ICKNIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is a non statutory Policy

September 2025

Policy Background	
Author	Carla islip
Original date	November 2025
Revised	
Version	One
Reviewed	Yearly
Date of next Review	September 2026
Approval by	**Governors**
Audience	Staff and Parents/Carers
Published	Staff Induction Pack School Website

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Believe, Achieve, Succeed

Purpose

Our school aims to promote good attendance, reduce absence (including persistent absence) and act early on patterns of absence that impact on pupils' education. Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled is the key purpose of this policy.
We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Icknield Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them in line with the DfE's 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' document
Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Research and Evidence

Persistent absence can leave many gaps in a child's learning, thus making it difficult for them to keep up with their peer group in the classroom. Research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning that is missed. Children who experience difficulties with their learning may also find it more difficult when they return to school, whilst younger children may find it difficult to renew friendships with their classmates. If allowed to remain unchecked, persistent absence and lateness can significantly impact on a pupil's progress and achievement.

Absence during the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has a significant impact on outcomes in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Regular attendance in reception ensures children access the full progression of systematic phonics teaching, daily opportunities to practise blending and segmenting, and the wider language-rich experiences that underpin early reading. Where absence is high, children often miss key stages of grapheme–phoneme correspondence and fluency development, leading to gaps in decoding skills and lower confidence when faced with unfamiliar words. National evidence shows that children with poor attendance in EYFS are less likely to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check, contributing to a widening disadvantage gap.

Legislation and Guidance

The law entitles every child of statutory school age (the term after their 5th birthday) to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal requirement of every parent to ensure that their child receives that education either by attendance at school or education outside of 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 and on time. 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.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:
• promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
• ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
• ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school;
• ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, local Headteacher Associations, the Local Authority and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance protocols. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

At Icknield Primary School, we define regular attendance as 98%. As part of our annual written report to parents and carers, their child's attendance records are shared. This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

The school develops a culture of expectation around attendance through Attendance Awards for the best class weekly attendance in each Key Stage assembly, and certificates for children achieving the target of 98% attendance in each term.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body

The governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. Attendance figures are reported to the governing body each term and actions taken to promote good attendance and to support families are shared in meetings.

The headteacher (Mrs Victoria James) and Senior Attendance Champion (Mrs Carla Islip)

The headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion are responsible for:

- Development of the policy in line with government advice
- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data with the attendance officer and reporting data to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Meeting with parents and carers to promote the good attendance of pupils and prevent patterns emerging
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle absence

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The Senior Attendance Champion and School Attendance Officer:
The Senior Attendance Champion is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class teachers
Class teachers are responsible for:
- recording attendance on a daily basis
- using the correct codes
- submitting this information to the school office
- speaking with parents and carers about initial attendance concerns as directed by the headteacher

School office staff
School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

Recording attendance

Attendance register
We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.
We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:
- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Classrooms open at 8:45am each day, all school gates will be closed at 8:55am. Children arriving after this time must be escorted by an adult to the school office and signed in. Registers are closed at 9:15am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm and will be kept open until 1.40pm in Y1-Y6. Afternoon registration for EYFS will be taken at 1:00 and close at 1:10pm.

Children are expected to attend for the full 190 days of the academic year.

Unplanned absence
The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents and carers should use the Studybugs app or website to report children who will be absent from school each day. A Studybugs button is available on the school website. Where unavailable, parents and carers can email the administration inbox (admin@ipsluton.co.uk) or call and leave a message on the pupil absence line (01582 534000, option 1) each day of the child's absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. After five days of absence, medical evidence for absence will be requested to support the school's understanding of the absence.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or if the pupil's attendance is less than 94% (and deemed at risk of being a 'persistent absentee') the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence
Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents and carers are to email the administration inbox (admin@ipsluton.co.uk) or call and leave a message on the pupil absence line (01582 534000, option 1) stating that the child is at an appointment. A letter stating the medical appointment details will need to be shown to the school office upon the child's return to school.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours, or provide medical evidence that this was unavoidable. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The school will not authorise medical or dental appointments without an appropriate appointment card or doctors note. In general, 2 hours will be adequate and children should attend school before and after any appointments.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 states which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality
A pupil who arrives late, but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (8.55am – 9:15am). After the register has closed, children will be marked as unauthorised absent.

Children who arrive to school after gates have been closed at 8:55am must be taken by an adult to the school office. The adult will be required to sign the child(ren) in using the booking in system. School lunch preferences must be recorded by the office staff.

