# ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR REGISTRATION OF PUPILS SEPTEMBER 2026

The Bridges Federation Attendance policy draws from the DfE statutory guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' See link below.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

We also have regard to the advice and information contained in the following non statutory guidance:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657995f0254aaa000d050bff/Arranging_education_for_children_who_cannot_attend_school_because_of_health_needs.pdf

Our approach to promoting good school attendance considers the key principles of inclusive practice:

**Support-first:** we aim to understand barriers and seek proportionate solutions.

**Clarity**: we are clear on what is expected of parents, as well as what absence the law allows and what is not allowed.

**Consistency:** we apply the same processes for all pupils while taking individual circumstances into account.

**Data-informed:** we use cohort analysis to plan targeted actions.

**Co-design:** we work with families, pupils, and local partners

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

All partners including parents, schools, governors and the local authority should work together to:

**Expect**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**Monitor**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**Listen and understand**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**Facilitate support**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

**Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## GENERAL

We expect all children to attend school every day. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure that their child receives this education. Where parents have decided to register their child in school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that school is open. The exception to this may be a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend school or having been given permissions for an absence in exceptional circumstances.

Children with good attendance do better in school and often find it easier to make friends. It is also vital for their educational progress, well-being and for their wider development. 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.

Every school has an 'ABIE,' an **Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectation** for our whole school attendance percentage which is set by the DfE. This is the minimum improvement expected for our schools and at the end of the year will be compared with our final attendance outcomes to measure progress and impact. We will always strive to achieve this and aim for improvements beyond if we can.

We expect children to arrive at school on time. The school gates are open from 8.45am until 9.00am to allow a staggered start for families. Any child arriving after 9.00am will be marked as late. Children arriving later than 9.30am without a good reason are marked as absent for the whole morning and this absence is recorded as an unauthorised late.

We acknowledge good attendance and punctuality and the class with the best weekly attendance and punctuality receives a certificate in assembly. The winning class each term receive medals. This is reported in the weekly school newsletter also. Each half term children with 100% attendance and

perfect punctuality receive a coloured wristband – red for autumn 1, orange for autumn 2, yellow for spring 1, green for spring 2, blue for summer 1 and purple for summer 2. At the end of the academic year children with 100% for the whole year receive rainbow coloured wristband. Each half term families where all children have achieved 98% or above are entered into a raffle to win a hamper full of goodies.

## PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

**It is your duty under the Education Act 1996 (section 444) to ensure your child attends school regularly. Failure to adhere to this could lead to a prosecution and a fine of up to £2500 or a prison sentence.**

Parents are aware through the Home School Agreement of their responsibilities for getting their children to school on time, every day. They are able to keep a track of their child's attendance percentage and punctuality via the school App.

Specifically, parents should:

- Inform the school in advance if they expect a child to be absent for any reason
- Inform the school if they need to pick their child up from school early
- Contact the school on the first day of absence, usually by phone or using the school App, to report their absence. They should do this before 9.30am.
- Send a note/email or App message giving the reasons for absence when a child returns to school (if they omitted to contact the school beforehand)
- Make sure the school has correct addresses and phone numbers
- Ensure the school has names, addresses and phone numbers of at least 3 people who can be contacted in an emergency

Late Collections

All children must be collected promptly at 3:30 pm. Late collection is not acceptable and must be avoided, as it impacts staffing and safeguarding procedures.

Parents should telephone the school if they are unavoidably delayed in picking up a child from school. If we do not hear from you, this could be considered a safeguarding concern and a referral to MASH may be made.

If a child is collected late, on the first occasion, a warning will be issued. Any subsequent late collections will incur a charge of £25.00 per child, per occasion.

This charge is applied to cover the additional staffing and supervision required to ensure children remain safe while on site.

If you have arranged for someone else to collect your child, the school must be informed before 3:00 pm so that the office can notify the class team.

If you are regularly unable to collect your child on time, we recommend using the after-school club based at Snowsfields Primary School. Please click here for further information: https://www.magnagroups.com/ Robert Browning Primary School - please book via the school office.

