



LIFTON COMMUNITY ACADEMY ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE IN TERM TIME POLICY

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FLOURISHING FUTURES
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Change Log

Date	Changes to Policy
August 2022	Updated in line with 'Working together to improve attendance' DfE 2022 More info on Introduction and purpose with more clarity from DfE More clarity of roles of school and those with responsibility in school Clearer process re: attendance follow up, including exact times of day/ registers More detail on monitoring and evaluations, including MAT expectations of best practice and oversight (Trust Director oversight and reports) More detail in how we will encourage good attendance More info on how we will support those with barriers More detail on PA and sever PA More detail on Vulnerable Pupils More detail on expectation of sharing of info with local schools, agencies and LA
Autumn 2021	Addendum – Recording attendance in relation to Covid during 21-22

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1. Rationale

Lifton Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, excellent attendance is crucial. We organise and do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems, which impede full attendance, will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, including attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances, a high level of school attendance is essential.

DfE Guidance 'Working together to improve attendance.' states:

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our academy so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

We recognise that some pupils find it harder to have good attendance and punctuality than others and we strive to work in partnership with parents and others, by building strong and trusting relationships and, by working together put the right support in place.

Attendance is everyone's business; pupils, all staff and parents. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, supported by all staff.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital all children are at the academy, on time, every day the academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at the academy are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

2. Purpose of our Policy

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
2. To ensure that excellent attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers, and is actively supported by all staff, including specialist support from the Family Support Team.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that the foundation for securing good attendances is that a school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be are keen and ready to learn.
5. To understand the action that can and will be at different levels, by the Family Support Team to ensure good attendance.

3. Rights, Responsibilities and Roles

Academy

1. All staff will be given support and training, so that they understand the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their work, messaging and support of this.
2. The academy will ensure that high expectation of good attendance for all pupils is regularly communicated through all available channels: clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents through a variety of media: social media, newsletters, face to face conversations and parents' meetings.
3. Regularly communicate what is expected of attendance and clarity on short and long-term consequences of poor attendance.
4. Make attendance everyone's priority with high visibility given, through assemblies, posters, celebration events, certificates etc. The academy recognises that this needs to be done sensitively so that this praises and rewards improvements or good attendance but does not shy away from this as attendance is so vital for pupils to have 'flourishing futures'.
5. Communicate to parents their child's attendance at 3 x yearly Parent Consultations.

6. The academy will inform parents weekly of class attendance figures and annually of the whole school attendance target via the school newsletter.
7. Staff will ensure that registers are completed in accordance with this policy.
All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session through the School Management System.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

8. The academy will identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
9. The academy will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
10. The Head Teacher will lead on attendance, supported a specialist team: Administrators, Family Support and SLT. This means they will have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
11. Regularly monitor and analyse attendance (at least fortnightly) to identify pupils or cohorts that require support. All pupils with attendance below 98% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the academy, in order to identify persistent absentees and those children at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
12. The academy will ensure there is support to improve attendance, including working with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with the Local Authority and others.
13. The academy understands the link between good attendance and wider academy improvement plans, including supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, mental health or wellbeing and support for otherwise disadvantage or vulnerable pupils.
14. The academy understands that children missing education can be a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues: neglect, sexual abuse and child and sexual exploitation and therefore will always be robust in our approach towards good attendance.
15. The academy recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and will regularly (at least annually) review processes, procedures and strategies, including the sharing of best practice across our Trust.

The Learning Academy Partnership's Trust Board play a vital role in setting high expectations and ensuring the rigorous implementation of strategies to support this. They comply with Section 3 of DGE guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

Parents/Carers

1. **Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the academy at which they are registered. Failure to fulfil this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action in accordance with s444 Education Act 1996.**
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends the academy regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
3. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing the academy of any absence by phone call, or where possible, in person on the first morning of any absence and thereafter- see First Day reporting.
4. Parents should not arrange family absences, visits away or holidays in term time.
5. Parents should try to make medical appointments outside of academy hours.
6. Parents/Carers can expect the academy to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.
7. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or subsequent prosecution of doing so without the academy's prior written permission.
8. If parents have concerns relating to their child's attendance, they should contact either: the class teacher or member of the Family Support or the Admin Team.

