Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction and Aims

Woodhouse West Primary School is an Inclusive Attendance School. This means we focus on understanding each child and family, using proven methods, and working together to help every child attend school.

Why attendance matters

We know that coming to school regularly helps children:

- **Learn better** - Children who attend regularly keep up with their learning and do better in tests
- **Gain knowledge and skills** - Every day at school teaches children something important for their future
- **Make friends** - School helps children learn how to get on with others and make friendships
- **Build good habits** - Attending school teaches children about routine and responsibility
- **Get help from teachers** - Teachers can help children more when they're in school regularly
- **Avoid falling behind** - Missing school makes it hard to catch up
- **Join in activities** - Children who attend regularly can take part in clubs, sports and trips
- **Prepare for the future** - Good attendance helps children do well in secondary school and later in further education and work

What we will do

We will:

- Help every child attend school regularly and arrive on time
- Work to reduce absence, especially when children miss a lot of school
- Make sure every child gets their full education
- Act quickly when we notice attendance problems
- Work closely with families to help children attend school

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance and School attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of the Education Act 1996

Part 3 of the Education Act 2002

Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

The Equality Act 2010

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

This policy also complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Our Inclusive Attendance Approach

3.1 What is Inclusive Attendance?

Inclusive Attendance is a way of improving attendance.

It helps us:

- Understand why children might struggle to attend
- Support children and families in the right way
- Train our staff to help every child
- Use information to make things better

All our staff receive regular training through the Inclusive Attendance programme. This means everyone in school knows how to support good attendance.

3.2 Our Three-Level Support System (The Inclusive Attendance Multi-Tiered System of Support)
We use a three-level system to support attendance:

Level 1 - Support for Everyone

- We make school **welcoming** and a place all children want to be
- We help children enjoy coming to school by providing an **exciting curriculum**, enriched by:
    - Visitor experiences
    - Visits to exciting and educational places - including residential visits
    - After-school clubs
    - The chance to represent the school in competitions
- We work in **partnership** with all families

Level 2 - Extra Help for Some Children

In addition to everything at level 1

- When we notice, a child is starting to miss school, we offer extra **support**
- We talk to families to **understand** what's happening
- We **work together** to solve problems

Level 3 - Specialist Support

In addition to everything at level 1 and 2

- For children who need more help, we may bring in specialist **support**
- This might include **signposting** or referral to other services like health or family support
- We create detailed plans to **help** children attend
- As a **last resort** we adhere to the expectations of statutory guidance and implement formal action including penalty notice fines. See section 9 for more information.

See Appendix 2 for more details about this system

3.3 Working Together
We work with our Trust (Sheffield South East Trust) and other schools and services to share good ideas and get better at supporting attendance. Every year we review what we do and make improvements.

3.4 Celebrating and Recognising Positive Attendance
We believe in recognising and celebrating positive attendance habits, effort and improvement. Our approach focuses on encouraging children to value attendance and feel successful, rather than rewarding attendance outcomes alone.
We recognise that every child's attendance journey is different. Therefore, all children should have opportunities to be recognised for positive attitudes, effort and engagement with attendance, regardless of their overall attendance percentage.
We may recognise individuals and classes for:

- Consistently attending school and being ready to learn
- Improved attendance over time

- Excellent punctuality
- Positive attitudes towards coming to school
- Overcoming barriers to attendance
- Supporting classmates and contributing to a positive attendance culture

Recognition may include:

- Celebrating achievements in assemblies
- Awarding certificates or recognition awards
- Sharing positive messages with families via text, ClassDojo, phone call or letter
- Displaying class or individual achievements around the school
- Acknowledging effort, progress and commitment during class or tutor time

Our attendance recognition systems are designed to be inclusive and motivating for all pupils. As this approach becomes embedded, we will move away from the use of tangible rewards, recognising that reward-based systems can unintentionally disadvantage some children whose attendance is affected by circumstances beyond their control. Instead, we will focus on meaningful recognition of effort, improvement and positive engagement with school attendance.