If your child attends an after-school club, they must be collected promptly at 4:30 pm. A warning will be issued for the first late collection. Any further lateness will result in the club place being withdrawn and a charge of £25.00 per child, per occasion.

Once issued, fines must be paid within one week.

If you travel to school on public transport, please check traffic and service updates to avoid delays.

We expect all parents to follow these rules to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and the smooth running of the school day

## TERM-TIME OR SPECIAL LEAVE

- If parents are requesting term-time or special leave they must complete a request form which is considered by the Leadership Team.
- The law in regards to term-time holiday states that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time. All requested leave during term time must be discussed and agreed with the Leadership Team and in exceptional circumstances a short period of absence may be agreed. It is not a right.
- The Southwark Education Inclusion Team supports its schools in discouraging term time leave absences.
- If the request is not authorised a warning letter will be issued and a copy will be placed in the child's record folder. The absence will be marked as an unauthorised absence.
- Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave of 10 or more morning and afternoon sessions during any 100 school sessions or 50 school days, not authorised by the school may receive a penalty notice.
- The unauthorised term time leave does not have to be consecutive for a parent to receive a penalty notice. In deciding whether to refer a case for the sanction of a penalty notice we will take into account whether there is any known evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave taken in the last 3 years and parents having previously been warned about a potential penalty notice.
- The school can off roll your child if they have been gone for 20 consecutive days.

## PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

- Children with attendance below 90% are considered 'persistently absent.' Children whose attendance falls below 50% are considered to be severely absent. These children and those at risk of becoming persistently absent are regularly monitored and support offered and allocated as appropriate. Children who are severely absent will be prioritised for support and intervention.
- Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic we will listen to and try to understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. We will take into

consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and recognise the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

- The Leadership Team, Office staff and our Learning Mentors are available to support families who are finding getting to school every day or on time difficult or for children who are at risk of becoming persistent or severe absentees and may be at risk of becoming disillusioned with education or school refusers.

- All children whose attendance is below 90% are monitored. Having noted the reasons for absence, we may contact parents via telephone or App message to offer support and the opportunity to discuss further.

- If a child's absence is below 90% and the absences are clearly unauthorised a warning letter is sent notifying parents that this is the case. The letter states the child's current percentage and the number/percentage of unauthorised absences. Parents will be offered the opportunity to discuss this and then invited to a more formal meeting if their child's attendance doesn't improve.

- Where families are working with Children's Social Care or Family Early Help, the child/ren's social worker or family early help practitioner is responsible for taking action and following up on attendance concerns, including liaising with the school.

- Where attendance is an ongoing concern, we take a 'support first' approach. This may include:
    - holding a TAF (Team Around the Family) including any other professionals involved with the family. Targets will be set with a clear period in which attendance will be monitored and reviewed.
    - Home visits or contact with the child if they have not been in school for more than 10 days
    - Referrals to relevant services (CAMHS, The Nest, Groundwork, Family Early Help, Parenting, AST, SEND)
    - School led attendance contract
    - Use of rewards and incentives
    - Consideration of how belonging and membership are fostered during absence
    - Exploration of 'push and pull' factors
    - Exploration of the child's needs - what is being communicated through non-attendance

- If we continue to be concerned about a child's attendance we may seek further advice from the Education Inclusion Duty Team. Senior Education Welfare Officers (SEWOs) are available to support with advice and next steps.

- No improvement in attendance could lead to a SEWO becoming involved. An attendance and inclusion team meeting will be held. A formal agreement may be entered into via an attendance

contract. At this point, the SEWO will decide whether a formal written "Notice to Improve" will be issued to the parent to inform them that they are at risk of legal action.

- No improvement could lead to statutory attendance (legal) action being taken.
- When a child is late after 9.00am we send an App message notifying the parents of this. Children who are regularly late are monitored. Parents may be invited to a meeting to discuss lateness and identify areas in which they may support. Support could include reward charts or getting ready for school charts or learning mentor support.

