

St. Luke's Attendance Policy

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Contents:

	Page
Introduction	3
The fundamental principles underpinning our policy	3
The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education	3
Aims	4
Encouraging good attendance and punctuality	4
Support available for families	4
Reporting pupil absence and authorised absence	5
Unauthorised Absence	5
Extended Leave	5
Registration	6
Lateness	6
Responsibilities • Class teacher • Administration team • Attendance team • Executive headteacher	6
Monitoring of data	8
School procedures in cases for intervention Wave 2 – School intervention Wave 3 – LA and School intervention	8
Additional Needs	10
Safeguarding	10
Siblings	11
Known Medical cases	11
Headlice	11
Appendix 1: Responsibilities for school attendance	12

Introduction

We are a Christian school community that seeks to instil a **lifelong** love of learning. Our core values inspire and prepare our children to lead successful and fulfilling lives. We strongly believe that this is only possible when the children have consistently strong attendance in school, and it is essential that children learn from a very young age that they are expected to attend school, and regular attendance will enable them to do well. Instilling this understanding in younger children will

help to avoid truancy emerging for children later in their lives. It also establishes an appropriate work ethic that will be beneficial for the young people once they enter the world of work.

The fundamental principles underpinning our policy

At St Luke's we believe that good attendance plays an essential part in pupils' social and emotional development and academic attainment. Attending school punctually and regularly allows pupils to participate fully in the school community and builds the discipline necessary for a good transition to secondary school and the increasing independence of young adulthood. Good attendance is a learned behaviour.

To put this into context, nationally the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2 in 2022 the DfE reported that 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. Our experience at St. Luke's reflects this national picture.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

We have clear systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality and where problems and patterns are identified we believe in providing early support to ensure that difficulties are dealt with before they escalate.

We work in partnership with all children's services to ensure that all our pupils are enabled to achieve punctual, regular school attendance.

We will apply the Attendance Policy rigorously and consistently to build an environment where good attendance and punctuality is an expectation of all members of the school community.

We expect school staff to set an example and ensure that they arrive to school on time and demonstrate the value given to time in school. Good personal organisation and time keeping is part of our school ethos.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education
We feel that when we are talking about the importance of children attending regularly, it is important to remember the legal position.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an 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 a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Aims
Therefore, in this context, the aims of this policy are:

- To encourage prompt arrival at school.
- To encourage excellent attendance.
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance and for early identification of any difficulties.
- To enable the school to provide support where necessary to enable stronger punctuality and better attendance.
- To inform any formal interventions that are required, following the analysis of data and when informal interventions have not enabled the improvements needing to be achieved.

Encouraging good attendance and punctuality
At St. Luke's our values inform everything that we do.

Central to achieving high levels of pupil attendance is having a strong **partnership** with parents.

When we talk about wanting to instil a lifelong love of learning, we hope the impact of that will be that pupils take **responsibility** for their learning, evident in them making sure that they come to school regularly.

It is also important to us, that our policy of encouragement promotes **fairness**.

With fairness in mind, and from having spoken to lots of parents about this very issue, we have come to the conclusion that rewarding 100% attendance could seem unfair because of the inevitable bouts of illness that children generally get at some stage in their primary school lives, like chicken pox etc.

Instead, as a school, we hope to encourage strong attendance by celebrating progress and improvement.

We aim to do this in a number of ways that include:

- Highlighting where class attendance has improved on a weekly basis in celebration assembly and in the school newsletter;
- Publicising in classrooms when the class is improving;
- Recognising where improvements are being made and rewarding that improvement – whether that is an encouraging message to a parent, a small prize for the child, or some additional playtime for the class.

We encourage parents and staff to let us know when they feel a child is doing particularly well so that we can commend their effort.

Our ambition for St. Luke's is that good attendance is the norm and progress will be valued.

Support available for families
At St. Luke's we have an attendance team and it comprises:
Head Teacher, Calum Howard
Community Cohesion Leader, Christine Collins
Attendance Administrator, Absana Begum

If a parent is concerned about their child's attendance, perhaps they are struggling to establish routines in the morning at home for example, we strongly encourage you to reach out to this team by calling the school office on: 0207 987 1753 or by email to: office@stlukeslondon.org

More than likely in the first instance Christine Collins will make an arrangement to meet with you, to listen carefully to the challenges that you are facing and to then sign post you to support that may be available, either through school or through other agencies.

There is nothing to feel embarrassed about when reaching out for help. Parenting is hard. It is a sign of strength to ask for help and we are here to support. The more we can work together from the beginning, the less likely any formal intervention later on will be necessary.

