Potters Green School

nurturing bright futures

Whole School Attendance Policy

Adopted by the school: 13th December 2023
To be reviewed: Autumn Term 2024

Coventry City Council has produced this document as guidance for schools and academies when writing their own attendance policy.
This guidance has been written in accordance with the Department for Education's (DfE) Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance (2022)
Schools and Academies must ensure that when using this guidance to inform their own policy that it reflects their own specific requirements.

This policy is available on our school website and is available on request from the school office. All parents are informed about the policy when their children join the school and on a regular basis through the newsletter and letters home where relevant.

We recognise the expertise our staff build by managing school attendance daily and we therefore invite staff to contribute to and shape this policy and associated attendance and safeguarding arrangements.

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Introduction/Aim

At Potters Green School we value the attendance of all pupils so that we can nurture their bright futures. There is a strong relationship between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children. It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children and young people. It is important that as a school we offer a safe environment, positive relationships, high quality teaching and learning opportunities to develop social and emotional skills.

Ensuring that children attend school every day will help achieve this ambition by maximising their education and social achievements as well as developing self-discipline, organisation and preparedness for the work environment. Improving attendance and reducing absence, especially persistent absence is a priority for our school and Coventry City Council.

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

Our attendance policy aims to give clear guidance to staff, parents, pupils, and governors to:

- Support pupil's achievement by establishing the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Provide a clear framework for monitoring and responding to pupil absences.
- Make parents / carers aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure their children have access to the education to which they are entitled.

We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive 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 school or by education otherwise than at school. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The government expects all 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.
- and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

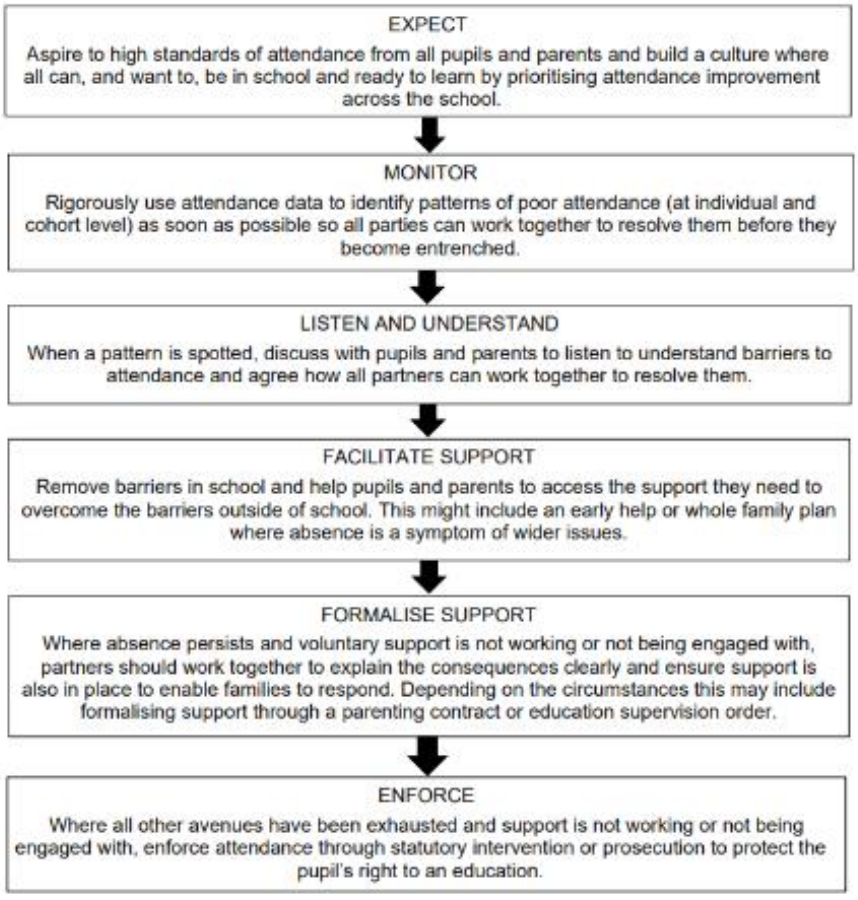
A “Parent” is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

3. Attendance Objectives

Our school attendance policy:

- Is easy to understand by pupils, parents and staff
- Is clear and consistently applied, transparent and fair
- Considers the individual needs of pupils and their families
- Is easy to find so that the whole school community is aware of our attendance expectations
- Includes the contact details of key staff to make it easy for parents to get in touch
- Is reviewed by staff regularly and involves pupils and parents because school attendance matters to everyone
- Is followed in accordance with the procedures in the flowchart below



4. Roles and Responsibilities

At Potters Green School we believe that school attendance matters to everyone. School attendance is a shared responsibility by governors/trustees, all school staff, parents, pupils, and the wider school community.

