



# Sudbourne Primary School

## Attendance Policy

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## Introduction

Sudbourne is a happy, successful school and all children play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all pupils to strive for excellence. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Pupils should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect learning. There is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results for children. Children who frequently miss school typically fall behind in their work and their learning outcomes can be harmed.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and legal guardians. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility. The failure of a child to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. The school will monitor absence patterns and requests for absence with a mindfulness that some children may be vulnerable to extremism or unacceptable practices such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

It is very important that parents and carers make sure that their children attend regularly, and that the school works hard to support this. This policy sets out how together the school community can raise attendance and make sure all children flourish at Sudbourne.

## Aims

- To achieve an attendance target of 96% or above
- To provide parents/carers with clear understanding of their responsibilities relating to their child's attendance.
- To ensure that all children benefit from regular and punctual attendance

## Expectations

### **We expect that children will:**

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time
- Feel able to tell a member of staff if there is a family problem with regular and punctual attendance

### **We expect that all parents/carers will:**

- Ensure their children attend school every day and arrive in good time for the start of the school day
- Contact the school no later than 9.30 a.m. on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for absence
- Not arrange holidays to take place during term time
- Provide the school with up-to-date telephone contact details so that they can be easily reached at any time during the school day
- Inform the school, in confidence, about any problem which might negatively affect their child's attendance or punctuality

### **Parents/carers can expect that the school will:**

- Record their child's attendance regularly, accurately, and efficiently

- Make every reasonable effort to contact the child's parent/carer when their child fails to attend school without good reason
- Support parents and carers who may, for whatever reason, find it difficult to get their children to school on time
- Make all efforts to encourage regular attendance and excellent punctuality
- Undertake regular attendance checks and follow up with parents/carers on any attendance issues
- Monitor poor attendance follow up on a fortnightly basis
- Celebrate good attendance and punctuality
- Report to parents their child's attendance in their end of year report.
- Ensure that all families, children, staff, and governors are familiar with our policy and procedures

## Regular Attendance

**Regular attendance at Sudbourne is defined by the Local Authority as 96% or above.**

The Law relating to Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

## Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. In order to classify the absence as authorised, the cause of the absence is required from the parent/carer in writing.

### Authorised absences

Are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

### Unauthorised absences

Are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence will lead to further action against parents or legal guardians. Examples include:

- Holidays due to parents working schedule/low cost holiday opportunity etc.
- Birthday celebrations
- Looking after other children
- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained

Sometimes a child may be reluctant to attend school and a parent/carer or a school staff member may suspect this is for reasons other than illness. In this situation, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter, avoids the issue and usually makes things worse. It is much better for parents/carers to raise the issue immediately with school staff and for all parties to support the child in order to solve the problem.

## Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason.**

Persistent absence is therefore categorised as attendance less than 90%.

## Parent/Carer Absence Procedure

If a child is absent, parents/carers should follow this procedure:

1. Contact the school by telephone as soon as possible, and before 9.30 a.m. where possible, on the first day of absence. Absence messages can be left on the school voicemail before office hours. Direct messages can be left with office staff from 8.00 onwards.
2. Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence. Parents/carers must do this even if they have already telephoned the school.

OR

1. Visit the school and report to reception to complete a 'yellow absence slip,' providing the school with an explanation of the absence.