Reporting pupil absence and authorised absence

- When a pupil is unable to attend school through illness parents/carers have a duty to inform the school by phone or in person and to give the reasons for their child's absence.

- Where a pupil is absent for 5 days or more due to illness, parents are expected to provide relevant evidence of the illness, for example, a doctor's appointment card stamped by the surgery, a doctor's note, the prescribed medication or a copy of the prescription.

- At the Attendance Team's discretion, in some cases parents may be asked to provide medical evidence for fewer than 5 days' absence.

- Where parents/carers have not informed the school of their child's absence, the school will phone on the first day of absence. If no contact is made, the parent will be reminded to call and give the reason (and evidence in relevant cases) for their child's absence.

Unauthorised Absence

- If parents/carers fail to give a reason or proof of illness the pupil's absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- If we are concerned about the whereabouts of a child, perhaps because we have not heard from the family, we will undertake a home visit and this may be announced or unannounced.
- Unauthorised absence is considered truancy by the borough. Continued unauthorised absence will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA), may lead to a fine and in the worst cases could lead to a requirement for the parent to attend court.
- Parent/carers can be referred for the FPN for 6 sessions of unauthorised absence.
- A Fixed Penalty Notice referral may be made if parents/carers of children fail to attend a school attendance (Panel) meeting to discuss their child's unauthorised absence or lateness.

Extended Leave

- In line with borough and national policy, parents requesting leave during term-time will be informed that they need to make a request in writing and the school has a Special Leave form that must be completed. We kindly ask that all requests for leave should be made no less than 10 days in advance.
- Where possible, the Head Teacher will meet parents before they take leave or, if necessary, afterwards to confirm school policy.
- The Head Teacher will consider each request very carefully. The general rule is that no leave during term time will be authorised. The only exception to this might be 'an emergency' where 'need' can be evidenced for example in a medical certificate.
- If a child has 5 days or more of unauthorised absence for travel/leave the parent/carer will be referred to the AWA and a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued. These Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by the local authority.
- After 21 consecutive unauthorised school days' leave, pupils will be removed from the school roll.

Registration

- Registers are kept in accordance with the guidelines issued in the LEA's circular 3.99, the Marking and Maintenance of Registers.
- Teachers complete their class register twice a day, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. This is a legal requirement.
- The appropriate codes and instructions for completion are detailed in the Staff Handbook.
- A termly register inspection is carried out by the Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA).

Lateness

- School begins at 9:00 a.m. Class teachers and support staff are in the classrooms from 8:45am ready to greet children. The school gates are open from 8:45am. Parents are asked to drop their child at the designated entry point for their child's year group and then the child will walk to their classroom. School gates are then locked from 9:00am and any child arriving after that time, will have to go into school via the school office.
- The registers will be taken at 9:00am and any child arriving in school after 9:00am will be marked in as late.

- Lateness is monitored by the Attendance Team and followed up as necessary. Persistent lateness will result in a referral to the Attendance Officer. The thresholds are as follows:

  If a child is late 5 times, they will receive a phone call or a letter from the school, highlighting the concern and setting an expectation of improvement.

  If the child has 15 or more 'lates' the school will have to refer the child and their family to the Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA). The exception to this would be if the parent has informed the school of the reason for the continued lateness and the school have agreed for this to continue as part of a wider plan over time.

  If the poor punctuality continued, then the Local Authority would be requested to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

- If a pupil is to arrive at school after 10 a.m. parents/carers must phone the school before 10 a.m. to order a school lunch, otherwise they will be expected to provide their child with a packed lunch.

Responsibilities
All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.
The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Ensuring their class registers are completed as accurately and as fully as possible, promptly at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, and notifying the admin. staff as quickly as possible, with any known reasons for absence.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either very good or poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for absence offered by children and their parents/ guardians.
- Informing the Head Teacher/Community Cohesion leader where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Informing the Head Teacher/Community Cohesion leader where they notice significant improvements.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation (but not necessarily taking this any further as this is the responsibility of the Attendance team).
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings/days.

Administration staff
Office staff are responsible for:

- Following up specific requests from the Head Teacher/Community Cohesion leader for information about individuals.
- Contacting families (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers) where any absences are not explained or where concerns are raised about absence, to understand why the pupil is not in school and when the pupil will return.
- Make sure that where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code is inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, and no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Follow the school's procedures for first day calling.
- Monitoring individual attendance daily where concerns have been raised.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO) and Attendance Team.
- Providing a point of contact between individual teachers, the Executive headteacher, the Community Cohesion leader and the school's Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO).
- Informing the Head Teacher/Community Cohesion leader on a formal and an informal basis of patterns of attendance noted.
- Promptly processing on a daily basis.