**First day contact procedures in cases of unexplained absence**

- Parents are expected to call the school office or send a message via the school App on the first day of absence to report their absence before 9.30am. We may make a follow up call if attendance has been reported via the school App to check in if needed.
- If we have not heard from the parent by 9.30am the administrator for attendance will start to call all the contact numbers provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence.
- The administrator for attendance will send the parents a text/App message notifying them that if we are unable to make contact and gain a reason for absence by midday then we may make a home visit
- If they are not able to get a response and ascertain a reason for the absence by midday then we will make a home visit (2 members of staff including a member of the safeguarding team.)
- If we are still unable to get a response then we will report it to the police to request a welfare check or to report as a "missing child."

## STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

### EXECUTIVE HEAD AND LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Executive Head and Leadership Team have responsibility for attendance and punctuality in school and for passing information on attendance to Southwark Education and the DfE. The Designated Safeguarding leads have responsibility for informing Social Services if any child with a social worker is absent.

A member of the Leadership Team interviews prospective parents and in the course of this meeting, points out parental responsibilities outlined in the school's Home School Agreement. This includes attendance and punctuality.

Each school has a Senior Attendance Champion, responsible for attendance and punctuality of all pupils.

At Tower Bridge Primary School this is Helen Viggiani, Co Head of School.

At Snowsfields Primary School this is Joanne Cranmer, Co Head of School.

At Robert Browning Primary School this is Anna Mulhern, Co Head of School.

The Senior Attendance Champion on the Leadership Team tracks children who are persistently and severely absent weekly and analyses attendance data both termly and annually to look for patterns for

key groups (boys, girls, SEND, pupil premium etc.) and identify further ways to improve whole school attendance and target those persistent and severe absentees. They also target children who are at risk of becoming persistently absent. They will benchmark their school's attendance data against local, regional and national levels including using the DfE 'View Your Attendance data' tool and termly 'Similar Schools' and 'Summary Reports' to identify areas for focus or improvement. They will then monitor in the data the impact of any efforts to improve attendance and use this to evaluate approaches and inform future strategies.

They share this information with governors each term via the Headteacher's report and during governor meetings. The link governors for attendance visit termly and reports back to the governing body.

The Senior Attendance Champion meets with the Education Inclusion Manager from the local authority termly for a 'Targeted Support Meeting.' Key families causing concern are discussed. A member of the Safeguarding team is on the gate every morning to note down those children who arrive late.

The Senior Attendance Champion in conjunction with the administrator in charge of attendance will ensure that the legally required information from the school registers is shared with the local authority in line with their requirements. This is through an electronic management system, Studybugs. The school will also share attendance data with the DfE (see link below)

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data

## ADMINISTRATOR IN CHARGE OF ATTENDANCE

At Tower Bridge Primary School this is Alison Clark (office@towerbridge.southwark.sch.uk, 0207 407 2959)

At Snowsfields Primary School this is Sarah Millar (office@snowsfields.southwark.sch.uk, 0207 525 9065)

At Robert Browning Primary School this is Laurie St Luce (office@robertbrowning.southwark.sch.uk, 0207 708 3456)

The administrator is delegated by the Headteacher for matters of attendance and punctuality and to ensure registers and statistics are kept up to date. They have day to day responsibility for dealing with matters of pupil enrolment and change of school. This includes the upkeep of all pupil paper records and computer data bases. The administrator in charge of attendance, in consultation with the Senior Attendance Champion (Co Head of School,) is the only person entitled to take children "off-roll". The administrator's other responsibilities include:

- Taking telephone messages/responding to App messages about pupil absence and recording details on data base
- Filling in children's names and time of arrival in school if they are late
- Printing off and filing a daily attendance sheet to use in the event of an emergency
- In case of the fire alarm sounding, taking the register folders to the playground and giving them to the teachers for checking.

