



The Russell School

Attendance Policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

This policy is in line with the following guidance:

- The DfE's [Children Missing Education \(2016\)](#)
- [Achieving for Children's Children Missing Education Policy and Procedure \(May 2019\)](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe In Education](#)
- The DfE's [Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance \(Sept 2022\)](#)
- The DfE's [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

A child typically starts school in Reception year and must access statutory education from the term after their fifth birthday. The child must remain in statutory education until they are aged 18 or they leave the country.

[Achieving for Children](#) (AfC) is commissioned by Kingston and Richmond Councils to ensure that they meet the councils' statutory duty to arrange suitable full-time education for children of compulsory school age. This includes providing alternative forms of education for children where mainstream inclusion is not appropriate.

We aim to encourage good attendance from every pupil at The Russell School by:

- Having a senior leader being responsible for championing and improving attendance. At The Russell School, the Headteacher is responsible for overseeing the strategic approach to attendance. She can be contacted by making an appointment via the school office (by phone: [020 8940 1446](tel:02089401446) or by emails: info@russell.richmond.sch.uk)
- Informing parents of attendance procedures
- Regularly meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor attendance
- Training staff to manage registers
- Identifying concerns with attendance and punctuality at an early stage and taking steps to address these
- Providing ongoing training for all school staff to recognise that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Poor or late attendance can significantly affect a child's learning. At The Russell School we aim to build a working partnership between the family and school to ensure that every child has equal opportunities.

Under [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#) and its subsequent amendments, 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 / carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents / carers 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.

Pupil attendance at The Russell School is monitored very closely and where there is a cause for concern the EWO will become involved which could lead to prosecution. This can happen when attendance falls below 95% (ten school days).

The DfE have set out expectations regarding school attendance for both parents and schools (Appendix 1) and a model for good practice (Appendix 2).

2 CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

Children are missing from education (CME) when they fail to register with a school or when they fall out of the education system. Their personal circumstances, or those of their families, may contribute to their withdrawal from education and/or their failure to successfully reintegrate.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Children missing from, or at risk of missing, education are at risk of underachieving and becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in later life. They may also be at risk of abuse or sexual exploitation.

It is important to differentiate between children who are at risk of becoming missing out on education and children who are missing from education or not receiving suitable education. If not attending a mainstream school or independent school, pupils should receive full time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs. This also applies to children who are being electively home educated.

Children at risk of becoming missing from education are children or young people receiving a suitable full time education who due to their circumstances are at a higher risk of becoming missing from education and are more likely to be at risk of harm. Children at risk of becoming missing from education are classified by AfC as:

- **known:** a child at risk of becoming missing from education for whom AfC has been notified that, due to the child's circumstances, they are likely to become missing from education; or
- **unknown:** a child at risk of becoming missing from education about whom AfC has no knowledge.

Children missing out on education are children or young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll. Children missing from education are classified as:

- **identified and located**: a child missing out from education that has been identified and located by AfC;
- **identified but not located**: a child missing from education that has been identified by AfC, but cannot be located; or
- **unknown**: a child missing from education about whom AfC has no knowledge.

Children not receiving a suitable education are classed as not receiving 25 hours of good quality registered provision a week. Where children do not receive this level of education, it is often because they are being educated outside of state maintained or independent schools, for example, at home or in alternative provision. For some pupils who have been out of education for an extended period of time, accessing the full 25 hours is not appropriate and a gradual transition is planned and supported by AfC.

For some children, being educated in mainstream school is not an option. This may be because they have a special educational need or disability, a medical need, are a school refuser, or they have been excluded from school for a fixed period or permanently. For these children alternative education provision is organised by the SEND Service if an EHCP is in place, or through the EISS. Some children are electively home educated by their parents or tutors. When a child is excluded from school, basic provision should begin from the sixth day. For a fixed term exclusion, this is the school's responsibility and for a permanent exclusions it is AfC's responsibility. Schools should ensure that the minimum standard of education is maintained for exclusions up to six days and that no child is at risk of harm whilst not at school.