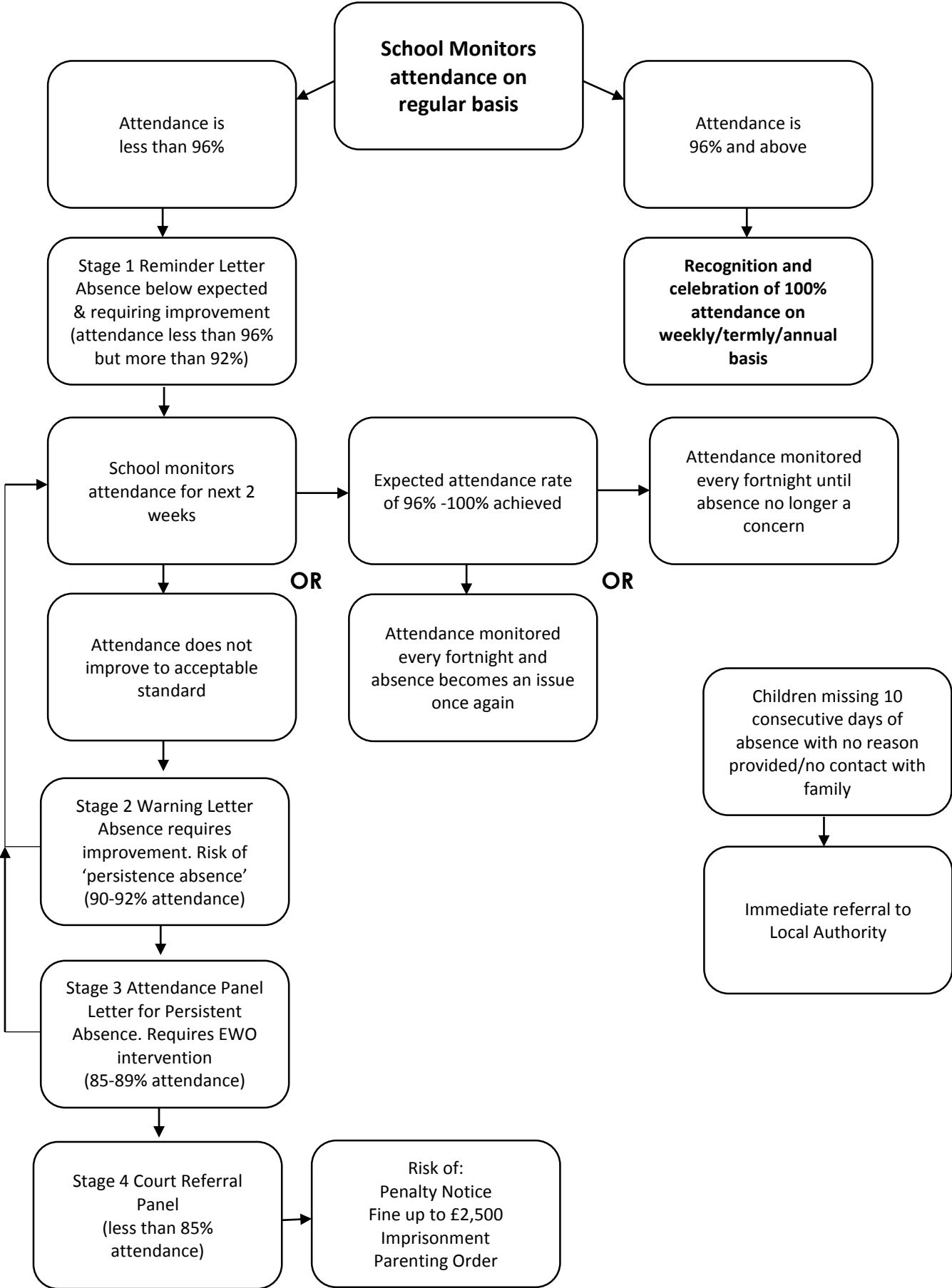
NB: In order for absence to be coded properly on the register and accurate authorisation decisions made, we ask parents/carers to provide as much information as possible regarding the reason for absence.

## School Absence Procedure

If a child is absent the school will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if the school has not heard from the family by 9.30 a.m. to identify reasons for absence
- Assess whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Contact parents/carers to follow up on any absence for which no reason has been provided. If, after 1 week, we are still not provided with a reason for the absence, it will be coded as 'unauthorised absence'
- Track absence on an ongoing basis and follow the absence protocol outlined below, with the support of the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) from Lambeth:

School's Absence Protocol



## School's Absence Procedures

Absence Level	School Response
<b>Absence dips below 96% over a term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 1 Letter to alert parents/carers to concerns               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See Appendix 1</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 2 week window for attendance to improve</li> <li>• Phone calls/letters regarding attendance/absence logged</li> </ul>
<b>No improvement after 2 weeks monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 2 Letter sent               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See Appendix 2</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Agree strategies to improve attendance</li> <li>• Continue in-school monitoring</li> <li>• Phone calls/letters regarding attendance/absence logged</li> <li>• Absence due to illness will require medical evidence (doctor's note)</li> </ul>
<b>No improvement after additional 2 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 3 Letter sent               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See Appendix 3</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Set up Attendance Panel meeting to agree strategies to improve attendance</li> <li>• Invite parents/carers and Local Authority EWO.</li> <li>• Phone calls/letters regarding attendance/absence logged</li> <li>• Absence due to illness will require medical evidence (doctor's note)</li> </ul>
<b>No improvement after Attendance Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Visit(s)</li> <li>• Court Warning Letter(s)</li> <li>• Referral to Court Proceedings</li> <li>• Court proceedings</li> </ul>
<b>Absence of 10 consecutive days without reason or if child protection or welfare concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate referral to EWO and/or Lambeth Social Care</li> </ul>

