



THE BISHOP'S STORTFORD HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Date of last review:	Spring 2023 (Updated November 2024)	Review period:	3 years
Date of next review:	Spring 2026	Owner:	Student Welfare & Development
		Approval:	



*TBSHS: A truly allround
education* Principles



In order to make the most of their education at TBSHS students are expected to have a good record of attendance and punctuality. Poor attendance and punctuality result in a poor education and low attendance rates are associated with lower achievement. DfE research suggests that 17 missed school days a year is the equivalent of a GCSE grade drop in achievement. DfE research published in 2022 states that the average attendance of a student achieving level 5- 9 in English and Maths GCSE was 96.3% whereas students that did not achieve a level 4 in Maths and English had an average attendance of 91.1%

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will do this through its use of curriculum and learning materials and by recognising good attendance accordingly. Parents/carers and students should ensure that they are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. A parent/carer is committing an offence if they fail to make sure that their child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without the parent/carers knowledge. Our strategy for ensuring outstanding attendance is divided into the key areas of 'Communication & Collaboration', 'Leading by Example', 'Incentivisation' and 'Enforcement' (See **Appendix A**)

Some children are reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, parents/carers and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and it may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

The member of SLT in charge of attendance is responsible for implementing the school's attendance policy and, in doing so, champion and improve attendance. They will ensure that procedures to address persistent and severe absence are robust and will regularly monitor and analyse attendance data to ensure continuing improvement in whole school attendance. The member of SLT in charge of attendance will provide a termly update to the governing body.

The school follows the steps to counter poor attendance, as identified in DfE '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' (May 2022, Updated August 2024) (See **Appendix B**). We will work together with parents/carer and student to deploy a full range of strategies to improve attendance. These strategies include expecting Parents/carers, whose children are experiencing difficulties, to contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent/carer may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO). They will also try and resolve the situation with voluntary support which may be in the form of a parenting contract. This is a voluntary contract between the school and parents/carers that details the support required from all involved to address the issues with a child's attendance at school. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken which may be in the form of a Penalty Notice ([Hertfordshire Code of Conduct](#)) or other legal options available to the Local Authority such as prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent/carer may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent/carer is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether a student is present or not. If a student of compulsory school age is absent, every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. **Only the school can authorise the absence, not the parents/carers**. This is why it is important that parents/carers provide information about every absence so that the school can make a reasonable decision as to whether it can be deemed authorised or not.

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. 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 very late without good reason (after 9.10am)
- Birthday outings
- Family holidays for which permission has not been sought in advance and no “leave of absence” granted.

The school will inform the local authority of any students who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the school's permission. The school understands it is under a safeguarding duty, under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

The school has an attendance target of 96.5%. The government’s persistent absence threshold has been set at 90. Students that are persistently absent (<90% attendance) and severely absent (<50% attendance) will be identified to the LAAO as per the termly monitoring meeting.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality and for deciding how to deal with individual absences. They are intended to promote good practice in this area.

1. Registration

Registers are marked electronically by Form Tutors in form rooms. Registration normally takes place from 8.30a.m.to 8.40a.m.and from 3.00p.m.to 3.30p.m. There are exceptions on early closure days and during examination periods.

Registers are kept open from morning registration until 9.10a.m. which is 30 minutes after the beginning of AM registration. Where a student has arrived late after the register has closed and the school is not satisfied that the reason for lateness should be authorised, then a code ‘U’ will be recorded. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep the register open for a longer period.

2. Lateness

Students who miss either morning or afternoon registration for whatever reason must sign in at reception.

The school actively discourages late arrival and lateness is monitored by the pastoral team in order to recognise patterns which could provide grounds for action by the school and which could lead to referral to the LAAO in serious cases. Where a student is persistently late at morning registration the student will be monitored by the appropriate inclusion manager/HoY.

3. Categorising Absence

The following table lists the codes that are used in the register to categorise an individual’s absence. It should be remembered that it is the school’s discretion, not the parents/carers, as to what code to use.