All cases of children who are children missing education or becoming children missing education should be reported to AfC via the Single Point of Access (SPA).

Richmond SPA: 020 8547 5008 or at spa@richmond.gov.uk (020 8770 5000 for out of hours/weekends)

On receiving notification of a child that is missing education or is at risk of becoming a child missing education, the SPA will check to see whether the child is known to AfC. If they are not, they will create a record on the central system and make a referral to the most appropriate service to respond to the child's needs. If they are known, they will notify the service that is working with the child to let them know they have received information.

For children who have not turned up to school or alternative provision, the SPA will notify the Education Welfare Service (EWS) which will undertake checks to locate the child.

If, in the course of carrying out their role, AfC employees become aware of a child that is missing education or at risk of becoming a child missing education, they should also inform the SPA.

3 LOCATING AND TRACKING CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

- It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school if their child is going to be absent from school. Parents can inform the school, via the School Office staff, that their child will be absent on a given day/period of time by telephoning [020 8940 1446](tel:02089401446) or by emails: info@russell.richmond.sch.uk)

If a child is absent from school and the school has not been notified by midday as to why, then we will instigate the following procedures:

Day 1

A parentmail text is sent by 9.30am, enquiring of the child's whereabouts.

If no response, this will be followed up by a telephone call by 11.00am. All notes are inputted into integris register on what communication has been sent to the parents.

The Headteacher will then be informed if there has been no contact. A likely action will be contacting the emergency contacts.

The exception to this is if a child who is in Year 5 or Year 6 and who is on the school's "Walk to School" google list and has not arrived by 9.15am and the school has not been notified either by email or phone as to why the child will be late/absent. If this happens, then the School Office will telephone the contacts on the Emergency Contact Form as soon as possible to find out the reason for the absence.

Day 2

If by the second day of absence without notification for the reason and without having been able to establish contact with parents on Day 1, regardless of which class a child is in, the parents / carers will be called and if necessary, the school will contact other adults who are listed on the school's Emergency Contact Form to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing child. This will be done before 11.00am.

Day 3

If there has been no contact with parents/carers or adults listed on the Emergency Contact Form by the beginning of the third day of absence, the school will notify the Educational Welfare Service. The school are aware that a formal referral will not need to be made at this stage, but will be made by Day 6 if needed.

If at any stage the school has concerns regarding the child's welfare we will contact the SPA immediately.

If the school makes contact with the child or the child returns to school, but no satisfactory explanation is provided, we will register the child as at risk of becoming missing from education by contacting the SPA.

If the child is found to be in elective home education (EHE), we will ensure that written confirmation is received from the parent or caregiver and then notify AfC. If a parent or carer reports that a child has moved to a new school, we will remove the child from the school roll once we have received confirmation that the child has been placed elsewhere by their new school and the EWS.

Days 6 to 20

The school will continue to make contact with the parents/carers of the missing child on Days 4 and 5.

If a child is absent for six consecutive days without any explanation, we will notify AfC by contacting the SPA. The SPA will refer the case to the EWS who will undertake the following actions to try and locate the child:

- make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details
- check local databases within the local authority
- follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies e.g. those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC
- check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force
- check with agencies known to be involved with family
- check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known
- check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved
- check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is
- in the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the [Ministry of Defence \(MoD\) Children's Education Advisory Service](#) (CEAS)
- home visit(s) made by the appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives

This list is not exhaustive or prescriptive, and so local authorities and schools should treat each case on its individual merits and use their judgement, ensuring they have taken into account all of the facts of the case.

If the child is located, AfC will inform the school and relevant partner agencies and explain what actions should be taken.

If the child has moved to another Borough, the EWS should confirm with the relevant local authority that the child is now living in and attending school in their Borough and contact the school to confirm this. Once confirmation has been received, the EWS will give permission for the Kingston or Richmond school to remove the child from their roll, upload or send the child's records to the new school and complete the online form.