4. Attending School Every Day

Good attendance is essential for pupils, and they are expected to attend the academy every day. Pupils' attendance is monitored by the academy registers which are taken at the start of the morning session and the start of the afternoon session, every day:

- At the start of each day, school opens at 8.50am and pupils should arrive at 8.50am. Registers open at 8.50am.
- Registers 'close' at 9.00 and children should arrive by then.
- Any pupil arriving after 9.00 will be marked as LATE and will need to enter through the main reception where the reason for their lateness will be recorded.
- Any pupil arriving after 9.15 will be marked as U and will be marked as an 'unauthorised absence'

Arriving later at the academy has a negative impact on pupils' smooth start to the day and means they have missed out on start of day routines and learning. This can have a significant impact on the pupils learning across the whole day, in turn impacting their mental health and wellbeing. It also has a detrimental and unsettling impact on classes and the smooth running of the academy. Where these 'U' lates cumulate to 3 or more in a half term the academy will send a letter to the parents/carers of the pupil in question to discuss any support needs and ways of accessing support.

**** 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) codes could result in the academy making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken ** A child is late after registers close when they arrive 9.00am**

5. Authorised/Unauthorised absence

Pupils are expected to attend the academy every day and this is key for children's education as well as their mental health. All absences must be explained by a parent/carer see section below on First Day Reporting. With reference to, and guided by, the DfE's guidance for schools on attendance, the academy will set out if their attendance can be authorised or not.

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are:

1. Illness (1)
2. Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
3. Days of religious observance
4. Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (2)

Absences from the academy will not be authorised for:

1. Absences not agreed, this will always include first and last day of half term unless medical evidence provided
2. Birthdays, if ill on a birthday, medical evidence will be required
3. Shopping
4. Looking after family members
5. Visiting relatives

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 3 consecutive days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 98% and/or the child is regularly away from the academy due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card/ letter, email or text showing name of child and date they visited.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided.

A referral should be made to the local School Nursing Team as provided by the Local Authority, for pupils with ongoing ill health concerns.

(2) Medical/dental appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of academy hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during academy hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided, such as Doctors letter, email or text. Failure to provide evidence may result in the academy not authorising the absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised.

6. Procedures for following up absence/lateness

First day reporting

Parents should notify the academy of any pupil absences:

- This should be done before the start of the academy day.
- This can be done by calling the academy on 01566 232071.
- As a last resort, parents can notify by visiting the main reception when the academy opens.
- The reason for absence should be given and an indication of the likely period of absence. If requested evidence of absence should be provided on the first day back.

This will be communicated at the beginning of each term via the academy newsletter, emails and social media.

Administration staff keep a log of absence calls and reasons received each day.

From 9am, attendance/administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any pupil who is absent but have not had parental contact to notify.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence, they will liaise with the administration staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should relay their concern to the Head Teacher, member of SLT or Family Support Team. The academy always seeks to have more than one contact detail for family members/ parents, work, etc., and will seek to contact these if they are unable to contact the parents. If there is no reply from the parents/carers, a text message will be sent and if there is no response to this text message a letter will be sent at the end of the first day of absence.

Alongside this, if there are still concerns re the pupil's absence, a home visit may be conducted that day by academy staff and / or the police may be contacted for a welfare check. The academy will always be led by its duties to safeguard pupils, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

If there is no contact a further letter will be sent on day three advising that medical evidence will be required for further absences, or the absence will not be authorised. If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address or sooner if necessary. Again, the academy will continue to have due regards for its safeguarding duties in tandem with this.

It remains the academy's responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary: see Supporting Good Attendance section.

If a child is absent from the academy for 5 days after an authorised absence, or has been absent for 10 consecutive days, and; after reasonable enquiries have been undertaken the child's whereabouts remain unknown. The academy will submit a CME¹ (children Missing Education) form to the LA.

***** If the child has a Social Worker or if the academy has particular safeguarding concerns and feels the child is at risk of immediate harm, the academy will immediately notify social worker or the Local Authority Safeguarding Hub, without delay.***

7. Supporting good attendance

Attendance is everyone's business and will be a daily conversation in all classes at Lifton Academy.