- Keeping the school attendance data up to date
- Phoning parents on the first day or unexplained absence (see first day contact procedures above)
- Contacting parents if children are left in school after 3.30pm and keeping a record of pupils collected late
- Contacting parents to discuss unauthorised absences
- Recording on the data base the time, date and information received through phone calls, meetings, or written answers to letters or emails
- Sending out relevant letters, emails or App messages about unexplained absences and lateness if unable to contact parents via telephone.
- Checking e-registers every week and ensuring teachers are aware of how to complete them correctly
- Working out weekly statistics for the award of the class weekly attendance certificate
- Working out percentage attendance figures for the school and all classes
- Liaising with the Senior Attendance Champion with responsibility for attendance

## TEACHERS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Class teachers and assistants have responsibility for day to day monitoring of attendance and the upkeep of e-registers. Specific duties include:

- Marking e-registers at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions according to the stated procedures
- Ensuring that children arriving late report to the office so they can be marked in as present in school
- Notifying office staff of any known reason for absence and lateness if these are given by parents
- Informing the school's designated safeguarding leads as soon as possible about any concerns
- Informing the Leadership Team and Administrator if they have any information about a child leaving the school

## GOVERNORS

The governing body is expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.

- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

The link governors visit once a term and meet with the Senior Attendance Champion and report back to the governing body. School attendance at both individual and federation level is a standing item on both curriculum and full governing body meeting agendas.

## FAMILY EARLY HELP SERVICE (FEH)

Within Southwark, Family Early Help practitioners work using a 'whole family' approach to provide a holistic service to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce unauthorised absences and improve educational outcomes for our children.

Referrals can be made using the Early Help Referral form.

https://localoffer.southwark.gov.uk/education/specialist-services-offered-by-the-council/family-early-help-feh/

## EDUCATION INCLUSION TEAM (EIT)

The Education Inclusion Team provides advice and guidance to schools, families and professionals in Southwark on exclusions, penalty notices, managed moves and statutory functions relating to school attendance. Further support can be provided for children and young people at risk of permanent exclusion.

The Education Inclusion Team is responsible for delivering upon Southwark's statutory duties in relation to school attendance and exclusion, providing timely interventions when concerns arise. They work with families, schools and practitioners to implement legislation and guidance with the aim of improving children and young people's attendance and access to education, and to reduce the risk of exclusion.

They use a variety of strategies to fulfil this objective. They may include education legal planning meetings, attendance contracts, education supervision orders, school attendance orders, simple cautions, and/or prosecution. The team includes Senior Education Welfare Officers who can provide targeted assessment and intervention for attendance and inclusion issues.

https://services.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/children-s-social-care/family-early-help-feh/education-inclusion-handbook

## CHILDREN AT RISK OF MISSING EDUCATION (CME) (2016)

The schools in The Bridges Federation have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, we hold an emergency contact number for more than one person, ideally at least three per child/family. Emergency contact numbers are provided and updated by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. This goes beyond the legal requirement but is good practice and by doing so provides us with additional options for making contact with a responsible adult when a child is missing school and is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

Where school staff have concerns about a child, they report this immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who then uses their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated. The local authority have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The local authority should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

We will notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

When removing a pupil's name, our notification to the local authority will include: (a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent, (d) the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and (e) the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register.

If we are removing a pupil's name from the register for any of the following reasons (see below) – we will, with the local authority, make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child:

In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence, that

(i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;
(ii) the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and
(iii) the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.

In the case of a pupil that has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and

(i) at no time was their absence during that period authorised by the school
(ii) the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and
(iii) the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.

For further guidance about the duties of the local authority in relation to Children Missing in Education please refer to

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education

EDUCATION PENALTY NOTICE PROTOCOL CODE OF CONDUCT

**Southwark code of conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence**

The purpose of this local code of conduct is to ensure that penalty notices for school absence are issued in a manner that is fair and consistent across Southwark. The code sets out the arrangements for administering penalty notices in Southwark and must be adhered to by anyone issuing a penalty notice for school absence in this area. The code complies with relevant regulations and the Department for Education's national framework for penalty notices as set out in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance.

**Consultation**

This code has been drawn up in consultation with the headteachers and governing bodies of state-funded schools and the local police force.

**Legal basis**

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the Education Act 1996. They can only be issued in relation to pupils of compulsory school age in maintained schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, alternative provision (AP) academies, and certain off- site places as set out in s.444A(1)(b).

