Attendance Policy

Ludlow Junior School

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Section 1

This policy is written within the context of the legislation governing the requirement for compulsory education of children. It identifies the responsibilities of parents/carers, the Local Authority and the school in ensuring that every child of school age is educated.

The Law

As legislation changes over time, the references below may be to legislation that has been amended or superseded. For an up-to-date list of applicable legislation, refer to the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk/schools.

i. The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6)
ii. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
iii. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
iv. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
v. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Basis of this Policy

This policy meets the requirements of the "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" statutory guidance issued[1] by the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude given any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The UK Government expects all schools and local authorities to:

• Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence;

• Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and

• Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents and carers are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where

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

required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the Local Authority (LA) to use legal measures. A "Parent" is defined as:

• Any natural parent, whether married or not;

• Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person;

• Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Rationale / Statement of Intent:

A high level of attendance is essential for children to achieve their full educational potential. At our school, we are committed to providing the highest quality education and creating a welcoming environment where every pupil feels valued. We recognise that strong partnerships between school, parents/carers and pupils are key to our success. Every child has a right to access their education, and we all share a responsibility to promote and support excellent attendance and punctuality.

We strive to achieve the highest possible attendance for all pupils and will consistently communicate the importance of attending school regularly and on time. For children to make the most of the opportunities available to them, it is vital that they attend school every day, arriving punctually unless absence is unavoidable.

The habits children develop around attendance and punctuality are important life skills that reflect the expectations of the wider world, including future employment. Good attendance supports high attainment, builds confidence, and positively influences future aspirations.

Good attendance matters because:

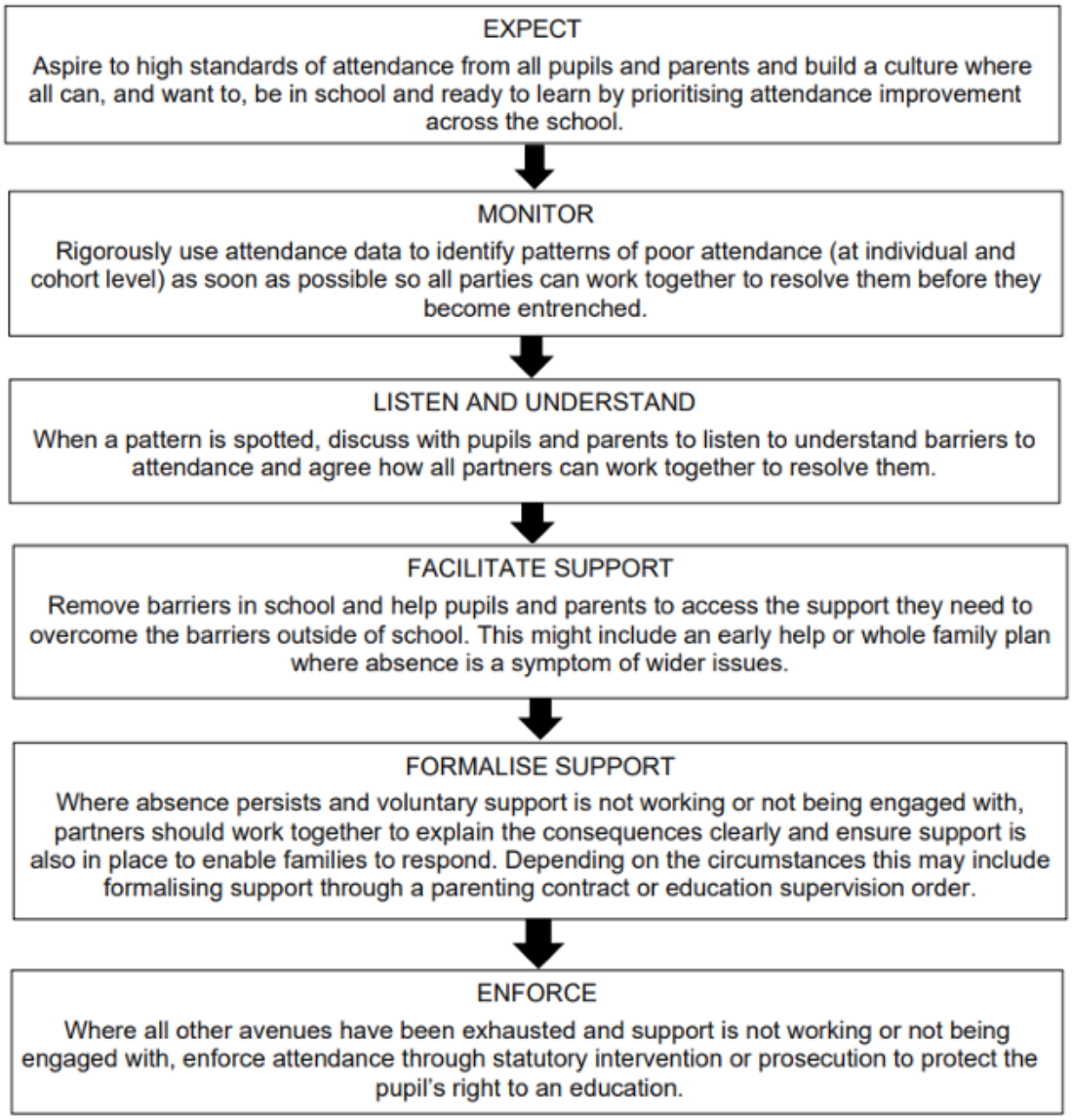
- There is a strong link between attendance below 95% and lower academic achievement;
- Pupils who attend regularly make better progress both academically and socially;
- Regular attendance helps children establish routines and build positive friendships;
- Pupils who attend consistently are more engaged and enjoy learning more;
- Regular attenders are better prepared for transitions between phases of education and into employment or training.