Role	Name	Contact details
Senior Attendance Lead	**Mrs Gillian Deery (Headteacher)**	**02476613670**
Attendance Officer	**Mrs Fiona Smith**	**02476613670**

The Local Governing Board of Potters Green School recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies. They take an active role in attendance improvement by:

- Supporting the school to prioritise attendance and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Ensuring school staff receive training on school attendance.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Potters Green School will:

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Signpost and support access to any required services where out of school barriers are identified.
- Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners and where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- Put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers where absence becomes persistent.
- Hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future where there is a lack of engagement.
- Work with the local authority on legal intervention where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.

- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils with SEND and/or medical conditions and their parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals for children with SEND and medical conditions.
- Regularly monitor data for children with SEND and medical conditions, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.
- Inform the pupil's social worker, where there is one, if there are any unexplained absences and if the child's name is to be deleted from the register.

Potters Green School requests that parents:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and where they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, parents and through the school timetable.
- Speak to their class teacher/tutor or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class.
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or guardians to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen.
- Follow the school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.

5. Recording Absence and Attendance

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department of Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

5.1 Leave of absence

The headteacher can only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. The headteacher will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts

and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. All absences associated with a family holiday (without exceptional circumstances) during term time will be marked as unauthorised on the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority by the headteacher and be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

Leave of absence forms can be downloaded from the school website or can be collected from the school office. Any requests must be made at least two weeks in advance. If a request is not made it will automatically be classed as an unauthorised absence.

A penalty notice request may be submitted to the Local Authority by the headteacher should:

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not authorised by the headteacher but is still taken.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the head teacher, the parent will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in a possible children missing from education procedure being instigated.

5.2 Medical Appointments and absence due to illness

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, we ask that parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment wherever possible. The pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. In most circumstances, a child should not miss a whole day at school for an appointment. If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must inform the school in advance. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised without the need for parents to supply medical evidence unnecessarily. In line with Department for Education guidance, if we do have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

5.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance

Potters Green 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 is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

5.4 Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation, and it is accepted as such by the school. The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the headteacher. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil/family member's birthday
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- Refusal to attend school on health grounds but where the pupil is considered well enough to attend
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school
- Staying off school because the family have arrived late back of a holiday or travelling
- Off school because the child/parent has overslept

6. Our Procedures

6.1 Register Keeping and Recording

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended, require schools to take an attendance register at the beginning of the morning session and once during each afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational activity or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Late Arrival at School

At Potters Green School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 8:50am. After this time the school gates are locked. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The school register will be taken at 8:55. All pupils arriving after 8:50am are required to report to the main office with their parents if young, who will be expected to sign the late book and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 9:15am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9:15am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

6.3 Expected absence procedure for parents

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. If no contact is received, then absence protocols will be instigated.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9:15am and where no reason for absence is known.

- At 9:30am the office will send out a schoolcoms text to the parents of the children who are absent without a reason given. This will ask parents to ring the school and explain the absence.
- By 10am if parents have still not phoned into school to explain their child's absence then the office will make a phone call directly to the parents.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned.
- If school cannot contact a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out.
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission.

In certain circumstances the school may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement.
- Discuss the pupil at the termly Targeted Support Meetings to seek advice and guidance on additional support strategies.
- Refer to Early Help and/or other external agencies to offer support, guidance, and advice.
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures.
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.

6.4 Rewards and Interventions

Attendance target: 94%

Attendance rewards at Potters are in different forms and are changed in line with pupil interests and current needs:

- At the end of each term all those with 100% attendance received a 100% badge at the end of term assembly. All those children who have fallen into the 'good' category of attendance of 96% or higher receive a good attendance certificate to take home. The year group with the highest attendance also receives a special party and treats..
- On a weekly basis the class with the highest attendance is announced in the whole school assembly and celebrated. They have a party the following week and are able to wear their own non uniform on the same day.
- The learning mentors and attendance officer works closely with families and pupils whose attendance is an issue, this is also shared with children's services or other agencies if they are involved with the family.
- The school will consider a change to a pupil's hours within school if it will be support them to return to school full time.
- Teachers share at parents' evenings what the attendance for their child is and what this means for their learning. Lates are also addressed during these meetings.

Local Authority Model Stages

Stage 1: Prevention
Criteria: Attendance is between 91% and 100%

Pupils who have attendance between 91% and 100% will receive support from school and other universal services they may be accessing i.e., GP.