/	Present a.m. reg	N	No reason yet provided for absence
\	Present p.m. reg	O	Unauthorised absence
B	Educated off site	P	Approved sporting activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	R	Religious observance

D	Dual Registration	S	Study leave
E	Excluded	T	Traveller Absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	U	Late (after reg closed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)	V	Educational visit
I	Ill	W	Work experience
J	Interview	X	School Closed to Student (Covid 19)
L	Late (before reg closed)	Y	Enforced school closure
M	Medical / Dental appointment	!	School closed to students
7	Illness Due to Covid 19	#	School closed to staff and students
8	Self-isolating due to Covid 19	-	All should attend/no mark recorded

4. Reporting and Explaining Absence

Parents/carers should alert the school via the MIS Parent App and complete all required fields with necessary detail. Reasons such as 'ill' or 'sick' will be unauthorised. If parents/carers do not have access to the App, they should contact the schools' Absence Line as soon as possible, and preferably before 8 a.m., on **every day of absence**, again giving their child's name, form and the reason for absence or late arrival.

The school implements a First Day Response system (See **Appendix C**). The Administration Support office will attempt to contact the parents/carers of any child who has been marked absent at that morning's registration and for whom no explanation of absence has been received. Through this process, all unexplained absences should be resolved on the day as per the First Day Response procedures.

Absences that continue to go unexplained, or those about which there is any uncertainty or ambiguity, will initially be referred to the head of year. If further clarification is needed, it is up to the member of the senior leadership team with pastoral responsibility for attendance (SLT in charge of attendance) to decide which authorised or unauthorised category the absence falls within.

5. Rewarding good attendance and punctuality

Each month, students who have achieved 100% attendance will receive a house point for commitment.

At the end of the year, students who achieve 100% attendance will be presented with an attendance certificate.

6. Leave of Absence

As it can be very damaging to a child's educational progress, the school and the Local Authority actively discourage any time out of school except for wholly unavoidable or exceptional circumstances.

- Parents/carers **CANNOT** demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- The power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the SLT in charge of attendance (student welfare)
- Parental/carer requests **MUST** be made in writing to the SLT in charge of attendance (student welfare) **IN ADVANCE**, as early as possible, and at least 10 days beforehand. Failure to do so will mean the holiday is automatically unauthorised and that it may be referred to the LA for consideration of a Penalty Notice.
- Schools cannot apply blanket policies to either approve or reject all applications but must consider each request on its own merits. For example, authorisation will be given for weddings and funerals, family graduation ceremonies, recognised awards ceremonies (ie, medals for long service, achievement and bravery); normally covering one or two days only (depending on the location of the event). In addition, parents/carers in the Armed Forces and the Police who have allocated leave entitlement will be granted authorisation on the proviso that a covering letter from their employer is forthcoming.
- Extended periods of absence will be granted **ONLY** in exceptional circumstances. (An extended period is any time greater than 10 school days).

Students will be marked **H** (authorised absence) for the agreed period of holiday leave and **G** (unauthorised absence) for holiday absence that has not been approved by the school or for any days taken in excess of the agreed period.

7. Illness, medical and dental appointments

Students are encouraged to make medical or dental appointments out of school hours but the school recognises that this is not always possible. Therefore, missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence, but this will affect their overall attendance figure.

The school should be notified in writing prior to the appointment via the school MIS system and this should include photographic evidence of the appointment. Students must register themselves in or out at reception.

A student receiving medical treatment on site should be marked present.

Where any member of staff has grounds to doubt the authenticity of an illness, they should discuss the matter with the relevant Head of Year or Inclusion Manager.

8. Leaving or Returning to the school site

The school keeps a record of students leaving or returning to the site so that it has an accurate record of who is on site. This is particularly important in the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building. Students must register themselves in or out at reception.

The school will not let students of compulsory school age off site during the school day without authorisation from parents. Medical appointments should be reported using the School MIS App at least two days prior to the appointment, along with relevant confirmation of the appointment. A letter or screenshot of the appointment should be attached to the message. Students must sign out at the school reception and sign back in on their return.

9. Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

Absence data is regularly used by the inclusion manager to assist Form Tutors and Heads of Year in monitoring attendance and punctuality. The LAAO also visits the school to monitor attendance on a termly basis.