Research also shows a clear link between attendance and attainment. Pupils with the highest outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have higher attendance rates than those with lower outcomes.

Section 2
Operating the Policy

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between school, parents/carers and the child.

The following flow chart (taken from 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' May 2022) illustrates the expected approach that schools will take around attendance:



Ludlow Junior School implements the above recommendations and expectations as follows:

Step 0 The school sets high expectations of attendance (including punctuality) for all its pupils and monitors attendance of all children regularly and carefully. The school aims for all pupils to maintain attendance of 95% or greater.
Step 1 For pupils identified for the first time with attendance falling below 93% or are routinely late, an initial letter will be emailed to their parents/carers making them aware that their child's attendance and/or punctuality falls below the acceptable threshold. If attendance improves, no further action will be taken.
Step 2 Should attendance not improve, a second letter will be sent with a parent feedback form for the school to better understand reasons for a lack of improvement, as well as offering further guidance and support to ensure attendance improves. If attendance improves, no further action will be taken.
Step 3 Should attendance not improve, a third letter will be sent and a meeting arranged with the Family Support Worker (or another appropriate staff member) to devise an action plan to improve attendance. The school and parents/carers will receive a copy of this and progress will be monitored closely. Further support may be offered including a possible referral to the Early Help Hub. From this stage, all attendance-related issues will be recorded on the schools CPOMS system and medical evidence will be necessary to authorise any absence.
Step 4 Should attendance not improve, a final letter will be sent to explain the next course of action, which is a referral to the Local Authority Educational Support Team to seek external support in improving attendance.
Step 5 If the above steps have not produced the expected improvement, the school will follow Southampton guidance through the Education Support Service to initiate a legal intervention.

The school reserves the right at any stage to skip the steps detailed above and escalate the matter to the Local Authority. This will only be done if the school does not feel that the family is cooperating with the support and guidance offered or that attendance shows no signs of significant improvement.

Roles and responsibilities

The Board of Trustees (BoT) is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school;
- Maintaining awareness of national, local and school trends relating to attendance;
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies;
- Agreeing goals for attendance with the SLT, and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals;
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation;
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy;
- Having due regard to Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place that is regularly reviewed and updated;
- Monitor the school's attendance training for staff.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school;
- Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance officer/lead role;
- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school;
- Ensuring appropriate attendance training is provided to relevant staff and is kept current.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures; and
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy;
- Leading with commitment and energy to improve attendance;
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently;
- Promoting good attendance behaviour;
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated; and

- Where designated, accurately taking the attendance register at relevant times during the school day.