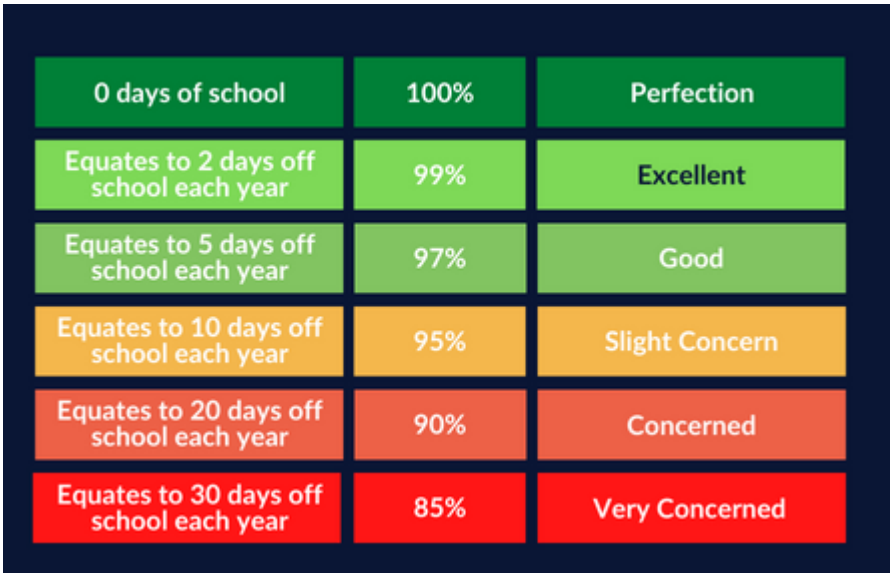
Stage 2: Early Intervention
Criteria: Attendance is between 81% and 90%

Pupils who have attendance between 81% and 90% may require support from other services outside of school and universal services at stage 1.

Stage 3: Targeted Support
Criteria: Attendance is below 80%

Pupils who have attendance below 80% may require multi-agency support in addition to that provided at stage 2.

Although at Potters Green school we follow the LA model stages we view attendance below 96% as beginning to cause concern and needs to be addressed before it deteriorates further. This is part of the Stage 1 process. Around the school and shared with children there is a common understanding of what good and bad attendance looks like. At Potters Green School this is our shared understanding of attendance.



7. Tailored Support

At Potters Green School we recognise that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, emerging health concerns. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance based on the individual needs and circumstances of the child.

Strategies we may use to support you include:

- Communication with the class teacher if there are any concerns which can be addressed to support a greater attendance at school.

- Learning Mentors to either support the pupil or the adults if appropriate. Learning mentors can signpost parents to other agencies eg housing, financial experts if required.
- Counselling can be offered to a pupil if this would be beneficial.
- Adaptation to the school day to support a pupil returning to school full time.
- Having a member of staff meet and greet children when they arrive or entering school by a different entrance.
- Referral to other agencies eg Rise or the Mental Health Team for children in Coventry to support children and families through difficulties or specific issues.

To plan the correct support, we will always invite parents and pupils to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns and devise a plan to support the child's regular attendance. Support offered will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. This may include a referral to Early Help or a Parenting Contract.

8. Persistent Absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 40 sessions (20 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in the section above. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

8.1 Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed penalty notices will be issued by the Head teacher to parents or carers if your children are absent from school for the following reasons:

- Holiday / leave of absence during term time
- Irregular attendance including persistent late arrival to school (after registration has closed) which equates to 10 or more sessions within a current 5-week period

Penalty Notices will issued by post to your home address to each parent or carer by the local authority at the request of the Headteacher. The Penalty Notice is:

- £60 for each of your children if paid in full within 21 days
- £120 if paid in full after 21 days but within 28 days.

9. Staged Reintegration/Reduced timetables

All children of compulsory school age are legally entitled to receive a suitable full-time education and the school and local authority have a statutory duty to ensure that all children in the area receive such an education. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, reduced timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs and only where it is safe to do so.

We will not use a reduced timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour. A reduced timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision where applicable. We will never put a reduced timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family. We will notify the Attendance and Children Missing Education Team of all reduced timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed.

10. Related Policies

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- safeguarding including child protection
- medical needs
- admissions
- anti-bullying
- exclusion
- special educational needs
- teaching and learning
- behaviour and incentives
- child missing in education

11. Statutory Framework

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, (September 2022)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures, DfE (January 2015)
- Children missing education, DfE (September 2016)
- Keeping children safe in education, DfE (September 2022)
- Working together to safeguard children, DfE (July 2018)

12. Appendices

The following pages contain appendices relevant to this policy.