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 day of a fixed period or permanent exclusion (under section 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006). 2

The definition of a parent in the Education legislation can be wider to include any person who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care for the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Therefore, applies to:

- birth parents, whether they are married or are named on the birth certificate
- any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil or pupil
- any person who has day-to-day care of a pupil or pupil i.e. lives with and looks after the pupil

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (and subsequent amendment 2024) sets out how penalty notices for school absence must be used.

A penalty notice can only be issued by an authorised officer: that is, a headteacher or a deputy or assistant head authorised by them, an authorised local authority officer or a police constable. Southwark Local Authority authorised officers are the Family Early Help Education Inclusion Team or a delegated senior officer (contact earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk).

The national framework for penalty notices is published in statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance3'. It provides further national guidance on the operation of penalty notice schemes for school absence in England.

## RATIONALE

The national framework for penalty notices is based on the principles that penalty notices should only be used in cases where:

- support is not appropriate (e.g. a term time holiday) or where support has been provided and not engaged with or not worked, and
- they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance for that particular family.

## WHEN MAY A PENALTY NOTICE BE APPROPRIATE

When a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks4, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday),
- code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established),
- code O (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies), and
- code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period.

If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Southwark, where a child's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under S.443 or s.444 Education Act 1996 or if an Education Supervision Order is appropriate.

For the purpose of the escalation process, previous penalty notices include those not paid (including where prosecution was taken forward if the parent pleaded or was found guilty) but not those which were withdrawn.

The national framework does not prevent a penalty notice from being used in other cases where an offence has been committed but before doing so, authorized officers are expected to make the same considerations as set out above and below. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events. In Southwark, this discretion will be used in exceptional

circumstances only, and the issuing of penalty notices in these circumstances can only be authorized by a senior officer (contact earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk).

## NOTICE TO IMPROVE

A notice to improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support. An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a notice to improve would have any impact on a parent's behaviour (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

Local arrangements for the use of Notices to Improve across Southwark are as follows:

1. Schools across Southwark may issue a Notice to Improve to any parent whose child's absence levels have triggered the national threshold for a penalty notice – i.e. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
2. The Notice to Improve may be used to offer parent/s a final opportunity to engage with support and improve the attendance levels of the child concerned. Where a parent does not engage with the offer of support during the Notice to Improve validity period and/or further unauthorised absences are recorded for the pupil and/or the pupil does not make significant improvements in their attendance patterns, a penalty notice may be issued in line with this code of conduct.
3. All Notices to Improve issued by Southwark schools will have a validity period of 6 school weeks (a maximum of 30 school days) and will clearly list the attempts which have been made and support which has already been offered to resolve the absence concerns. Parents should be provided with clear contact details for the staff member/s within the school that they should contact to access the support that still is available during the Notice to Improve validity period.
4. Schools and lead professionals will closely monitor attendance records throughout the improvement period and, where further unauthorised absence is recorded, consideration will be given as to whether a penalty notice is to be issued.
5. Schools do not have to wait until 30 school days have passed before considering a penalty notice – decisions will need to be taken on a case-by-case basis, based on the level of parental/pupil engagement and/or level of attendance improvement noted.
6. Sufficient improvements during the Notice to Improve validity period may include evidence of no further unauthorised absences within the improvement period or enough improvement tailored to the specific family circumstances.

7. When a Notice to Improve has been issued by a school to a parent a copy should be sent to the Local Authority via earlyhelp@southwark.gov.uk.
8. Authorised LA officers may also issue a notice to improve as part of the Stage 2 approach to improve attendance, for example following a TAF meeting.

## PROCEDURE FOR ISSUING PENALTY NOTICES

Under the new national rules introduced by the Department of Education, all schools must consider a penalty notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons in any rolling 10-week period. This is in line with national guidance and Southwark's Code of Conduct.

Schools should not have fixed positions on whether they will or will not issue penalty notices. Judgements should be made on the evidence in each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will increase to:

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

This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

**First offence**

Penalty notices will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

**Second offence (within 3 years)**

The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time Leave or Irregular Attendance: The amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

**Third offence**

Where two penalty notices have been issued within a rolling three-year period, and a third offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance: A penalty notice must not be issued. The case will be considered for legal action and expedited to the Magistrates' Court for prosecution where appropriate. Fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.