Where a child is absent from school without authorisation, the Admissions support staff and Inclusion Managers make contact with the parent/carer to discuss the issue in the first instance. Where this is unsuccessful in ending any persistent absence, the stages of attendance intervention (**Appendix B**) will be followed.

Where a child has had a pattern of truancy or parentally-condoned absence, the Form Tutor and Head of Year will monitor the attendance more closely and the LAAO. The parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible, by phone, or by letter and the Form Tutor will be kept aware of the situation. In the case of persistent truancy or absence, careful investigation of the matter must be undertaken in order to ascertain the causes. The key is to enable the student to return to a pattern of regular attendance. Assurance and advice within the school should first be sought from the SLT in charge of attendance, and the Learning Support department. In persistent cases or when an individual student's attendance level falls below 90% in any one term without good reason, a referral to the LAAO may be made by the school. Following investigation and depending upon the causes and extent of the truancy or absence, a variety of actions will be taken to reintegrate the student into the school as described in "Principles" above. These could include a parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations, 2007.

10. Other non-routine attendance matters

10.1 Days of religious observance

This is absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong, including religious festivals.

The school is sensitive to such requests and asks that parents/carers give advance notice.

10.2 Interviews with prospective employers or for a place at another school (including entrance examinations)

The school should be notified in advance with proof of the appointment, for example a letter of invitation. If the interview takes place during Year 11 and the SLT in charge of attendance is satisfied that it is linked to future education or employment prospects, absence can be recorded as "J – interview" which counts as "approved education activity".

10.3 Study Leave

Other than in exceptional circumstances (for example as part of a strategy to prevent permanent exclusion) study leave will be granted sparingly, not exceeding 15 school days for Year 11, during the actual examination period itself.

If possible the period of study leave should be less than the examination period. Regard should also be paid to the individual student's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it.

Study leave cannot be counted as "approved education activity" as it is unsupervised.

10.4 Exclusions

A student excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school. Similarly, the absence of a permanently excluded student is treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress.

In the case of a permanent exclusion the student's name should be removed from the school roll on the first school days after the day on which:

- i. The independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion;
- ii. The independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion, but does not direct the student's reinstatement;
- iii. The prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal; iv. The parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in writing that he does not intend to appeal.

In the meantime the absence is to be recorded as authorised using code "E". The school is responsible for setting work for an excluded student who remains on the school roll.

10.5 Family bereavements

The school will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals or associated events and will, within DfE guidelines, authorise such absences.

10.6 Child caring for a sick or disabled family member (young carers)

In a genuine crisis, the school will approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school will set a time limit for the absence and set some schoolwork so the student does not fall far behind while at home. Referral to outside agencies will be done sensitively, recognising that a child may fear being "put into care" if the parents/carers are seen as unable to cope. In the final analysis it is important to remember that in accordance with the Children's Act 1989, the interests of the child are paramount and that advice should be sought from Social Services. In these circumstances Form Tutors and Heads of Year should seek the advice of the school's Designated Senior Person (DSP), or deputy DSP's.

10.7 Family prison visits

The school will authorise requests for absence, which will enable a child to visit his or her parent in prison.

10.8 Birth of a child

Support is directed to keeping the student in school wherever possible and to her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant will be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

10.9 Special occasions

The school will consider each request individually. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. For example, attending the wedding of a family member would be acceptable but a day out of school for the student's birthday or for a shopping trip would not. Requesting leave of absence for a 'special birthday' involving a family gathering would not be granted. The school will always take into account the nature of the event; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the student's overall pattern of attendance. Absence towards the end of each half term and term will always be recorded as unauthorised, unless prior permission has been sought and agreed.

10.10 Public performances, including film or TV work

The Local Authority must licence a student to take part in a public performance.

Agreed participation should be treated as authorised absence, but as student's progress through the school towards GCSE and A-Levels, permission will be less forthcoming. If granted, students must always ensure they catch up with all missed work as quickly as possible.

10.11 Traveller children when the family is travelling

To help ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling.

While the traveller is away, the base school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised.

Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

10.12 Deleting students from the school roll

Students can only be deleted from the school roll by the Head teacher. In so doing they strictly follow the current DFE regulations regarding such deletions. These are outlined in Regulation 9 of the Education (Student Registration) Regulations, 2006.

Students who have been permanently excluded are to be removed from the roll.

When the school has made the decision to remove a student from their roll, the Administration Support office notifies the LA.

If a student is to be taken off roll because the child is moving to another area or school, the administrative staff should first find out the name and address of the new school and when the student will start, confirming this information with the receiving school.

10.13 Precautionary measures to protect children

Where a student is said to be moving to a new school all school staff should be concerned:

- If the parents/carers do not name the new school;
- If a student has “disappeared” from the area without explanation;
- If a student has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date for a holiday taken in term time.

If these concerns arise, staff should speak to the DSP who will alert Children’s Services without delay. If, however, staff have good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed, they should contact the police directly. In all of the above cases a member of the school’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) must be informed.

Responsibilities for Attendance Matters

Students

Students should attend school punctually every day. If this is not possible for any reason, they must follow the procedures as described above for signing in and out and for reporting absence. They should raise any particular reasons for non-attendance as soon as possible with their parents/carers or a member of staff so that any difficulties can be resolved.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should ensure that their child attends punctually every day, avoiding taking them out of school except for exceptional circumstances. Where possible, any planned absence should be raised with the school well in advance and any absence or late arrival reported by contacting the school as delineated above. They should be alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance and contact the school or the LAAO as soon as possible to work together to resolve any difficulties.

Attendance Team (Administration Support)

The attendance team are the first point of contact for routine attendance matters. Absences reported by the School MIS App or telephone will automatically be updated on the school system.

Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for marking the register at morning and afternoon registration using the appropriate attendance codes and for first level monitoring of an individual’s attendance and punctuality, including robustly chasing students for adequate explanations for lateness.

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers provide a second level of monitoring of attendance and punctuality, looking at trends across individuals, forms and year groups.

Heads of Year/Inclusion Managers are consulted by Form Tutors about particular attendance concerns and work with them, other staff, students, parents/carers and the LAAO, if necessary, to resolve any issues that are preventing regular attendance. They meet occasionally with the LAAO to review attendance.

SLT in charge of attendance (Attendance Officer)

The Attendance Officer is the SLT in charge of attendance who oversees all attendance matters on behalf of the school and is assisted by the Inclusion Managers. They are responsible for the Attendance Policy and its implementation and will be consulted by Heads of Year as required.

Head teacher

The SLT in charge of attendance is responsible for authorising any leave of absence.

Governing Body

Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the students who need it.

Attendance Matters

The SLT in charge of attendance has strategic responsibility for all attendance matters. Day-to-day responsibility for administering the attendance is overseen by the Heads of Year and the Inclusion Managers. The Schools Admissions Office produce daily registers for emergency evacuation purposes and contact any parents/carers whose child is absent from school that day for whom no explanation has been received. They update registers with reasons for absence in the light of the calls they receive and make.

Summary

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

Appendix A



Ensuring Outstanding Attendance

Communication & Collaboration

TBSHS will regularly communicate with students and parents/carers about the importance of outstanding attendance and our school targets and procedures.

Methods of communication include standards evenings, newsletters, the school website, and assemblies.

We work closely with parents/carers to ensure we have up to date and robust records for absence and can support where problems arise.

Leading by Example

We model the importance of full school attendance by ensuring that disruption to learning, by things such as weather or national events, is at a minimum. Closing part or all of the school will only occur when there is no other option available.

We have high expectations of staff attendance and ensure that absence is minimised.

Incentivisation

>96.5% attendance is an expectation of all students. We celebrate students achieving this. For example, house points are awarded for each calendar month of full attendance.

High attendance is a factor in selection for commendation tea and end of year '100% attendance' letters are sent home.

Enforcement

Where attendance drops below specified measures then an attendance letter is sent to parent/carers.

The school follows clear procedures for 'first day response' (FDR) and applies appropriate strategies to avoid students becoming persistently absent.

Absence requests (7-11) are considered individually and consistently by SLT in charge of attendance.