3.5 Why Children Might Miss School

There are many reasons why children might find it hard to attend school. If you're worried about anything, please talk to us.

Common reasons include:

- **Health problems** - Physical illness or mental health difficulties
- **Family situations** - Bereavement, family illness, or caring for others
- **Bullying or feeling unsafe** - Worries about safety or being bullied
- **Transport problems** - Difficulty getting to school
- **Money worries** - Struggling to afford uniform, food or other essentials
- **Special educational needs** - Needing extra support to attend
- **Not feeling engaged** - Finding school work difficult or not interesting
- **Language or cultural differences** - Finding it hard to fit in
- **Peer pressure** - Being influenced by friends
- **Lack of support at home** - Parents/carers struggling to help

If any of these affect your child, please talk to us. We can help.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

At Woodhouse West Primary School everyone has a part to play in good attendance.

4.1 Sheffield South East Trust (SSET) Attendance Lead

Mrs Sutton is our Trust Safeguarding & Attendance Lead. She:

- Supports all SSET schools with attendance
- Looks at attendance data across all our schools
    - Analyses data to target support
    - Tracks data to identify trends
    - Provides reports to in school attendance leads to inform and support their work
- Helps schools that need extra support
- Develops attendance strategy and policy for the Trust

Contact Mrs Sutton:

- Phone: 0114 244 1512
- Email: r.sutton@sset.education

4.2 School Governor for Attendance
Lucy McGann is our attendance governor. They:

- Make sure attendance is a priority
- Look at attendance information
- Check this policy is working by scrutinising data and monitoring its implementation

4.3 Senior Attendance Champion
Anne-Marie Bailey, Headteacher is our Senior Attendance Champion. They:

- Lead attendance across the school
- Look at attendance information
- Create plans to improve attendance

4.4 Attendance Officer
Jane Dobie is our Attendance Officer. They:

- Contact parents when children are absent without explanation
- Keep attendance records
- Support families with attendance

4.5 Teachers
Teachers will:

- Create a positive classroom where children want to be
- Take the register twice daily
- Notice when children are absent
- Welcome children back after absence
- Tell the attendance officer about concerns
- Talk to parents about attendance

4.6 Teaching Assistants and Learning Mentors
Teaching assistants and learning mentors will:

- Build positive relationships with children
- Help children feel welcome and supported
- Notice attendance patterns
- Support children who struggle with attendance
- Tell the attendance officer about concerns

4.7 School Office Staff
Office staff will:

- Answer calls from parents about absence
- Record absence on our system (Arbor)
- Pass calls to the right person for support
- Update attendance records

4.8 Parents and Carers
Parents and carers should:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school before 9am if their child is absent
- Give us at least 2 emergency contact numbers
- Try to make appointments outside school hours when possible
- Talk to us if something is affecting their child's attendance
- Keep to any agreements made with the school

4.9 Pupils
Pupils should:

- Attend school every day, on time, ready to learn
- Understand that school is important for their future
- Tell parents if they're worried about something at school
- Try their best and ask for help when needed
- Be kind and respectful to others

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 How We Take the Register
We take the register:

- At the start of the morning
- After lunch

We record whether each child is:

- Present
- At an approved activity (like a school trip)
- Absent
- Unable to attend for a valid reason

5.2 School Times

School starts at 8.45am School ends at 3.15pm

- Children should arrive by 8.45am
- The morning register is taken at 8.45am and stays open for 30 minutes. The afternoon register is taken after lunch and stays open for 15 minutes.

5.3 If Your Child is Ill
Please call the school office on 2692602 before 9am on the first day your child is absent. Then, call each day they're absent to let us know how they are.

If your child is absent for more than 3 days, we might ask for evidence like a prescription, medical appointment or doctor's note.