Attendance Letter A

POTTERS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
Ringwood Highway
Coventry
West Midlands
CV2 2GF
Telephone: 02476 613670
Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Deery
Email: info@pottersgreen.org.uk
Website: www.pottersgreen.coventry.sch.uk
Twitter:@pottersgreencov

[Insert parent name and address]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert parent(s)/carer(s) name]

Re: School attendance concern for [Insert child's full name, date of birth, year group] at [insert school name].

I am writing to you in relation to your [insert child's name] school attendance which has fallen to [insert attendance percentage,number of days and sessions]. As a result we are becoming concerned that [insert child's name] is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of [insert child's name] attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on children's academic progress, friendships, social skills and life skills. The well-being and progress of our pupils is our priority.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on [insert child's name] attending school regularly or if you are concerned about your child's attendance. Support can be offered through an Early Help Assessment (EHA). Please do not hesitate to contact me.

I will continue to monitor [insert child's name] attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason, please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

Yours sincerely

[insert name of the Headteacher]

Attendance Letter B

POTTERS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Telephone: 02476 613670
Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Deery
Email: info@pottersgreen.org.uk
Website: www.pottersgreen.coventry.sch.uk
Twitter:@pottersgreencov

[Insert parent name and address]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert parent(s)/carer(s) name]

Re: Significant school attendance concern for [Insert child's full name, date of birth, year group] at [insert school name].

I am writing to you in relation to significant concerns about [insert child's name] school attendance which is currently at [insert attendance percentage,number of days and sessions]. We wrote you on [insert date] regarding our concerns and since then have not seen an improvement in [insert child's name] school attendance.

Poor attendance is often a sign that additional support is needed, and we would like to ensure that this is put in place to support [insert child's name] improved attendance.

I would like to invite you to meet with me on [insert date] at [insert time] to discuss this matter and identify any support that may be required. This meeting may result in an Attendance Support Action Plan being agreed, which will aim to outline any support needed and actions needing to be taken by the school, you as parent(s) and [insert child's name].

Failure to attend this meeting could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Should we continue to see poor attendance following this meeting a School Attendance Improvement Plan meeting will be arranged.

You are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting so we can work together to ensure [insert child's name]'s attendance improves, and such action is not necessary.

Yours sincerely

[insert name of the Headteacher]

Attendance Letter C

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Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Deery
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Website: www.pottersgreen.coventry.sch.uk
Twitter:@pottersgreencov

[Insert parent name and address]

Invitation to a School Attendance Improvement Plan Meeting

Dear [Insert parent(s)/carer(s) name]

Re: [Insert child's full name, date of birth, year group] at [insert school name].

There have been continuing difficulties concerning the attendance of your child [insert child's name] at [insert school name].

To assist you, the school have tried to engage with you to offer additional support such as Early Help to improve attendance and prevent the need for legal action.

In an attempt to resolve issues regarding attendance, a formal School Attendance Improvement Plan Meeting has been arranged at [insert school name]. on [insert appointment date] at [insert appointment time].

Use this paragraph for secondary schools only. Delete for primary school child unless you feel on an individual bases that the primary school child would benefit from attending the meeting.

[insert child's name] should be in school and can join us for the meeting. If [insert child's name] is not in school please bring «[insert child's name] with you.

It is very important that you attend. Your co-operation is essential.

This meeting is an opportunity for you to discuss any matters of concern. If you now require assistance and support via an early help assessment, you must attend the meeting after which an assessment may be arranged.

Failure to attend this meeting and further unauthorised absence could result in you being prosecuted in court or a penalty notice being issued.

I have to advise you as a parent/carer of a child of statutory school age, you have a legal responsibility to ensure full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and

any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Section 444, Education Act 1996).

Please contact me urgently on the telephone number provided if you are unable to attend. If I am not available, please leave a message and contact telephone number and I will call you back.

Yours sincerely,

[insert name of person sending the letter on behalf of the school

Attendance Letter D

POTTERS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Telephone: 02476 613670
Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Deery
Email: info@pottersgreen.org.uk
Website: www.pottersgreen.coventry.sch.uk
Twitter:@pottersgreencov

[Insert parent name and address]

Dear [Insert parent(s)/carer(s) name]

Re: Notification of Parenting Contract for [Insert child's full name, date of birth, year group] at [insert school name].

Your child, [insert child's name] has been identified as having poor attendance at [insert school name].

To assist you, the school and Local Authority Attendance Officer have tried to engage with you to formalise the support that has been offered and initiate a Parenting Contract to improve your child's attendance.

You were invited to a meeting with the Local Authority Attendance Officer on [insert date] at [insert meeting location] which you failed to attend. As a result, the Parenting Contract was discussed and initiated in your absence. A copy of this contract is enclosed for you.

Should you not engage with the school or the Local Authority around the Parenting Contract a request for prosecution will be submitted.

Yours sincerely,

[insert name of person sending the letter on behalf of the school]