We will work in partnership to:

- Expect good attendance
- Monitor attendance data (see Monitoring section)
- Listen and understand barriers by talking with pupils and parents (see Supporting those with barriers to attendance)
- Facilitate support (see Supporting those with barriers to attendance)
- Formalise support (see Supporting those with barriers to attendance)
- Enforce (See Enforcement)

The following is in place to support good attendance:

- Classes with the highest attendance each week, will be shared with all staff and celebrated throughout the academy, including in whole academy Worship. These will also be shared with parents via social media.
- Parents will have the class attendance of their child, shared on a weekly basis, via Class Newsletters
- Pupils in the class with the highest attendance after each Half Term will be invited to a Celebration Breakfast on the final day of each half term. This is free and supported with both hot and cold options, facilitated by our catering team and Family Support.
- Children who have struggled with attendance will have their own sticker charts and certificates awarded by the Family Support or Admin Team when their attendance improves.
- Certificates are awarded on a termly basis for those with high levels of attendance.
- Pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each term and year are celebrated with specific rewards.
- Specific and tailored support will be put in place for pupils with barriers to attendance, such as a daily/ regular check in with attachment adult in the academy, daily call to family home to support with morning routine, home visit,

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breakfast support, an extra transition supportive approach to the start of day, such as starting in The Nurture Room, entering via a different gate/entrance.

See below for further information on supporting pupils at risk of being persistently absent or severely persistent absent.

8. Monitoring Attendance and Supporting those with barriers to attendance

Attendance is key and every school day counts towards a child's successful education and flourishing future. Mrs Cripps will analyse and evaluate weekly attendance in regular meetings.

Pupils, year groups, pupil groups and / or cohorts with lower than 96% attendance are monitored closely. This includes looking for patterns and trends e.g. pupils who attend less regularly on a Monday/ Friday.

For each of these children, the specific barriers of individuals are discussed, sharing information from parents, class teachers, etc. This could include info that they had had an illness e.g. chickenpox but that their attendance is new back on track. Support will be triaged and a plan made for those with history, ongoing or newly arising patterns of poor attendance.

This support could include:

- Teacher to monitor and talk with parents/ child with possible sticker chart, personalised plan.
- Family Support/ Admin to contact parents and begin partnership working to identify barriers and then support.
- Family support to invite parent in for specific Attendance Meeting, joined by class teacher.
- Discussion with a Social Worker or other agencies, already involved with a family.

The academy always takes into account the individual needs of families and seeks to always work in partnership with parents, whilst ensuring pupils have good attendance. Any meetings should be set up as soon as is possible with parents to minimise any delay.

This will be written up in a 'Attendance Reports' with info set out per class and shared with class teachers, SLT, Safeguarding Lead as well as family Support, Attendance Team and PSED Team. These outline the action as well as the person responsible for this.

Attendance analysis of all pupils, year groups and pupil groups will also take place: Half termly, termly and annually. This data will be benchmarked against local (including other schools in Trust Regional Hub), Regional and National level and identify areas of improvement. This evaluation is reported termly to Trustees through Local Committee Reports and the academy is offered both support and challenge to ensure pupils have the highest levels of attendance.

There are regular opportunities for leaders and those working on attendance (such as Family Support and Admins) to share best practice with regards to attendance and the Trust invest in such opportunities. A key part of this is also Head Teacher working together, and with the oversight of the Director of Inclusion and Vulnerable Pupils, to evaluate the impact of their actions and then share good practice across the Trust. See Expectations of Trust Board for more info.

Monitoring also looks back at pupils previously with poor attendance in an Annual Attendance Report, so that the Head Teacher and others leading on attendance, can be especially alert to pupils who have struggled in the past. The monitoring of attendance also looks at wider vulnerabilities or cohorts, such as pupils with additional needs or vulnerable pupils to look for trends or patterns which need investigation and / or support.

Working in partnership with Parents

At Lifton Academy, we strive to treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff work to show respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and the academy that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we always seek to discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and **challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like.**

Where a pupil or family needs extra support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the academy works with and supports the family, typically, this would Family Support or Admin Team.

9. Persistent and Severely Persistent Absentees

Pupil who have missed 10% or more of their schooling are classes as Persistent Absentee (PA). This level of absenteeism is likely to have a deep and profound impact on the child's education. This also would be a warning sign of the child having additional vulnerabilities. At Lifton and across our Trust, we will place high priority on supporting pupils at risk of such low attendance and invest heavily in this.

Pupils identified as currently PA – this means they have missed 10% or more of their education, (at any stage during the school year), or those who have been PA in previous years will be a priority for attendance support and action planning. Where barriers are outside of the academy's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. As a minimum, this should include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in the academy and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions should be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

In addition to the above measures, pupils may have their attendance tracked daily so that this can be celebrated or support to be in the academy asap.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, and the academy will seek to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners, this could include:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead, Family Support, Head Teacher or another member of SLT to discuss/ meet with parent.
- Referrals and or work with other agencies, such as Safeguarding.
- Home Visit
- Mentoring
- Early Help Assessment
- EHC application

If the support planned out is not effective or is not engaged with, the academy will seek to work with the Local Authority. This could include:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.