Day 20

If, after 20 days of unauthorised absence following investigation by the EWS, the school is unable to establish the whereabouts and location of the child, permission may be given by the EWS for the school to remove the child from their roll, where there are no immediate safeguarding concerns. The school will then upload the child's records onto the School2School database as a child missing from education and complete the online form.

4 REGISTERS AND THE SCHOOL DAY

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registers are legal records and all schools must preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. Teachers are responsible for the information that is recorded on attendance registers. They are the recognised system in the school for monitoring attendance and punctuality and are completed at the start of each morning and afternoon. Registers are completed on Integris, which is the school's Management Information System (MIS).

Children are listed in alphabetical order by surname and the register is updated when either a child leaves the school or joins the school.

The gates to the school are opened at 8.30am and shut at 8.50am prompt. This is to give parents and carers the time to walk from their drop-off point back to the gate. Children are expected to be in their classrooms by 8.45am in time for the morning register to be taken. The afternoon register is taken after lunch break has finished, which is at 1.15pm. The school day finishes at 3.15pm.

Children who arrive after the register has been taken, but before 9.10am are coded with an 'L' for being late. Arrivals after 9.10am are coded with a "U" meaning that it is an unauthorised absence. Late arrivals also sign in a Late Book that is held in the school office. A senior member of staff will address the issue of persistent lateness with a child's parents / carers. If there is no improvement in a child's punctuality, the school may refer the child to the EWS.

- For absences through illness, parents are asked to contact the school via phone or email on the first day to advise why their child is absent: 0208 940 1446 or info@russell.richmond.sch.uk explaining the absence.

For planned absences, such as attending an interview at a secondary school, parents are asked to inform the school in writing (letter or email) in advance of the absence. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher whether longer absences for reasons other than illness would be authorised.

The school does not authorise any holidays taken during term time and regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval for this type of absence.

Where the school is not able to correctly code an absence for a pupil due to lack of information, the school will contact parents (and where appropriate foster carers and/or social workers) to understand why and when the pupil will return. Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session.

Codes for absences are recorded on Integris using the appropriate guidelines. All absences are coded, otherwise they count as an unauthorised absence. See Sections 7 and 8 for further information about authorised and unauthorised absences.

5 MONITORING, REPORTING AND CELEBRATING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

The school office staff and Headteacher monitor children's attendance data and punctuality in order to identify children who are presenting as a cause for concern.

Where there is cause for concern, the Headteacher may speak with the child's parents / carers or send a letter indicating that the child's attendance is being monitored. This may be discussed at meetings with the EWO.

Where attendance causes significant concern, individual cases are referred to the EWO for action, which would initially include support to overcome any barriers to regular attendance through a wide range of intervention strategies (see Section 10 which refers to key services which can be accessed to support good attendance).

Where engagement in support by parents/carers is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents/carers (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This will be led by the Headteacher and may include the EWO. The purpose of the meeting will be to clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future. It 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.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, the school will work with the EWO to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
- Issue a [Fixed Penalty Notice](#) (FPN) where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour. See Section 8 for further information about FPNs.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).

- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

As well as sharing attendance information with the EWO, it is also reported the Full Governing Board every half-term and to AfC and the Department for Education.

Both attendance and punctuality checks are reported to parents formally at the end of each academic year via a child's written annual school report.

Celebrating and Promoting Punctuality and Attendance

We acknowledge classes with the highest attendance and announce this in our Celebration assembly on Fridays.

6 PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have SEND. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This could include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing 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. Considering 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.
- Working 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 EHCP is accessed.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.

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.