The Family Support Worker is responsible for:

- Working with SLT to develop a clear plan for improving attendance;
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions;
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement;
- Communicating with pupils and parents regarding attendance;
- Leading a compassionate approach when listening to parents and pupils regarding barriers to attendance;
- Implementing firm but fair expectations and strategies to improve attendance;
- Demonstrating a good awareness of comparative benchmarks and expectations when setting attendance targets with individuals and for groups;
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance;
- Enforcing attendance through statutory interventions in cases of persistent poor attendance where other supports have not succeeded; and
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school;
- Aiming to be punctual in relation to all aspects of school life – start of day, start of lessons, team or club commitments;
- Remaining in lessons throughout the duration of their day and not seeing absconding as acceptable behaviour;
- Following any support provided by the school to improve attendance; and
- Engaging openly and positively with improvement planning.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details;
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number;
- Updating the school if their details change;
- The attendance of their children at school;
- Promoting good attendance with their children;
- Promoting regular highly punctual attendance at school and for school commitments;
- Proactively engaging with any attendance support offered by the school and/or the LA;
- Notifying the school as soon as possible when their child must be unexpectedly absent;
- Requesting absence only in exceptional circumstances, and in advance. With due regard to the guidance that any such absence should be truly exceptional, unavoidable and unforeseen;

- Booking medical appointments outside school hours where possible;
- Following any family-based support implemented by the school to improve attendance;

Section 3

Recording Attendance

The school records attendance using the national attendance codes, in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance, to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Registers are marked twice daily in accordance with legal requirements:

- At the start of the school day at **9:00am**; and
- At the start of the afternoon sessions at:
    - Year 3 –**12:55**
    - Year 4 –**13:05**
    - Year 5 –**13:25**
    - Year 6 –**13.30**

Lateness and Punctuality

Arriving on time is essential for pupils to settle into school routines and make the most of their learning. The start of the school day and lessons is a key time for giving instructions, organising activities, and setting expectations. Arriving late can result in missed learning, disruption to others, and can affect a child's confidence.

- The school day begins at 9:00am, and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time. Pupils will be marked as late ('L' code) if they arrive between 9:00am and 9.25am;
- The register closes 25 minutes after the start of the school day – 9:25am;
- Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked with an unauthorised absence code ('U'), which is recorded as an absence in line with DfE guidance;
- All lateness is recorded daily and may be used as evidence if legal action is required;
- Lateness due to a medical appointment will be recorded as authorised (code 'M').

Persistent lateness can have a significant impact on a child's learning and the learning of others. Where persistent punctuality issues are identified, parents/carers will be contacted in line with "Step 1" above to discuss concerns and potential support. If punctuality does not improve, and reaches 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a penalty notice may be issued in accordance with LA guidance.

End of the School Day

Pupils must be collected promptly at the end of the school day. Persistent or significant lateness in collection may be treated as a safeguarding concern.

What to Do if Your Child is Absent

A pupil absent from school is considered a safeguarding matter, and is why information about the reason for any absence is required. If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible in the morning of the first day of absence and on each subsequent day; and
- Provide copies of appointment letters/cards prior to any absence due to a medical appointment.

If a pupil is absent with no prior notice or contact from the parent, we will take these actions:

Day 1	The school will telephone the pupil's primary contacts if the parent/carer has not contacted school by 9.25am.
Day 2	The school will telephone and email all contacts.
Day 3	The school will telephone and email all contacts again. If there is no adequate response then the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their deputy, accompanied by another member of staff, will visit the pupil's home by lunchtime. They will hand-deliver a letter stating the school has concerns and has made efforts to contact parents or adults with parental responsibility. This letter will also be emailed to all contacts. At their discretion, the school may inform the Police and/or Children's Services alerting them of concerns and ask for a welfare check.
Day 4	The school will telephone and email all contacts again, If not already notified, the school will inform the Police and Children's Services.

The school will always follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence;
- Potentially identify the location and carer of the pupil at a given point in time;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken;
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not;
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system;

Continued or Ongoing Absence

A pupil is considered persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of school sessions across the academic year (equivalent to approximately three weeks).