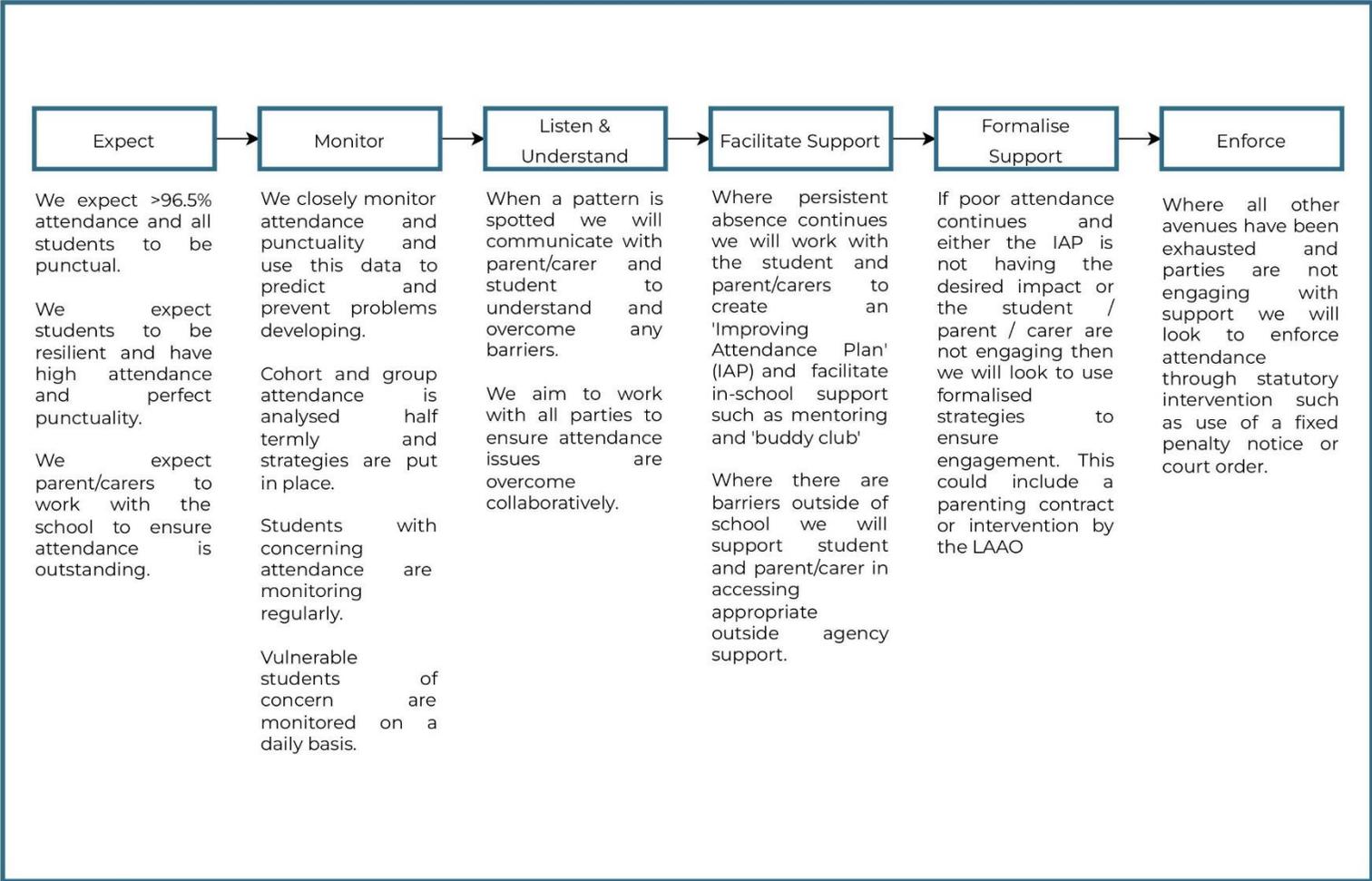
Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are requested where appropriate and we work with the LAAO to use all measures available to ensure outstanding attendance.



Appendix B



Stages of attendance intervention



Appendix C