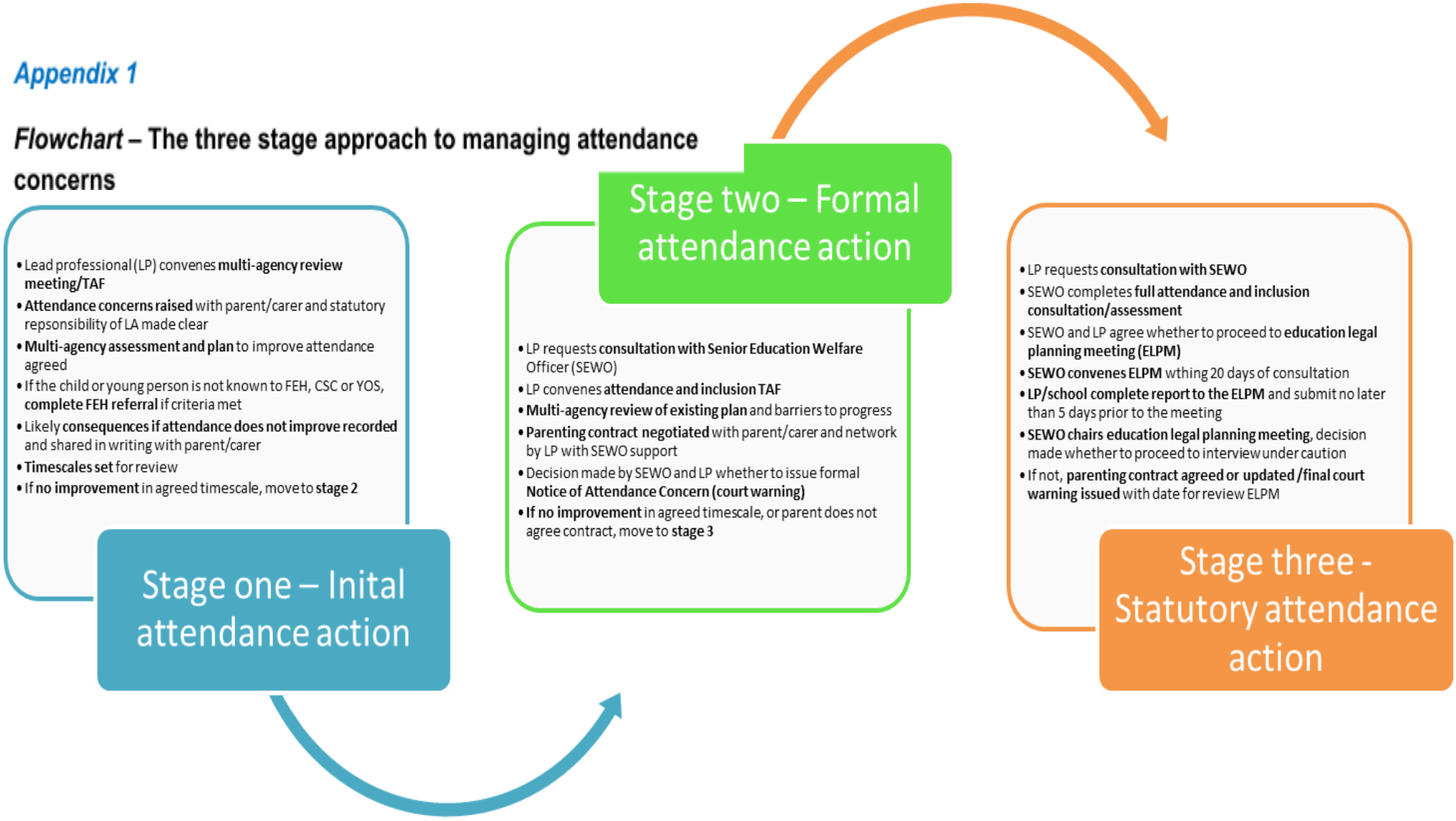
**Offences before August 2024**

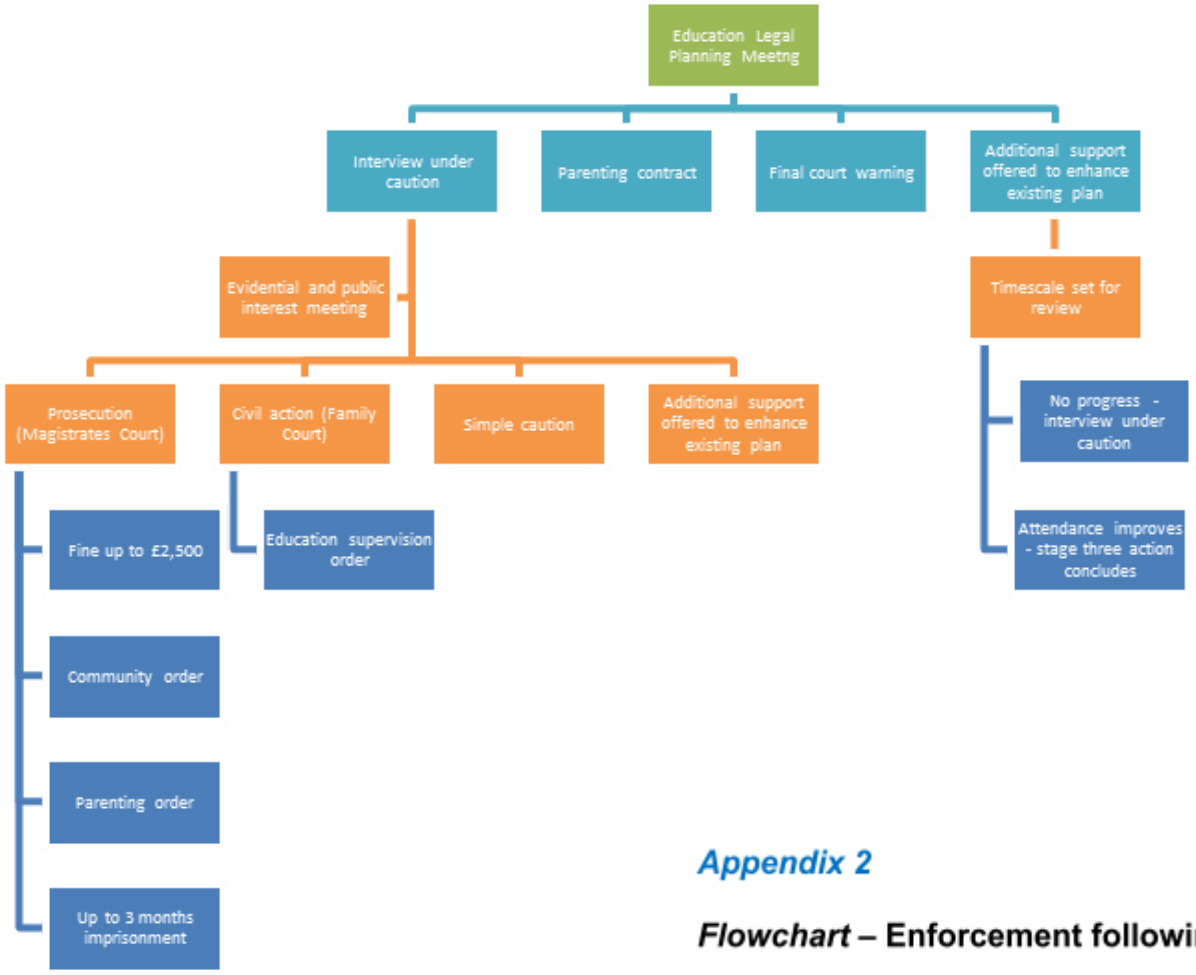
Please note that any offences prior to the changes in August 2024 will be processed under the previous legislation. For example, term time leave for 5 or more days in the academic year prior to August 2024 may incur a penalty notice of £60 per parent if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days.