Absence can significantly impact a child's progress by creating gaps in learning. Research shows that attainment begins to decline when attendance falls below 95%.

The school monitors attendance carefully and shares data with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Where attendance falls towards 90% or below, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss concerns and identify any support that may be needed.

Section 4

Request for leave of absence

Section 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that an authorised person (as assigned by the Headteacher) may only grant leave of absence during term time in **exceptional circumstances**.

The Headteacher has full discretion to decide whether absence is authorised, as well as the length of any agreed leave. Exceptional circumstances are rare, significant or unavoidable, and therefore cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of term time. As all families' situations are different, each request is considered on a case-by-case basis.

There is no legal entitlement for pupils to take leave of absence for holidays during term time. In most cases, holiday requests will not be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to request leave of absence must complete a leave of absence form, available from the school office, at least 3 weeks in advance to allow for consideration of the request.

Leave of absence will not be authorised just before or during SATs week for our Year 6 pupils.

If a pupil is taken out of school during term time without prior approval, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Where the number of unauthorised absences meets the thresholds set by the Local Authority, this may result in a fixed penalty notice or further legal action in line with the relevant Code of Conduct.

Taking holidays during term time can have a significant impact on a child's learning.
Parents/carers must ensure that holidays are arranged outside of term time wherever possible

Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents must make all reasonable efforts to plan medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, parents must obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment. It is not reasonable for a short appointment to result in a half or full day of absence unless agreed in advance on the grounds of extenuating circumstances and context. Parents may be required to provide evidence for any appointments, such as an appointment card/text/doctors notes etc.

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The

school defines this as a day where the pupil's parents/carers would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the established religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least three weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return.

Participation in Public Performances

Parents/carers may request leave of absence for their child to take part in public performances, such as theatre productions, film or television work, or modelling.

In these circumstances:

- Parents/carers must contact the Headteacher in advance;
- The school will consider the nature and frequency of the absence;
- A valid performance licence must be in place where required; and
- Appropriate education arrangements must be confirmed during periods of absence.

Where approved, these absences will be recorded as authorised (Code C)**.**

Participation in Sporting Events

Parents/carers of pupils who represent their sport at regional, county, national or international level may request leave of absence to attend competitions.

Such requests will be considered on an individual basis, and the Headteacher will consider:

- The level and significance of the competition;
- The frequency and duration of absence;
- Arrangements for continuing the pupil's education during absence.

Requests for regular absence, or for pupils to leave early/arrive late for training, will not normally be authorised unless appropriate educational provision is in place (for example, a tutor provided by the club or organisation).

Section 5

Understanding Types of Absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day throughout the academic year unless there is a valid and exceptional reason for absence.

There are two main categories of absence:

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is when the school has:

- Accepted the explanation provided by a parent/carer as a valid reason; and
- Granted permission for the absence in advance.

If no explanation is provided, the absence cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for the absence or has not approved a request for leave.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Parents/carers keeping their children away from school unnecessarily (e.g. shopping, birthdays, or caring for siblings);
- Truancy before or during the school day; and
- Absences where no explanation is provided.

Changes to Attendance Records

In certain circumstances, the school may amend an attendance record if new information becomes available. This may involve changing an absence from authorised to unauthorised, or vice versa.

Any changes will always be communicated to parents/carers. For example, if a child is reported as being unwell but evidence later indicates they were on holiday, the absence may be reclassified as unauthorised.

Section 6

Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance and Legal Measures

Under applicable law, parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly, unless the absence has been authorised by the school. Failure to do so may result in legal action.

Ludlow Junior School and Southampton City Council are committed to supporting families; however, where attendance does not improve, a range of legal measures may be considered. These will generally follow a referral to Southampton Education Welfare Service and will only be pursued where:

1. The pupil or family does not require additional support from other agencies to improve attendance; and
2. The pupil has accrued **10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence**, and the parent/carer is considered to be responsible for the absence.

The following legal measures may be used for pupils of compulsory school age:

- Parenting contracts agreed at Education Planning Meetings;
- Parenting Orders;
- Penalty Notices (fixed fines);
- Education Supervision Orders; or
- Prosecution.