All arrivals after the close of the register (9:15am) and without previous authorisation will be unauthorised. This will be reflected by the code 'U' in the school register. Unauthorised lateness will have a detrimental effect on children's attendance percentage. In accordance with DFES guidelines, all unauthorised lateness will effectively result in an unathorised absence for that session.

Two or more late arrivals will generate an email home. Repeated late arrivals will result in investigation by the child's Class Teacher. If lateness continues a meeting will be arranged with the School Attendance Champion or School Attendance Officer.

Please see Appendix 1 for the lateness flowchart.

Late Collection

Under Section 457 of the Education Act 1996 and the relevant Regulations, the school governing body has the power to impose a charge on parents or carers who fail to collect their child from school within reasonable time after the close of the school day or after school activity.

The school accepts, however, that a variety of emergency situations can arise due to unforeseen circumstances and will ensure that charges are not imposed on the parent where there is a genuine unforeseen emergency. Notification must be given to the school as soon as the situation arises or when collecting the child.

Late collection will be monitored by the school. The school operates a late charge system as follows:

- Should a child not be collected at the end of the normal school day, their names will be recorded in the late collection register. They will be supervised outside of the school office. A late collection fee of £5 per 15 minutes will be charged.
- If a child is not collected by 5pm the charge will increase to £10 per 15 minutes to cover salary costs.
- If a child is not collected by 5:10pm, the school will use the contact numbers liston on the school management information system (Arbor) to find out the reason for non-collection. Following this, if a child remains uncollected the school will contact social care. If this is unsuccessful and we have had no response by 5:30pm, a member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact the Headteacher and then the local police station as the child concerned will then be considered to be abandoned.

Following up absence:
Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by contacting the parent through Studybugs, Arbor or by text if the parent does not access the relevant apps
- Following this up with a phone call to confirm the reason for absence.
- Home visits will be made if contact is not made with parents and carers
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

Reporting to parents

Parents and carers can access their child's attendance records through the StudyBugs app or website and viewed on their child's Arbor account. A copy of their child's attendance record is annually included within the written end-of-year report.

If the school has identified that the child's attendance has fallen below 98%, a first email will be sent to parents and carers to inform them of this. Class Teachers will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for and impact of their child's absence.

Should attendance fall below 94%, parents and carers will be invited into school to attend an Early Help meeting with the Senior Attendance Champion or Attendance Officer. At this meeting parents or carers may be offered a 'parenting contract' to support attendance.

Where a child has had 2 days of unauthorized absence within a 10 week period, parents will receive a letter informing them they are at risk of falling below the school attendance target or becoming a persistent absentee. They will be reminded of the sanctions that can and will be placed on them by the Local Authority if absenteeism does not improve. See legal sanctions set out below.

Parents will also be notified through Studybugs where their child's attendance has improved, for example where their child has moved out of Persistent Absence or attained the school's attendance target of 98%.

Please see Appendix 1 for the Attendance Flowchart

Legal sanctions

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, for example returning to school on the fourth day (before the five-day minimum) or using the days before and after school holiday dates during the academic year, or repeated absence for birthdays or other family events. The local authority will exercise discretion and consider issuing a penalty notice if appropriate.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by the school. The school will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Luton Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

Attendance monitoring

Attendance monitoring takes place continually within the school, supported by the Studybugs attendance support programme, with alerts generated for Class Teachers, Heads of Year and the School's Attendance Champion and Attendance Officer. Termly meetings take place with the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority.

If a pupil's absence falls below the thresholds set out in the Attendance Flow, parents will be informed accordingly.

The persistent absence threshold is 90%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is 90% or lower, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Our school collects and stores attendance data on the School Information Management System (Arbor), Studybugs (Attendance) and on the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS). It is used for internal attendance monitoring, which includes:

- Tracking the attendance of individual pupils and ensuring that patterns of absence do not begin.
- Identifying whether or not there are particular groups of pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Monitoring and evaluating those pupils identified as being in need of intervention and support.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed each year and in line with guidance from the local authority or DfE by the head teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:
Child protection and safeguarding policy
Relationships Policy
Leave of Absence policy