- Processing and following up holiday request forms.

The School Attendance Team (Headteacher, Community Cohesion Leader and Admin Officers)

The Attendance team is led by the Head Teacher, Calum Howard.

The Attendance Team is responsible for:

- Including information about attendance trends and class percentages in the school bulletin.
- Ensuring the Executive headteacher is aware of the patterns of attendance noted.
- Providing a point of contact between individual teachers and the school's Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA).
- Collating weekly attendance percentages.
- Completing relevant statistical returns to the Local Authority.
- Making sure registers are completed accurately and fully, complying with termly register inspections by the Local Authority.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Use the persistent absenteeism framework for identification of pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.
- Ensuring that our Attendance policy is followed and that the actions from Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA) and school attendance meetings are carried out.
- Liaising with and discussing with parents (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers), issues relating to attendance.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases.
- At least fortnightly meetings with the Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA):
    1. Attendance record for any child with less than 90% attendance.
    2. Attendance record for any child whose absence shows particular trends.
    3. Attendance record for any child who has been frequently arriving at school late.
    4. Class percentage totals.
    5. Information is shared about previous cases and decisions taken about the next stages of intervention where this is appropriate. Decisions taken are recorded on the attendance monitoring sheet. It is expected that reasonable steps have been taken by the school prior to Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA) intervention.
    6. Following the meeting with the Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA), other professionals supporting the child/family are notified of the outcome and agreed actions are discussed with office staff and followed up as appropriate.

The Head Teacher:
The Head Teacher is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance and setting of challenging attendance target for the school.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Acting as a point of contact for teaching and non-teaching staff where concerns need to be raised or advice sought.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Liaising with and discussing with parents (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers), issues relating to attendance.
- Overall preparation and implementation of our Attendance policy.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases.
- Making sure the importance of attendance has a high profile in Collective Worship.
- Report statistics to the governors as part of the Headteacher's Termly Report.
- Every three months, in partnership with the Community Cohesion leader and the school's Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA), scrutinise the attendance for each child in the school, tracking children whose attendance is between 90 and 95%, and taking appropriate action to encourage a stronger level of attendance.

Monitoring of data
As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial.
To make sure that any intervention undertaken by the school is fair, we monitor data for the attendance of each pupil and groups of pupils, very carefully.

At least weekly, the Attendance team will review the attendance data for all children who have attended 90% or less of the time in accordance with the responsibilities outlined above.

Every three months, the Attendance team with the Attendance and Welfare Adviser (AWA) will review the attendance data for all pupils in the school.

With the help of the DfE we are now able to benchmark our attendance against other schools nationally as well.

The Executive headteacher will report to the governing body, in the termly 'Headteacher's Report', the attendance percentage for the school and on any specific trends and/or challenges, including comparators, that need to be reflected and acted upon.

School procedures in cases for intervention
As said already in this policy document, our concern is to work in partnership with parents. We hope that the earlier we intervene, the more successful that will be. And the focus to any intervention is to identify what the barriers to regular attendance or good punctuality are, so that support can be given or accessed to enable the child to attend better.

Sometimes we will be able to provide the support and other times, other agencies will be better placed to do so.

As such, we work in partnership with an range of agencies to support families who are struggling with regular attendance with that clear focus clear focus on removing barriers and thereby enabling the child to attend better.

Although a range of strategies and actions will be taken on an informal basis, particular steps are applied where a child's attendance is unexplained or falls below 95%.

Wave 2 – School intervention

Where an absence is unexplained the Community Cohesion Leader will send home a note requesting details of the child's absence or make contact to discuss the absence.

If the note is not returned, or the reason for the absence remains ambiguous, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. All notes are recorded on the registers themselves and then stored in the pupil's file.

If attendance is erratic and/or falls below 95%, letters are sent from the Head Teacher drawing attention to the child's attendance. Across the year this letter may:

- Serve to keep the parent aware of their child's attendance;
- Invite the parent to come into school to discuss the attendance and think of ways it might be improved, seeking to find ways of overcoming barriers to strong attendance;
- Provide encouragement when the level of attendance shows improvement;
- Ensure the school understands any in school barriers to attendance so that they can be addressed.

Both the Community Cohesion Leader and the Head Teacher, will work hard at this stage, in partnership with parents, to try and get the attendance improving. Intervention at this stage is rooted in Growth Mindset approaches, where it is possible for it to be better, where we can get back on track, and where together with parents we endeavour to help, support and seek to find solutions.