Unauthorised Leave of Absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to:

- A request for leave that has not been approved by the Headteacher; or
- A holiday taken without permission

and this results in **10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 school days)** of absence within any 100 possible school sessions, a **Penalty Notice** may be issued.

When unauthorised absence occurs, the school must follow the **Southampton City Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct**[2], which ensures that legal powers are applied consistently and fairly across all schools.

Penalty Notices may be issued where a pupil has:

[2] https://www.southampton.gov.uk/schools-learning/support-inclusion-education/education-and-school-services/education-welfare/

- Been absent for **10 or more half-day sessions** of unauthorised absence within 100 school sessions (these do not need to be consecutive):
- Been persistently late after the register has closed (coded **U**) for up to 10 sessions:
- Been persistently late before the register closes (coded **L**) where the threshold has been met:
- Missed public examinations or formal assessments where dates were known in advance.

Penalty Notices will not be issued where this would conflict with other support or intervention already in place.

A Penalty Notice may be issued where:

- A pupil has **10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness within a 10-week period**; or
- There is **any unauthorised absence during formal assessments or examinations.**

Parents/carers will normally be warned of the risk of a Penalty Notice through:

- School letters such as a "notice to improve";
- Leave of absence request processes; and/or
- The school's attendance policy and website.

A Penalty Notice is issued **to each parent/carer** responsible for the child during the period of unauthorised absence. In some cases, this may result in multiple fines (e.g. for more than one parent and/or more than one child).

Payment arrangements are detailed on the Penalty Notice and must be made directly to the Local Authority.

- First Penalty Notice (within a 3-year period):
    - £80 if paid within 21 days
    - £160 if paid after 21 days (within 28 days)
- Second Penalty Notice (within 3 years):
    - £160 (no reduced rate available).

Further offences may lead to additional legal action.

Where attendance does not improve, or where Penalty Notices are not paid, the Local Authority may consider further legal action. This could include:

- Parenting Orders;
- Education Supervision Orders; and/or
- Prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty Notice payments are made to Southampton City Council. Income generated is used to support the costs of administering the system and, where necessary, pursuing legal action.

Section 7

Reluctance to Attend School

Children may sometimes feel reluctant to attend school, and this can happen for a variety of reasons. Any concerns about attendance are best addressed through open communication between the school, parents/carers and the child.

If a child is hesitant to attend school, it is important not to excuse or cover up their absence, as this may reinforce the idea that attendance is optional and can make the situation more difficult to resolve. Instead, early support and honest conversations are key.

Parents/carers are encouraged to contact their child's class teacher as soon as possible to discuss any concerns. There may be underlying reasons for a child's reluctance, such as difficulties with learning, friendships, bullying, or challenges at home. By working together, the school and parents/carers can identify contributory factors and put appropriate support in place. In some cases, it may also be helpful to involve additional professionals to ensure the right support is provided.

How can I support my child to attend school?

Parents/carers can help by:

- Ensuring their child gets enough sleep and has a consistent morning routine;
- Allowing plenty of time to get ready and arrive at school punctually;
- Making sure their child is properly equipped and ready for the day;
- Showing a positive interest in their child's education.

Talking regularly with your child about their school day—what they have learned, who they have spent time with, and what they have enjoyed—can also help build confidence and a positive attitude towards attendance.

Section 8

Leavers

When a pupil leaves the school (other than at the end of Year 6 when transferring to secondary school), parents/carers are required to provide the school with full details of their plans. This should include:

- The date of the move;
- The new address and contact details;
- The name of the new school and start date (if known).

This information must be submitted to the school office **in writing**.

If a pupil leaves without this information being provided, they may be recorded as a **Child Missing in Education (CME)**. In such cases, the school and Local Authority have a duty to carry out investigations to locate the child, which may involve contacting Children's Services, the police and other agencies. Providing the required information promptly helps to avoid this process and ensures a smooth transition.

Section 9

Record Preservation

School attendance registers are legal documents and must be maintained in accordance with statutory requirements.

The school will ensure full compliance with attendance regulations regarding the keeping of records to comply with Regulation 7 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Electronic registers will be securely stored and preserved as digital records, with appropriate back-up systems in place to safeguard data.