- Develop individual attendance plans for pupils where appropriate, including clear targets and review points
- Use attendance data to inform decision making and target support effectively
- Engage with external services, including Early Help, health professionals, and the Local Authority, where additional support is required

Where attendance does not improve despite support, the school will escalate concerns in line with Birmingham City Council's Support First model, including the use of formal interventions where necessary.

The effectiveness of attendance strategies is regularly reviewed by senior leaders and governors.

Further detail on the school's graduated response to attendance can be found in **Appendix 4**.

## **Legislation and Statutory Interventions**

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 (section 444(1)) to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly and on a full-time basis.

Failure to ensure regular attendance, including permitting unauthorised absence, may result in legal intervention by the Local Authority.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person

- Any person who has care of a child or young person

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs.

The school is committed to a 'support first' approach and will work in partnership with families to identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity.

Where attendance does not improve despite support and interventions, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority. The Local Authority has a duty to take appropriate action, which may include formal interventions such as penalty notices or prosecution.

Local authorities have a duty to identify children who are missing education. The school will follow Children Missing Education (CME) procedures in line with statutory guidance.

At all times, the welfare and safety of the child remains the school's paramount concern.

### **Penalty Notices (2024 Regulations)**

In line with national guidance and Birmingham City Council's Code of Conduct, schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate where a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a rolling 10-week period.

In accordance with the 'support first' approach, support will be offered in cases where it is appropriate before escalation to legal intervention (this does not apply to unauthorised leave of absence).

Where the school considers that the threshold has been met and a penalty notice is appropriate, a referral will be made to the Local Authority.

- Penalty notices are issued **per parent, per child**
- The first penalty notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days
- A second penalty notice issued within three years will be charged at £160
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued within a three-year period; alternative legal action, including prosecution, may be considered

Leave of absence in term time will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances. Where leave is taken without approval, it will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in a penalty notice being issued.

Further information for parents can be found on the Birmingham City Council website: [https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20014/schools\\_and\\_learning/1502/school\\_attendance\\_advice\\_for\\_parents/4](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/1502/school_attendance_advice_for_parents/4)

## **Safeguarding and Children Missing Education (CME)**

Water Mill Primary School recognises that attendance is a key safeguarding indicator. Poor attendance, persistent absence, or unexplained absence may be a sign of wider safeguarding concerns, including neglect, abuse, or other vulnerabilities.

The school will respond promptly to any concerns or patterns of absence and take appropriate action in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a pupil is absent from school and no contact can be made with parents or carers, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures. This may include:

- contacting parents or carers using all available contact details
- contacting other known professionals involved with the family
- conducting home visits where appropriate
- making referrals to external agencies, including Children’s Services, where there are concerns about a child’s welfare

The school will work in partnership with the Local Authority and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and receiving appropriate education.

In line with statutory guidance, the school will follow Children Missing Education (CME) procedures where a pupil’s whereabouts are unknown, or they have been absent for a prolonged period without explanation.

Where a child is believed to be missing education, the school will notify the Local Authority in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Local Authority has a duty to identify children who are not receiving a suitable education, and the school will fully cooperate with any investigations or enquiries.

At all times, the welfare and safety of the child is the school’s paramount concern.

**If you are experiencing any difficulties with attendance or punctuality, please contact the school as soon as possible.**

**We are committed to working with families to support regular attendance and address barriers at the earliest opportunity.**

<b>Mrs Rudd</b>	<b>Mr Hill</b>	<b>Mrs Hoye</b>	<b>Miss Potter</b>	<b>Zoe Lynch</b>
Head Teacher	Head Teacher	Assistant Head Teacher	Assistant Head Teacher	School Attendance Officer
		Attendance Champion		Monday mornings only
		SENDCo		

## Appendix 1

### The Attendance Team

#### **Mrs Hoye (Assistant Head Teacher)**

##### **Attendance Champion / Lead DSL / SLT**

The SLT Attendance Champion provides strategic oversight of attendance across the school and ensures a consistent, whole school approach.

##### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Lead and coordinate all attendance provision across the school
- Monitor attendance data and identify trends and priorities
- Ensure a graduated, support first response to attendance concerns
- Oversee interventions and evaluate their impact
- Liaise with external agencies and the Local Authority

#### **Mrs Lynch**

##### **Attendance and Wellbeing Officer**

The Attendance and Wellbeing Officer supports families and pupils to improve attendance through Early Help, communication, and co-ordination processes.

##### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Act as a supportive point of contact for families regarding attendance
- Provide advice, guidance, and signposting to support services
- Support early intervention and targeted support for pupils
- Maintain accurate attendance records and documentation
- Support formal processes where required, including referrals and penalty procedures

#### **Mrs McMahon**

##### **Pastoral Lead Teaching Assistant**

The Pastoral Lead Teaching Assistant provides relational and pastoral support to pupils and families to encourage regular attendance.

##### **Key responsibilities:**

- Build positive relationships with pupils and families
- Provide targeted support and encouragement for pupils with lower attendance
- Support pupils' wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging
- Work with staff to identify and address barriers to attendance

#### **Mr Hill**

##### **Head Teacher / Deputy DSL**

The Headteacher provides strategic leadership and accountability for attendance across the school.

##### **Key responsibilities:**

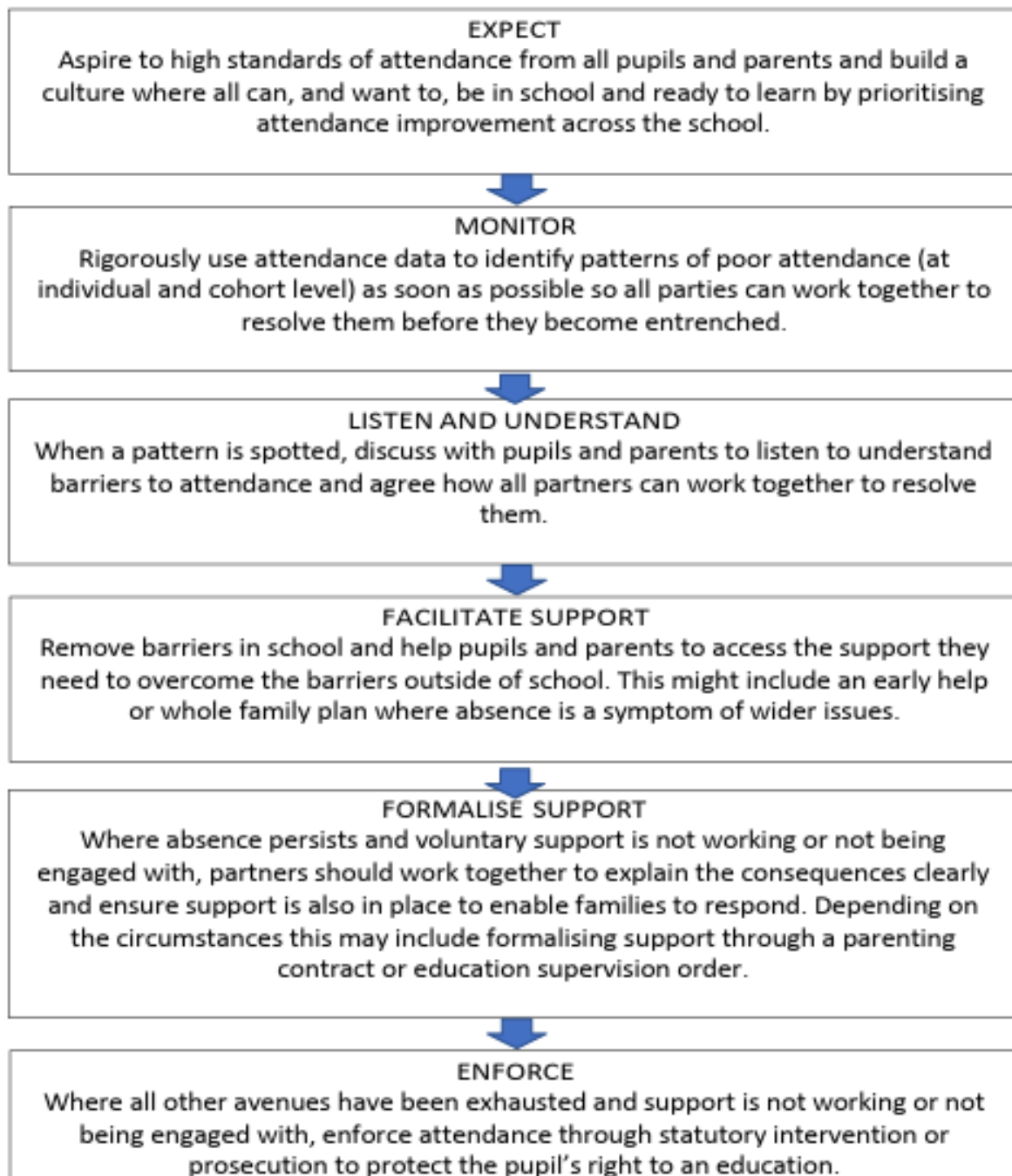
- Ensure attendance remains a whole-school priority
- Support the Attendance Lead in delivering the attendance strategy
- Lead on complex or high-level cases
- Work with families to address significant attendance concerns
- Ensure compliance with statutory duties and Local Authority procedures

