

Attendance Policy

Policy Agreed: September 2024

Policy Review: September 2025

Medlar-with-Wesham Primary School

Our Mission Statement

We are a loving, caring, distinctively Christian family, providing an excellent education in a safe, happy environment, where every individual is valued as a child of God.

Our vision for attendance: Parents, teachers and children all work together to understand and promote the importance of attending school and that good attendance links directly with children achieving their potential.

Introduction:

This is a successful school, and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Give you details on attendance on our website.
- Report to you three times yearly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Continue to develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff, and governors.
- Set targets to improve individual pupil attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school must be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

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 can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher.

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the

school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents, and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programs, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent, you must:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone, classdojo message or you can call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
If contact cannot be made, the school will try to contact the people named as emergency contacts. Where reasonably practicable, for every pupil, schools should hold an emergency contact number for more than one person. Our school will request emergency contact numbers from the parents with whom the pupil normally resides. If no contact is possible with any of the emergency contacts, the head teacher should be informed, and consideration made whether to request/undertake a welfare/home visit.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our in-school Attendance Lead and/or Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to always have your contact numbers. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

- Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher.
- Parenting contracts.
- Use of the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and/ or referral to outside agencies.
- Attendance panels.
- Penalty notices.

Penalty Notices

Legal interventions may be sought if providing support to improve attendance is not appropriate (eg for an unauthorised holiday in term time), or has not been successful or engaged with. In accordance with the Lancashire code of conduct, we may request that the local authority issue penalty notices for unauthorised absences that include:

- Leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made.
- Leave taken after a request has been declined.
- Days taken in excess of an agreed period of leave, without good reason.
- Other unauthorised absence that meets the required threshold, including sessions marked as late after the register has closed (code U).

On 19 August 2024 new penalty notice arrangements came into force, with changes to the cost of a penalty notice and to the thresholds at which penalty notices may be requested by school. The DfE now requires that schools **must** consider if a penalty notice is appropriate when the thresholds are met. The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at £160 per parent per child. This will reduce to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or consecutive school years.

- A maximum of two penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).

- If a school requests a penalty notice for absences other than unauthorised holidays, including being late after the register has closed, the local authority School Attendance Legal Team may issue a Notice to Improve to parents. A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and offers of support have not been engaged with by parents or have not worked, a Notice to Improve may be issued to give parents a final chance to engage with support and improve their child's attendance.

The code of conduct for penalty notices and information and FAQs for parents can be found on the Lancashire County Council education penalty notice webpage.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.55am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.
- Registers are marked by 9.00am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9.15am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives at 9.16am onwards they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark, and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.
- If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or Attendance Lead but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Arrival at School

Children are supervised from 8:45 am and should not arrive before this time without parents for their own safety.

Leave in Term Time:

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. (See appendix)

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are exceptional.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand that leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

In considering the request, we will also look at various factors such as:

- The timing of the request:

When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

- Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 96% or will fall to or below that level because of taking leave.
- Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year
- If the employer can support parent's submission that they cannot take leave during school holidays

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

Religious and Ceremonial Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance. Leave for weddings, funerals and visiting of immediate relatives during illness will be treated likewise.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence.
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than one day, inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence regularly.
- Ensure that the school has up to date contact details and at least two emergency contacts who can be contacted if parents are unavailable.
- Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using the school's relevant form.
- Attendance at meetings in school.
- Participation in Parenting Contracts and Early Help Assessment and cooperation in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies.

Pupils:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed outside of school, e.g., early bedtime.
- Attend school/registration punctually.
- Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may influence school attendance.
- Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies.

Headteacher

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school.
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters. Mrs Taala is the Attendance lead.
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities.
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school meets all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision.
- Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision-making process.

School Attendance Lead:

- First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided.
- Input and update the attendance registers.
- Regularly identify and monitor pupils, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups.
- Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents.
- Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance and use Parenting Contracts where appropriate.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children where they are greeted as they enter the building and provide a safe learning environment.
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum.
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns.
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance.
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff.
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.

Governors:

- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly.
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy.
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.
- The Chair of Curriculum Committee or Chair of Governors can make amendments to this policy with effect prior to the next scheduled meeting.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

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 these areas will be provided by the school and we ask for your full support.

Notifications to the Local Authority:

Admissions

All schools must notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register and must provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply to pupils who are added to the admission register at the start of the school's youngest year unless the local authority also requests such information to be provided (Lancashire currently does not).

Leavers

All schools must 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 where the pupil's name is removed after they have completed the school's final year unless the local authority requests such information to be provided (Lancashire does not currently).

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with the following information as laid out in the regulation.

Notifications of Pupils who Fail to Attend

All schools (including academies) must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more. In Lancashire primary schools, this can be done via referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team or a request for a Penalty Notice. Any other notifications not so covered can be submitted on an individual basis to the local authority.