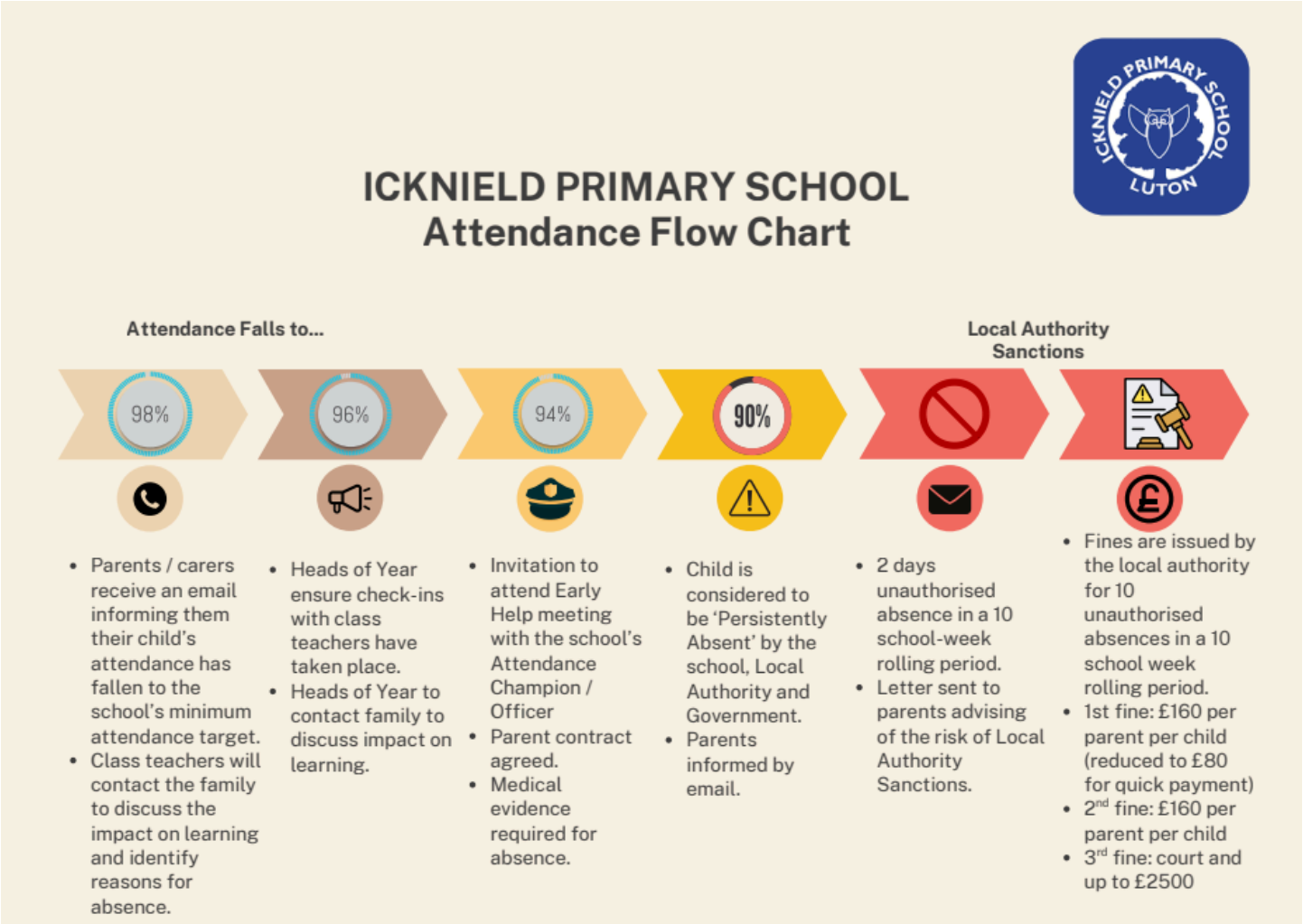
Appendix One

Attendance Flow

The following attendance flow has been created in line with the table of responsibilities from the DfE's 'Working Together to improve Attendance' document…

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk)]