THE BRIDGES FEDERATION

## *Appendix 1*

### *Flowchart* – The three stage approach to managing attendance concerns



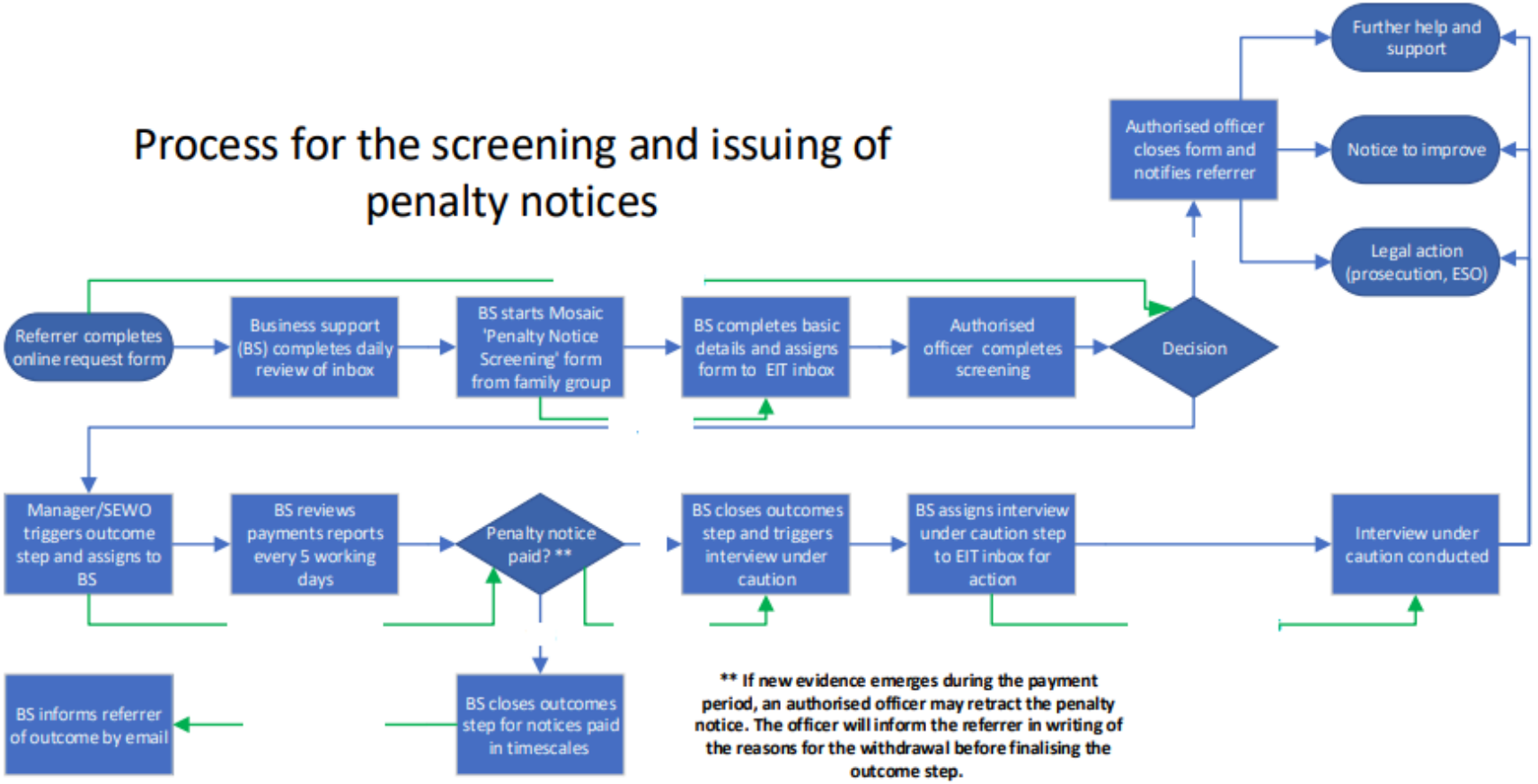



## *Appendix 2*

***Flowchart*** **– Enforcement following education legal planning**

Southwark Council

# Process for the screening and issuing of penalty notices




** If new evidence emerges during the payment period, an authorised officer may retract the penalty notice. The officer will inform the referrer in writing of the reasons for the withdrawal before finalising the outcome step.