Children at Risk of Missing Education

Local authorities 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. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

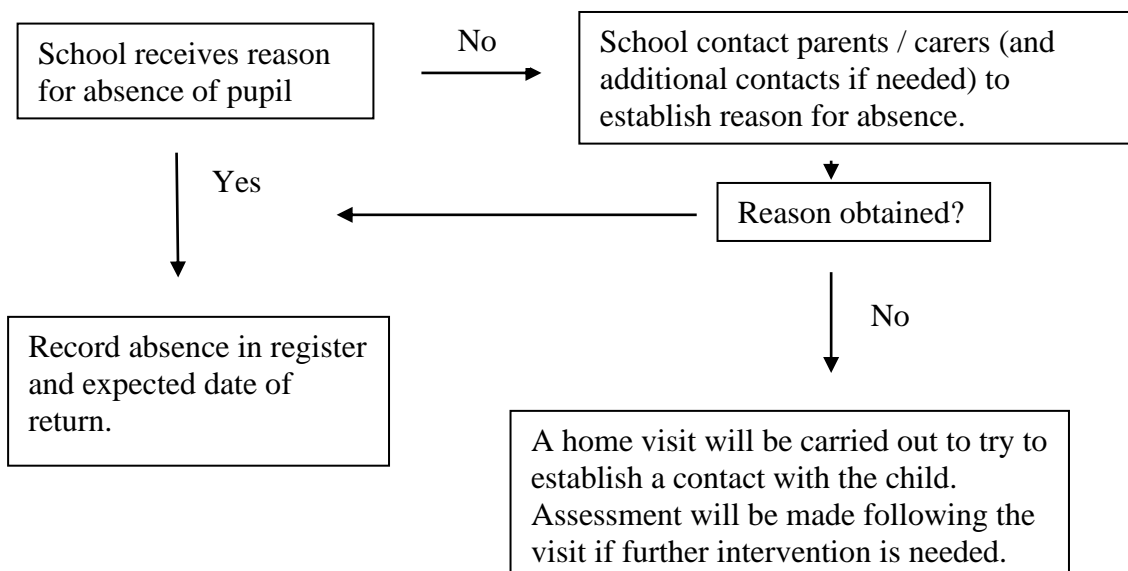
Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting a pupil's name from the register if the whereabouts of the child are unknown. In these cases, schools will undertake a home visit themselves, or request support from their local authority attendance consultant prior to a referral being made to the local authority Children Missing Education team.

Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

MEDLAR WITH WESHAM CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL ABSENCE PROCEDURE

Day 1 of absence

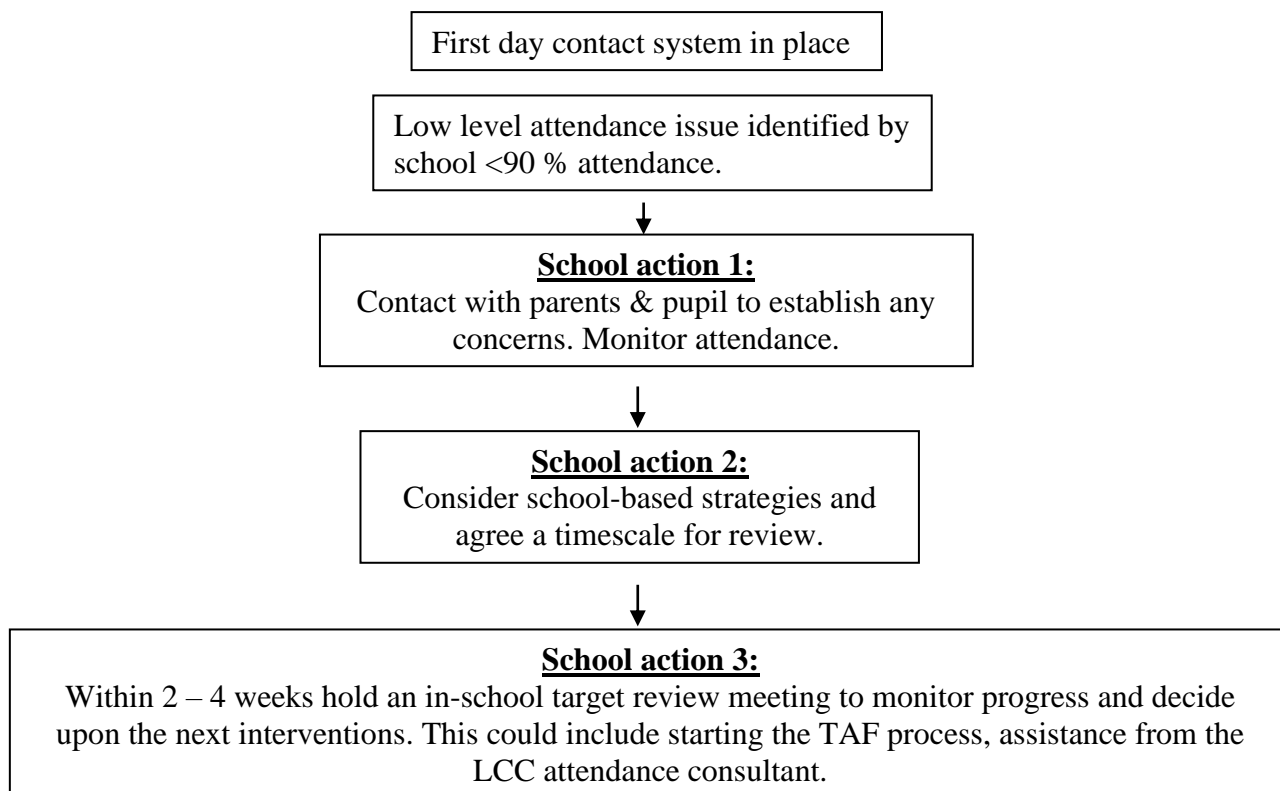


This process will be followed for all students, for safeguarding reasons, as well as attendance monitoring.