5.4 Medical and Dental Appointments
Please try to make appointments outside school hours.
If this isn't possible:

- Tell us about the appointment in advance
- Your child should attend school before and/or after the appointment when possible

5.5 If Your Child is Late

- They should come to the main entrance on Coisley Hill.
- They should report to the office
    - **Arriving after the bell but before the register closes:**
        - Your child will be marked as late (code L)
    - **Arriving after the register closes:**
        - Your child will be marked as absent (code U)

When a child arrives late, we will:

- Welcome them warmly
- Check they're okay
- Make sure they've had breakfast (we'll provide some if needed)
- Talk to parents separately to understand why they're late

If lateness continues, we will:
- Talk to you to understand what's causing it
- Monitor whether it improves
- Invite you to a meeting if needed

5.6 If We Don't Know Why Your Child is Absent
On the first day of unexplained absence, we will:
- Send you a text asking you to contact us
- Call you if you don't respond to the text
- Visit your home if we can't reach you by phone
- Record the reason for absence and enter the appropriate code in the register

If your child is still absent on day 3:
- We may visit your home, even if we have spoken to you, to check everything is okay
- If we haven't been able to contact you at all, we may contact the police or social care

We do this to keep your child safe.

5.7 Keeping You Informed
We will tell you about your child's attendance by:
- Discussing it at parents' evenings
- Including attendance in any meetings related to your child
- Including it on your child's end of year report
- Contacting you if we're concerned about attendance patterns

We might contact you by:
- Phone, text or email
- Face-to-face conversation
- Letter
- ClassDojo message

We will always be supportive and help you understand how absence affects your child's learning.

5.8 Attendance Codes
We use official codes to record attendance. See **Appendix 1** for the full list.

6. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

6.1 Requesting Time Off During Term Time
The headteacher can only authorise absence during term time in very limited circumstances:
- Taking part in a performance or employment abroad (with proper licenses)
- A temporary part-time timetable (agreed with parents)
- Exceptional circumstances

What are 'exceptional circumstances'?
These are things that are:
- **Unexpected**

- **Unavoidable**
- **Outside your control**

Holidays are not usually considered exceptional circumstances. There is no longer a code to record authorised holidays.

How to request time off:
- Submit your request as soon as possible, ideally 2 weeks before
- Request forms are available from the school office
- You must speak to the headteacher or a senior leader first
- You may be asked for evidence
- Each request is considered individually

The trust will check all exceptional circumstances requests across our schools to make sure all families are treated fairly.

6.2 When Absence is Authorised
We will authorise absence for:
- **Illness** - physical or mental health problems
- **Medical/dental appointments** - when they can't be made outside school hours
- **Religious observance** - days set aside by your religion
- **Traveller families** - when travelling for work (by agreement)
- **Suspension or exclusion** - when no alternative provision is arranged

6.3 Other Approved Absences
Your child can be absent from the school site for:
- Attending another school where they're also registered
- Provision arranged by the local authority
- Other unavoidable reasons (like emergency travel disruption)

7. Promoting and Supporting Attendance

7.1 How We Promote Good Attendance
We promote attendance by:
- Having information on our school website
- Displaying attendance information around school
- Talking about attendance in newsletters, on ClassDojo, social media and in assemblies

7.2 How We Support Attendance
We support children and families by providing:
- A friendly welcome every day
- breakfast club
- Breakfast for children who arrive late
- Recognition for good attendance and improvement
- An interesting and engaging curriculum
- Clubs, activities and events
- Support for families struggling with health, parenting, routines, housing or other difficulties

7.3 Supporting Children Who Are Absent

While a child is absent, we will:
- Keep in touch through phone calls, texts or home visits

- Talk to parents about keeping learning going at home
- Arrange additional support if needed (like health services or family support)

When a child returns after absence, we will:
- Welcome them back
- to help them settle back in
- Make temporary changes if needed, such as:
    - Different start or end times
    - Part-time timetable for a short period
    - Changes to their timetable
    - Extra support during the day

8. Monitoring and Data Analysis

8.1 How We Monitor Attendance
We regularly check:
- Whole school attendance
- Each year group's attendance
- Individual children's attendance
- Attendance of different groups (like children with SEND, children eligible for free school meals)

We share this information with the Department for Education.
We compare our attendance to other schools locally and nationally to see where we can improve.