## Leave of Absence during Term Time

Sudbourne Primary School does not authorise term time holiday requests. Government legislation of September 2013 means that taking holidays in term time is not allowed.

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holiday interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children, and creates disruption in schools. Sudbourne Primary School therefore aims to discourage parents/carers from arranging family holidays during term time.

### Guidance for Parents/Carers

- A child does not have a right or entitlement to term-time leave for the purposes of an annual family holiday, and that term time leave can only be authorised at the discretion of the headteacher.
- The headteacher has the discretion to authorise a short period of absence in '**exceptional circumstances**' only.
- Exceptional circumstances can include:
  - Funeral of parent/grandparent/sibling
  - Loss of housing (sudden)
  - Wedding of parent/sibling

- Request for authorised absence during term-time must be made in writing, a minimum of 2 weeks in advance, using the Request for Term Time Absence Parent/Carer form – see Appendix 4. The school cannot give retrospective approval for leave.
- Whilst decisions will be made on a case by case basis, request will normally be refused.
- The school is not obliged to set working during term-time leave of absence.
- We track and monitor parent/carers requests for Leave of Absence.
- Occasionally, parents/carers take their children on holiday without requesting a leave of absence. If the school suspect that this has happened, a suspected holiday letter (see Appendix 5).
- Unauthorised absence in excess of 20 days may result in the pupil being taken off roll, and losing their place at school. This decision is undertaken in partnership with the school's EWO.

## Penalty Notices

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following Lambeth's Penalty Notice position. For further information, see: <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-attendance/school-attendance-guide>

*You are committing an offence if your child doesn't attend school regularly and it is not agreed by the school (unauthorised absence). In some cases unauthorised absence may result in prosecution.*

*Penalty Notices were introduced as an alternative to prosecution. If paid within deadlines, a Penalty Notice does not require a court appearance, but still aims to improve attendance.*

### Cost of a Penalty Notice

Fines are issued by the council on behalf of schools and are:

**£60** per parent, per child, if payment is made within 21 days

**£120** per parent, per child, if paid after this but within 28 days

*You have up to **28 days** from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If full payment is not received within this time, we are required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of unauthorised absence by your child.*

*If proven, this can result in fines of up to £2,500 and/or a range of measures such as Parenting Orders, Community Sentences and imprisonment. If a parent is found guilty of the offence of failing to secure appropriate levels of attendance the parent will receive a criminal record.*

### When Penalty Notices are used

*When the school agrees for your child to miss school in advance or accepts your explanation, absence is 'authorised'. All other absence is 'unauthorised'.*

*Penalty Notices may be used where absence is unauthorised, for example when:*

- a parent has taken their child on holiday during term without authorisation, especially when this means pupils miss exams, e.g. SATs or GCSEs.
- enquiries made at school after a truancy sweep show the pupil's absence at that time as unauthorised
- pupils are regularly late for school after the register has closed.
- a pupil has eight or more unauthorised absences within the previous ten week period.

Lambeth, 2 February 2018

## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day they will struggle to catch up with the first lesson. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for other pupils. This can be embarrassing for the child and can result in further absence. Extreme lateness, in excess of 30 minutes, is coded as 'unauthorised absence'.

### Start of School and Registration

- Sudbourne Nursery has a staggered start with children able to attend nursery from 8.30 a.m. onwards for Morning Nursery session, with registration taken at 9.00 a.m., and from 12.15 p.m. onwards for Afternoon Nursery session, with registration taken at 12.45 p.m.
- Reception classes (EYFS) have a staggered start with children able to attend school from 8.45 a.m. onwards with registration taken at 9.00 a.m.
- Key Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2) has a staggered start with children able to attend school from 8.45 a.m. onwards with registration taken at 9.00 a.m.
- Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) has a formal start at 8.45 a.m. with registration taken at 8.45 a.m.