Attendance Concerns



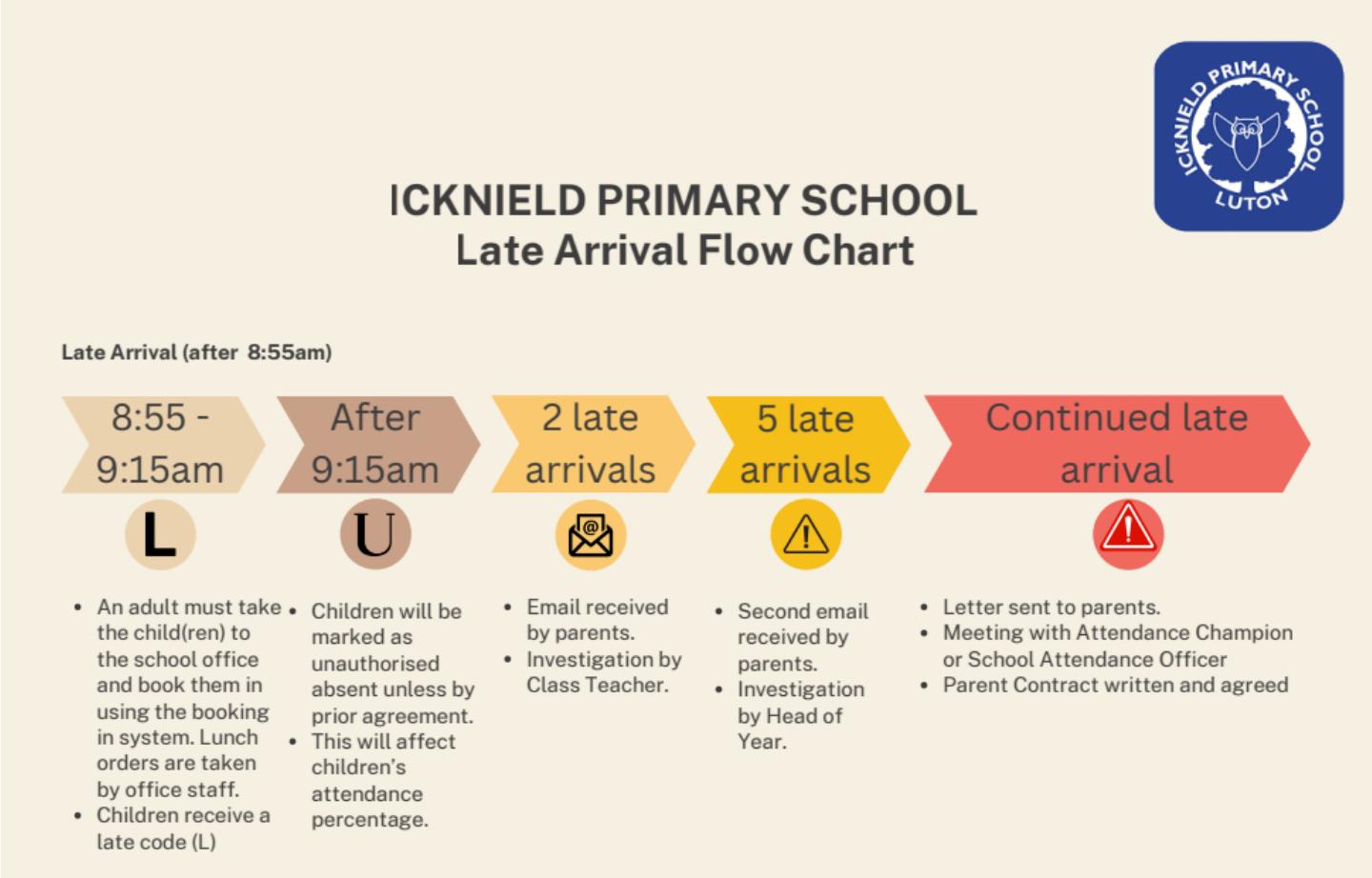
A record of all conversations will be made by the person contacting parents and carers on CPOMS.

Discussions to support Families

Requesting Leave of Absence for Exceptional Circumstances

If a family has no other choice than to request a leave of absence for an exceptional circumstance, a Leave of Absence form can be requested from the school office. A member of the Senior Leadership Team will invite parents or carers in to discuss the reason for the leave of absence, whether one parent could stay at home to ensure the children do not miss their education and the expected return date. Exceptional circumstances are discussed on a case by case basis. Exceptional circumstances are not considered to be cheaper holiday costs, cooler weather climate in the country to be visited nor previous holiday not taken in past years. Following the meeting, if the Leave of Absence request is still to be made, the form will be completed and returned to the office. A letter containing details of next steps that may be taken will be sent to parents/carers. Return dates will be closely monitored. If a child does not return to school on the expected date and their absence is beyond 20 school days, the child may lose their school place and would need to reapply when they return.

Late Arrival into School Flowchart



Appendix 2

Attendance Frequently Asked Questions

https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Education_and_learning/Other-support/attendance-support-team/Pages/school-attendance.aspx

Code of Conduct

https://www.luton.gov.uk/Education_and_learning/Lists/LutonDocuments/PDF/luton-pcn-code-of-conduct.pdf