Normally at this stage we hope that parents will access support voluntarily. Sometimes this may include a referral to services and organisations that can provide more support than the school are able to offer and we would normally explore this through the completion of an Early Help Assessment.

Generally, this second wave of intervention is all that it takes to convey a strong message regarding the importance of regular attendance and we see a sustained improvement from then on. Anything agreed is regularly reviewed and closely monitored.

Wave 3 – LA and School intervention

If monitoring demonstrates that improvements have not been made and attendance continues to fall, the school has to and will refer the matter to the Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO). In such instances:

1. The parent/carer will be invited to meet with the Attendance and Welfare Officer (AWO) and Community Cohesion leader where the concerns will be outlined, the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family will be explained as will the potential need for legal intervention in future if improvement is not achieved, however this meeting will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.
2. Attendance will then continue to be closely monitored. Where improvement is not evident and attendance falls to 90% or below the parent/carer will be requested to attend an Attendance Panel which comprises: Attendance and Welfare Advisor (AWA), the Community Cohesion leader and the Headteacher when possible. The outcome of the Attendance Panel will be a plan of action for the family.
3. If further monitoring demonstrates that the child's attendance has not improved, the local authority will serve a Court Warning letter.
4. If further monitoring demonstrates that the child's attendance has still not improved, the local authority will serve a Court Summons and the parent may face prosecution.

What is encouraged at every stage is improvement. ***So long as sustained improvement is evident the interventions will, at some level, cease***. This is because children only have one chance for their education and their education is their right and their entitlement. When parents and carers choose to have children there needs to be an understanding that sacrifices need to be made. One of those will be relinquishing the opportunities to take leave in term time. All parents and carers have a responsibility to make sure their children receive their entitlement to education and thereby get the best possible start in the life that has been created for them.

Additional needs

At St. Luke's we recognise that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore we hold the same attendance ambition for these pupils as we do for any other pupil. However, through our work to support parents, we will seek to be mindful of the barriers that these pupils may face and put in additional support where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

We will:

- Seek to hold sensitive conversations to develop good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.
- Together with the parent, we will consider whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Work with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- In addition, we will work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- And we will also seek to establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance or those who have experienced a long period of absence.

Where we have children who require additional support, we will regularly monitor the attendance data for these pupils/groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. For further information we advise parents to read our policy for 'Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions' policy which can be found on the school's website in the knowledge that we will work together to find the right way to meet the educational needs of your child at this time.

In all cases, we will show sensitivity and seek to understand how parents and children feel and what they think will help to improve their attendance so that together we develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Safeguarding

Our primary concern is to make sure that all children are safe and sometimes patterns of poor attendance can be an indicator that there are concerns for a child.

Children have a right to an education, and frequently not being given access to that right, is a safeguarding concern. If a child is persistently absent (90% and below), targeted intervention will be delivered and escalation as appropriate will be considered by the school. In cases of persistent absence, a MAST referral will be made where required.

Staying in communication with us about the reasons for your child's absence can allay many of the concerns.

To enable us to be in close communication, we always seek to have at least two emergency contacts for every child, with working telephone numbers.

If a child is deemed vulnerable, we will meet with the parents, and foster carers and/or social workers if deemed necessary as well as other agencies if needed.

One of our values at St. Luke's is safety and children are safe when in school.

If children are absent from school, and the reason for their absence is not known, then they may become deemed as Missing in Education. There are strict protocols to find children who are 'missing in education' and we will work with the Local Authority to establish the safety and whereabouts of the child.

Siblings

• Where one child in a family is ill, parents are expected to bring any other sibling(s) to school as usual.

Known Medical Cases

• Children with on-going health issues that we know of or short-term acute illness such as chickenpox may be exempt from the follow-up procedures and dealt with on an individual basis at the discretion of the Attendance Team.

Headlice

- Children's absence from school due to head lice should be minimised. If live lice are detected on children while at school, their parent/carer will be called to collect the child, treat their hair and, if time, return the child to school.

- If a parent/carer calls the school in the morning to say that their child will be absent due to head lice, they will be advised to treat their hair and then bring them into school as soon as possible.

Appendix 1:

Responsibilities for school attendance – taken from: 'Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities Published: May 2022' by the Department for Education.

	Parents and expected to:	Schools are expected to:
All Pupils	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.	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.
Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent	Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	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. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

Persistently absent pupils	Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care. Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
Severely absent pupils	Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers	Not applicable.	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.
Support for pupils with medial conditions or SEND with poor attendance	Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up working 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. Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.
Support for pupils with a social worker	Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.