### Registration Window

- Sudbourne has a **30 minute** registration window. This means that if your child arrives no later than 30 minutes after the register is taken (see above), they will be marked as L – late in the register.
- However, if your child arrives **more than 30 minutes after the register** is taken, this will be recorded as U for 'unauthorised absence'.

## How the School Manages Lateness

- Pupils are expected to arrive at school in time for registration.
- Pupils not in class when registration is taken are marked down by the class teacher as absent.
- Pupils arriving late to school but within the registration window (before the register is officially closed) will then have their absent mark recoded as 'late arrival' (code L).
- Pupils arriving late to school and after the registration window (after the register is officially closed) will then have their absent mark recoded as 'arrival after registration' (code U).

## Late Arrival Procedures for Parents/Carers and Children

- The start of the school day is signalled by a bell rung at the School Gate at 8.45 a.m. for Key Stage 2 pupils, and 9.00 a.m. for Key Stage 1 and EYFS pupils.
- **Pupils arriving after this MUST report to the school office to sign the Late Book.**
- **Reason for lateness must be provided.**
- **Arrival time must be provided** - this is recorded in our registers and allows staff to identify if lateness is during the registration window or not.
- Each child will be given a Late Card to take with them to their class teacher to indicate to the class teacher that the child's arrival at school has been noted.
- Office staff will use the entries in the Late Book to finalise class registers and recode 'absent' marks as either later before registration or late after registration accordingly.

NB: If the child enters class after the register has been taken **without** a Late Book entry, they will be in school but continue to be marked in the register as absent. This causes serious safeguarding issues (e.g. in the event of a fire or other emergency) and unnecessary anxiety for parents/carers as we contact parents/carers to identify reasons for absence.

## Monitoring of Lateness

Late marks will be monitored.



Parents/carers of pupils who reach 10 'lates' in any 10 week period will be contacted by the school and asked to improve their child's punctuality.

Where there is a continued failure to improve, parents/carers will be asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the reasons for the lateness. There is a risk that with persistent lateness that the case could be referred to Lambeth who may decide to issue a penalty charge.

It is all parents and carers' responsibility to ensure their children are in school on time. The school requires all parents and carers to agree to that responsibility. If parents/carers are having problems getting their child(ren) to school on time, they can approach the school at any time and the school will work to support the family wherever possible.

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### Late Collection After School or After School Club

Similarly, late collection of pupils from school causes problems. The school understands that sometimes there are unavoidable reasons why a parent/carer may be late collecting a child from school. However, persistent late collection is not acceptable.

Children can easily become distressed if they are not collected on time. In addition, the school does not have staff available with the time or the training to manage children after regular school hours.

### Late Collection Fine

Parents/carers will receive a warning letter if they collect their child more than 15 minutes late 3 or more times in one term.

After this, any further late collection will lead to a £5 fine for each 15 minutes per child that the child is late.

### School Targets

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance – this equates to each pupil missing a maximum of 7 days across the year or 1-2 days per term.

We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. However, our target is to do better than this, as we know that good attendance is the key to successful education and we believe our pupils deserve the very best education.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on attendance will be made available to parents and carers, and we ask for your full support.

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I have read and understood the Terms and Conditions of the Attendance Policy at Sudbourne Primary School.

Name of parent/carer:

Signed:

Date:

Child's Name:

Class:

## Revised and updated: February 2018

Full Governing Body Ratification Date	<b>23.3.2018</b>
Approved by Chair of Governing Body	<b>7.2.2018</b>
Approved by Headteacher	<b>7.2.2018</b>
Next Review Date	<b>March 2023</b>

## Appendix 1

Date

Dear

### **Re: Stage 1 Attendance Reminder Letter**

From our records, we can see that [insert name of child]'s attendance for the year now stands at [insert attendance percentage] and is below the expected standard attendance of 96% or above.

Please can you ensure that you have informed the school of the reasons for any absences not yet provided.

I am sure you are aware that it is important that [insert child's name] maintains regular attendance as any absence may interrupt their academic progress and may have an effect on friendships. You should also be aware that regular attendance is a legal requirement.

We will monitor attendance closely and expect to see an improvement in attendance during this time. If attendance does not improve it may be necessary to take further action.