8.2 How We Use Information
We use attendance information to:
- Identify children who need extra support
- Spot patterns (like children who are often absent on certain days)
- Develop plans to help
- Check if our support is working

8.3 Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of school (roughly 1 day every 2 weeks).
Severe absence means missing 50% or more of school (more days absent than present).

We track absence in days to help parents understand. **We consider 10 days or more absence as being at risk of persistent absence.**

For children at risk of persistent or severe absence, we will:
- Look for patterns in the data
- Meet with parents to:
    - Discuss attendance
    - Listen and understand barriers
    - Explain help available
    - Explain potential consequences
    - Review what we're already doing
- Provide access to wider support services
- Meet with parents at the start of each school year to discuss concerns and set targets
- Consider safeguarding concerns and act on them

9. Sanctions and Legal Interventions

We will use the full range of sanctions available to tackle poor attendance. Decisions are made case-by-case.

9.1 Notices to Improve

If support hasn't worked and parents don't engage with offers of help, we may issue a notice to improve. This gives parents a final chance to engage with support.

The notice will include:

- Details of the child's attendance
- Why regular attendance matters
- Details of support already offered
- Opportunities for more support
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may follow
- A timeframe of 3-6 weeks for improvement

9.2 Penalty Notices (Fines)

The local authority can fine parents for unauthorised absence.

When might a penalty notice be issued?

- When a child has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in 10 school weeks
- When a penalty notice is the best way to improve attendance
- After considering if more support would be better, and
    - Considering the Equality Act 2010

How much are the fines?

First penalty notice:

- £80 if paid within 21 days
- £160 if paid within 28 days

Second penalty notice (for the same parent and child):

- £160 if paid within 28 days

Third penalty notice cannot be issued within 3 years. Instead, other legal action will be taken.

9.3 Other Legal Action

In serious cases, the local authority may prosecute parents. This could result in:

- Education Supervision Orders
- Fines up to £2,500
- Imprisonment

10. Removal from Roll

10.1 Transferring to another Sheffield school

If you want to move your child to another school in Sheffield, you must

- Speak to the headteacher or a senior member of staff about your reason for the transfer. We want to understand, so that we can put a plan in place to address a school issue, that might mean the transfer is not necessary.
- If the transfer goes ahead, you must complete an application form. These are available from the school office.
- The school also needs to complete a section of this form.

- While your application is being processed [by the local authority] you must ensure your child continues to attend school every day.

10.2 Moving out of Sheffield or the UK

If you are moving to another city or abroad and will no longer need your child's school place, you must

- Inform the school as soon as possible
- Provide the details of where you are moving to and when
- Provide the details of the school your child will be attending or those you are applying to

Your child will remain on the school roll until

- Their new school contacts us to say they have started
- Following a referral to the Children Missing Education Team
    - We are informed that we can remove them

This can take several weeks, during which time your child will continue to accumulate absence, and will remain our safeguarding responsibility – which means we will stay in touch with you and may need to visit (Where possible).

10.3 Elective Home Education

If you wish to remove your child from school for the purposes of educating them at home, we ask that you talk to us about your plan to do so.

To go ahead, you need to

- Write to the headteacher stating
    - Your intention to home educate your child/ren
    - When the last day of attendance for your child will be
    - Request removal of your child/ren from the school roll
    - Sign and date your letter

On receipt of your letter

- The headteacher will send you a written reply
- Your child/ren will be removed from the school roll
- We will inform the local authority about your decision and the removal of your child/ren.

If your child has an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan), the same process applies, however the local authority will need to amend the plan to reflect that you are now responsible for meeting your child's educational needs.

11. Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed:

- When guidance from the local authority or Department for Education changes
- At least every 2 years

The Trust Attendance Lead will review the policy, and it will be approved by the board of trustees for adoption by governing board of each school.

12. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to:

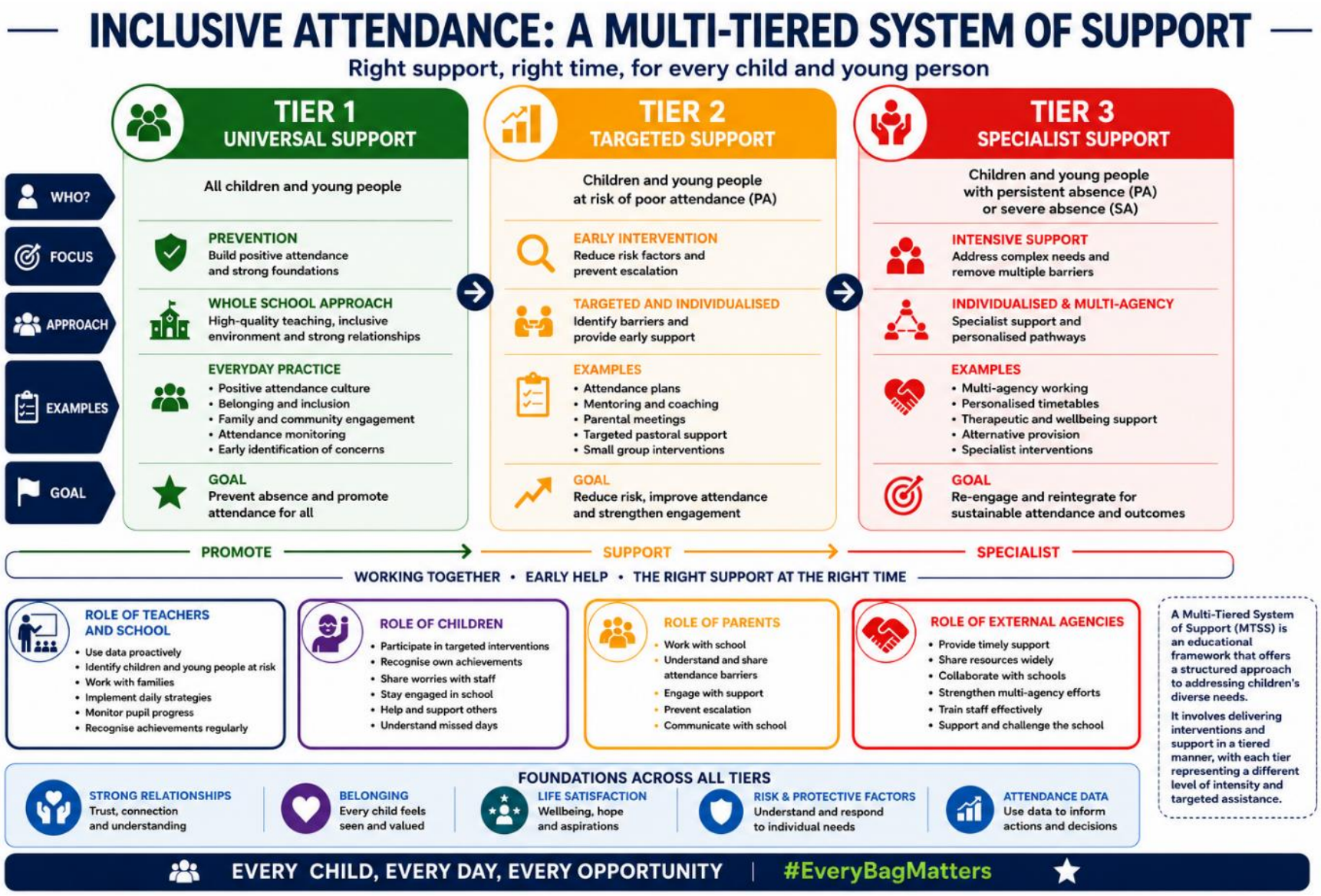
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Teaching and learning policy
- SEND policy
- Pupil premium policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend

C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes

Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Our Three-Level Support System
(Inclusive Attendance Multi-Tiered System of Support)