## Appendix 2

### Birmingham City Council Support First



- 'Support First' reflects the model of attendance intervention outlined in 'Working together to improve school attendance' where all partners should work together to...



## Appendix 3

### Talking About Attendance (for Staff use)

When speaking with pupils or parents about attendance, use a shared three-part approach to keep conversations positive, clear and solution-focused.



**Belong** – Emphasise that the pupil is missed, valued and an important part of the community.

*“We’ve really missed them — they’re an important part of our class and their friends notice when they’re not here.”*

**Benefit** – Highlight the positive impact of regular attendance on learning, friendships and confidence.

*“When they attend regularly, we see them grow in confidence, stay socially connected and maintain momentum with their learning.”*

**Build** – Work together with families to identify supportive next steps and practical solutions.

*“Let’s think together about what might help make coming into school more consistently feel easier.”*

#### **Shared Language Guidance**

##### **When a pupil returns after an absence**

- “It’s great to have you back — we’ve missed you.”
- “Your friends will be pleased to see you today.”
- “Let’s help you settle straight back in.”

##### **When speaking with parents or carers:**

- “They’re a valued member of our class community.”
- “Regular attendance really supports friendships and confidence.”
- “We want to work together so they can benefit from being in school every day.”

##### **Remember the tone:**

- Lead with connection before correction.
- Focus on opportunity and belonging rather than percentages or blame.
- Use “we” and “together” to reinforce partnership.
- Keep conversations forward-looking and solution focused.

## Appendix 4

### Water Mill Attendance Procedures Guidance

This guidance should be read in conjunction with Birmingham City Council's **Support First Framework**.

In line with *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*, the school **does not apply a fixed or automatic process** for attendance intervention. Each case is considered individually, taking into account the needs, circumstances, and barriers affecting the pupil and their family.

While the stages below provide a framework for support and escalation, **professional judgement is applied at all times**. Steps may be adapted, combined, accelerated, or revisited as appropriate.

Step	Trigger	Action
Stage 1	When attendance concerns first emerge	<b>Early Identification and Support</b> Class Teacher to hold an initial conversation with parents. Discussion of any barriers to attendance. Early support and advice offered. Continue to monitor attendance patterns.
Stage 2	Where concerns continue or patterns emerge	<b>Targeted Support</b> Informal Meeting with Attendance Officer  Identification of barriers and agreement of support strategies  Consideration of Early Help or referral to support services  Ongoing monitoring and review  Referral to the School Nurse to be completed, if required
Stage 3	Where attendance does not improve despite support	<b>Formalised Support</b> Formal Attendance Meeting (FAM) with Attendance Officer  Development of an attendance plan with clear targets  Consideration of additional support, including health or external agencies  Request for medical evidence where appropriate
Stage 4	Where concerns persist and improvement is limited	<b>Intensified Support and Warning</b> Issue of 'Notice to Improve' (NTI), where appropriate  Clear expectations set regarding attendance improvement  Continue support offered alongside monitoring  Consideration of referral to the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT)
Stage 5	Where support has not resulted in improvement	<b>Legal Intervention</b>  Referral to the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT)

		This may include penalty notices or prosecution in line with statutory guidance
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**Important principles:**

- Support will always be considered and offered before escalation, where appropriate
- Absence thresholds may inform decision-making but do not determine action in isolation
- The school will work in partnership with families throughout all stages
- Safeguarding concerns may result in immediate or accelerated action at any stage
- Progress will be regularly reviewed and plans adapted as needed