We want to support all parents/carers in improving their child's attendance, so please do not hesitate to contact the school to let us know if there is anything we can do to help support you with your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 2

Date

Dear

### **Re: Stage 2 Attendance Warning Letter**

From our records, we can see that [insert name of child]'s attendance for the year now stands at [insert attendance percentage] and is considerably below the expected standard of attendance of 96% or above.

Children frequently get colds, stomach upsets, etc. and some time off due to illness is to be expected but we are concerned when attendance falls below 90%. Any further absence due to illness will need to be evidenced by a doctor's note.

Non-attendance at school for any reason is an important issue and must be treated seriously. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. There is a risk that if your child's attendance remains at the current level, a referral may be made by the school to Lambeth's Education Welfare Officer. We will monitor attendance closely and expect to see an improvement in attendance during this time.

We want to support all parents/carers in improving their child's attendance, so please do not hesitate to contact the school to let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 3

Date

Dear

### **Re: Stage 3 Attendance: School Attendance Panel**

From our records, we can see that [insert name of child]'s attendance for the year now stands at [insert attendance percentage] and is classified as 'persistent absence', for whatever the reason.

The school's Education Welfare Officer has requested that you attend a meeting to discuss [insert child's name]'s attendance and persistent absence. The EWO will be at Sudbourne on [DATE] and wishes to meet with you at [TIME].

During the Attendance Panel meeting, we will discuss any concerns you may have, so we can continue to support [insert child's name] in making good progress.

Failure to attend this appointment could lead to the school completing a formal referral to Lambeth for consideration of legal escalation.

As you have parental responsibility for [insert child's name] you are liable for prosecution if you fail to ensure your child attends school regularly and on time, as stated in the Education Act 1994, Section 444. Please note that the potential penalty for non-attendance is a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Please ensure that you attend this meeting. If you urgently need to reschedule, please contact the school office on 0207 274 7631 as soon as possible so that an alternative date/time can be confirmed.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## Appendix 4

### TERM TIME LEAVE ADVICE FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/Carers must ask permission for their child to be absent during term time, and it is at the Head Teacher's discretion to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. The Head Teacher may authorise leave during term time for exceptional circumstances only. If leave is taken without permission, or no application is made, parents/carers risk being issued with a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted upon their return. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for their child to have leave from school should complete this form and return it to school for authorisation at least two weeks before the proposed leave. The application will be discussed with the school's Link Educational Welfare Officer whose advice will guide the outcome.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations were made by the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) and came into force on 1 September 2013.

The amendments made it clear that Headteachers may only grant leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances. Any request for leave must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional leave at present by the Department for Education. However, from discussion with the DfE and professional associations it is suggested that exceptional leave would be:

- Rare
- Significant
- Unavoidable
- Short

(NAHT, 2014)

Any absence from school may impact on educational achievement, success in later life and longer term health and well-being.

Parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school where they are on roll.

Any unauthorised absence including taking term time leave not agreed with the school, can result in legal action being taken including Penalty Notices and court prosecution.

### Application for Leave During Term Time

PARENTS/CARERS SECTION					
Surname of child				First name	
Date of birth		Year		Class	
Full name of parent(s)/carer(s)					
Address of child					
Postcode		Telephone number			
Reason for request					
Departure and return Date					
Would your child miss any national tests or examinations?					Yes / No
Is his/her attendance above 95% over the past 12 months?					Yes / No
Has (s)he had leave during term-time in the last 12 months? (If so, please give dates, reasons, and number of school days leave)					Yes / No
Parent/Carer signature				Date	

Holiday in Term Time	(i) <b>approved</b> ____ school days	(ii) <b>not approved</b> ____ school days
Reasons		
Date parent/carer informed of approval/non-approval		
Head Teacher's signature		Date

## Appendix 5

Date

Dear

### **Re: Suspected Holiday**

I am writing with regards to [insert pupil's name]'s absence from school from [date] to [date].

It has come to our attention that [insert pupil's name] was absent as a result of leave of absence taken without permission.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. If absence was not due to a family holiday but was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, [inset pupil's name] will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded, a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer in respect of each child who is absent from school.

If a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored, and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you, and may lead to legal action being undertaken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve,

Yours sincerely

Headteacher