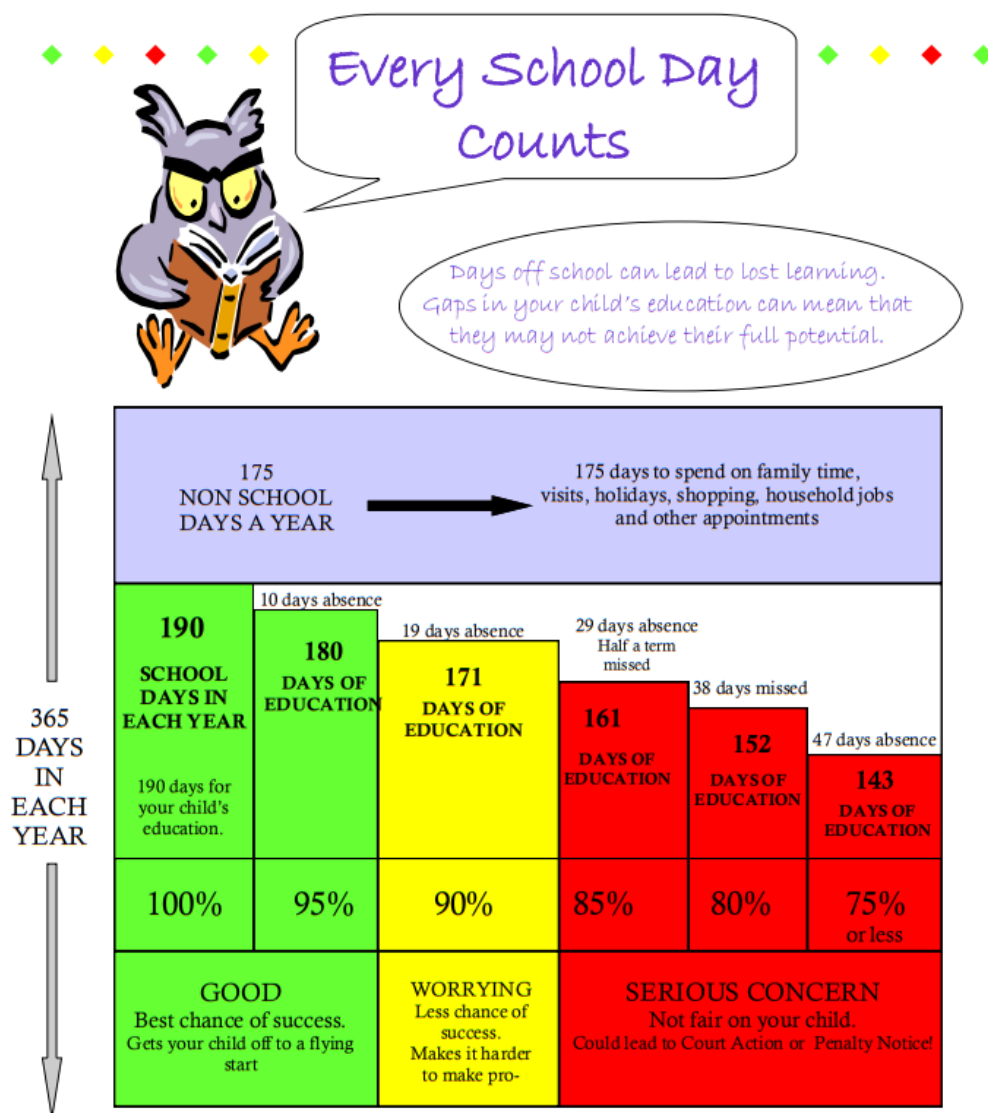
If your child is absent due to illness, please state in your message when you expect them to return to school. All cases of sickness and diarrhea require pupils to remain at home until 48 hours have passed since the last occurrence (as NHS guidance).

Please update school if circumstances change and explain any continuous absence.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES



Appendix:



Your child deserves an education. Every day really does count.

Please help us to help you. If you are worried about your child's school attendance, there are staff available at school and within the local authority who can support you



When a child arrives late:

- It interrupts concentration in class.
- It wastes valuable learning time.
- The teacher must repeat information / instructions.
- The late child is at an immediate disadvantage because they have missed important teaching points, missed discussions, and will be generally unsettled.
- Children feel stressed and anxious about having to walk into their lesson late, some children find being late very distressing.