The school is sensitive and avoids stigmatising pupils and parents/carers and will talk to pupils and parents/carers and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Part-time timetables

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

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

7 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence. Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- illness, medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exclusion;
- traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- family bereavement;
- involvement in a public performance (theatre/sporting event);
- attending an Open Morning when viewing secondary schools for Year 6 pupils.
- 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)

8 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given a child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable. Absence will not normally be authorised in the following circumstances:

- Where no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;

- Where the explanation offered is deemed by the school to be unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- For family holidays or visits, both in this country and abroad, whether or not the school has been notified in advance

There may be truly exceptional circumstances where the school would normally not authorise the absence but applies discretion to do so. The nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Schools can fine parents or commence a court process for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. The decision to issue a FPN will be based on the following considerations:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular absence, such as holidays taken in term time without permission/prior notification to the school and comprising either five consecutive days and/or the equivalent of ten consecutive school sessions (either a school morning or afternoon)

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority and if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

The issuing of FPNs would only be taken where it is felt that parental co-operation is either absent or insufficient to resolve the presenting problem. The decision on whether or not to issue a FPN ultimately rests with the Headteacher and would be issued in line with the

The issuing of FPNs are intended for use where it is likely they will have a successful outcome in securing an improvement and enforcing regular attendance.

9 HOME SCHOOLING

If a parent chooses to home school their child, they will be taken off The Russell School roll once written notification has been received from the parent. Prior to taking a child off roll, the school will request a meeting with the child's parents to establish the reasons behind the decisions to home school them and whether it is in the child's best interests. This is particularly important where a child has SEND, is vulnerable and/or has a social worker. On receiving written notification from a parent that they will be home schooling their child/ren, then The Russell School will make a referral to SPA to notify them of this.

10 KEY SERVICES

Below is a list of key services that are involved in ensuring children are supported in receiving a suitable education.

Education Welfare Service

The [Education Welfare Service](#) (EWS) has statutory responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils who attend state maintained schools within Kingston and Richmond. All schools receive the support of an allocated officer. The EWS works with schools and other key services to identify, locate and track any children missing education or at risk of missing education. The EWS also has responsibility for monitoring the quality of education being provided to children who are electively home educated and to take action when evidence suggests that the education they are receiving is not suitable for their age, ability, aptitude and any specific needs they may have.

Education Inclusion

The [Education Inclusion Support Service](#) (EISS) supports primary aged pupils who have been permanently excluded; and primary and secondary aged pupils who are at risk of exclusion from school. The EISS team support primary aged pupils who are missing education, including those who have medical needs and cannot attend school; those who have special educational needs but are not appropriately placed; and those pupils who are between placements. Malden Oaks is the service provider for secondary aged pupils who are missing education for the same reasons. The service also includes specialist practitioners and support staff who work with both primary and secondary aged pupils, their families, schools and other professional partners to sustain appropriate educational placements and , where necessary, support reintegration into school.

Early Help Team

The Early Help Team offers support and help to families for children aged 5 to 19. This support includes:

- addressing difficulties with a child's habits or behaviours
- building confidence in dealing with difficult parenting issues
- helping to motivate children and encourage good attendance at school
- improving relationships between family members
- signposting to support agencies

The Early Help Team works within the cluster model and will contact a family within three working days if a referral to them has been made and will make a visit to the family within seven working days. If an assessment is made that the family is in crisis, more immediate interventions and support will be provided.

11 OTHER ASSOCIATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:
The Russell School Safeguarding Policy
[AfC's Children Missing Education Policy and Procedure](#)

12 MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is monitored by the Headteacher and office staff who are responsible for attendance at the school. It is reviewed every three years by school staff responsible for attendance and by the Full Governing Board. This policy will be updated and revised sooner in light of any change in guidance or legislation published by either Achieving for Children or the DfE.

APPENDIX 1

All pupils

Parents/carers are expected to:	Schools are expected to:
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Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents/carers understand.
Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness)	Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.	Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible	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

Parents/carers are expected to:	Schools are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support	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

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:
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Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	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.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
Proactively engage with the support offered.	Ensure join up 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

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected to:
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Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.	Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.
Proactively engage with the support offered.	

Appendix 2

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to

attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

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.

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.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to 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 a parenting 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 or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.