At this stage, the severity of non-engagement will be set out in a more formal meeting.

Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from the academy more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in the academy or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, **it is likely to constitute neglect**. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education.

If a pupil is at risk of becoming Severely PA , the Head Teacher will also proactively, at an early stage, engage the support of the Trust Director for Inclusion and Vulnerable Pupils, in developing a plan. Both persistent and severe absence should also be central to the academy, Trust, and local authority level strategies for improving attendance.

See section 5 and 6 of DfE Guidance for more detail including Parenting Contracts, Education Supervision Orders, Attendance Prosecution, Parenting Orders and Fixed Penalty Notices:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf

10. Working in Partnership with others when absence is becoming persistent or severe.

We understand the value in collaborating with others locally and seek to work in a proactive way with other local schools, secondaries and agencies to ensure the very best for all pupils in our locality. In doing this, we will adhere to the DfE expectations below.

The DfE states:

“Schools of all types, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familial harms). Local authorities and schools (of all types) are expected to have a regular Targeting Support Meetings at least termly. Further, to facilitate timely collaborative

working across partners, all schools are also legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority.”

As a minimum this includes:

- Every time a pupil's name is to be added to, or deleted from, the academy admission register outside of standard transition times (including the statutory reason for deletion). For deletions this must take place before the deletion, and for additions it must be no later than 5 working days after the addition.
- The name and address of any pupil who fails to attend the academy regularly or has missed the academy for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised. Local authorities should agree the frequency this must be shared with all schools in their area. This should be no less frequently than once per calendar month.

At Lifton, we will work to support this data gathering and evaluation by Devon Local Authority. We will also regularly engage with any further training or guidance provided by Torbay's attendance team or the Director for Inclusion and Vulnerable Pupils.

In addition to this, we will engage with termly Attendance and Vulnerable Pupil meetings with the Director for Inclusion and Vulnerable Pupils, and in doing so, evaluate the effectiveness of our provision.

1.1. Attendance Meeting Stages

All pupils with attendance below 96% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Senior Leaders and administration team, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees. (Persistent absentees are pupils who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year).

Absences may be unauthorised by the academy where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the Academy feels the reason for the absence is untrue. A member of the Family Support Team may telephone for clarification.

Where a pupil's attendance is below 96%, the following actions should be taken (in addition to individualised plans):

Attendance letter 1 will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the class teacher/Attendance Lead/Head Teacher/Family Support Team as considered appropriate by the academy. Schools may contact parents within this 2-week period if needed and a pupil's attendance had not rapidly improved.

Attendance letter 3 will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Head Teacher/Attendance Lead/Family Support Team.

In all cases, the academy should monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties should work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

Vulnerable Pupils

Pupils with medical conditions or SEND

These pupils can sometimes face greater barriers to attendance. At Lifton Academy, we recognise the individuality and how uniquely special eh child is, in line with our Christian Vision. As part of this, we will always strive to understand individual circumstances and work in a dignified and respectful way with children and their parents around attendance. To support good attendance, we have the same high expectations for all pupils but recognise, some may need further support, such as:

- Making reasonable adjustments, making referrals or working with external experts.
- Work with families or others on EHC plans
- Establish in school strategies to remove any barriers, where possible, around transport, routines etc.
- Ensure there is joined up approach with class teacher and other staff involved e.g. PSED team and consider short term, phased return.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored to ensure we are making improvements for all groups of pupils.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf sets out further detail of this.

Pupils with a Social Worker

At Lifton, we understand that good attendance at our academy also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

Social workers and Virtual School Heads have certain duties set out by the Government with regards to the attendance of pupils with a social worker.

To facilitate effective working across the local authority, **we will inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from the academy or if we have concerns regarding a child's absence. The Safeguarding Lead will have clear line of sight for the attendance of pupils with a Social Worker and will take swift action where attendance of any such pupil, is a concern.**

Children Missing in Education Officers or the academy's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team should also inform a pupil's social worker if their name is to be deleted from the academy register.

Part Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at the academy or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the academy has agreed to a pupil being absent from the academy for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

12. Conclusion

It is the policy of the academy to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career; it is also vital in safeguarding pupils. Our Trust will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all our pupils.

At Lifton as across our Trust, partnership will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home academy links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.