

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Signed by the Chair of the Local Advisory Board:	Matthew Arrowsmith-Brown

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## **1. Introduction/Aim**

- 1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.
- 1.2 At Acle Academy we believe that regular school attendance enables children both to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become responsible, organised and motivated adults. We value all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community.
- 1.3 Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

## **2. Legal Framework**

- 2.1 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 to 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 2.2 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 2.3 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - Present;
  - Absent;
  - Present at approved educational activity; or
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Not attending school for any reason

Regular attendance as:

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency, exceptional circumstances or unavoidable cause for which the school has granted leave

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed, without evidence of having attended a medical appointment
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

“Parent” as defined by Section 576 of the Education Act 1996:

- All biological parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person – this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative.
- Any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child

## **4. Categorising Absence and Attendance**

### **4.1 Registration**

4.1.1 Students of compulsory school age have their attendance registered electronically six times per day. It is the practice of this School to register ALL students.

The School Register is electronic and is monitored and updated on an hourly basis by the Attendance Officer. In addition, all teaching staff are required to check that the students who should attend each lesson actually do so and electronically register their attendance at the start of each lesson.

4.1.2 The Electronic Register records the following:

whether the student is present, absent (authorised), absent (unauthorised), or attending an approved educational activity.

An 'approved educational activity' is defined as: one taking place off the School premises and is:

- a) approved by a person authorised by the governing body or the Principal;
- b) supervised by a person approved by the governing body or Principal;
- c) of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips and educational visits, interviews with prospective employers, or for a place in higher or further education; and
- d) Link Courses where students attend a Further Education (FE) college for part of their time, or franchised students receiving part of their education off-site at another location while remaining on roll and under School supervision (e.g. sick children being taught at home), or attending an approved sporting activity;
- e) a managed move or attendance trial taking place at a different school

When a student is absent he/she is marked as an 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' absence; and the nature of the approved educational activity is recorded.

## **4.2 Leave of Absence**

4.2.1 Since September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Principals can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances). All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday (without exceptional circumstances) may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution if the absence meets the criteria (set out in para 7.3.8 of this policy).

4.2.2 Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence during term time must apply in writing using the appropriate form, to be obtained from the main school office or Attendance Office, to the Principal at least 7 days before the planned leave. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Principal and it will be marked as unauthorised. Acle Academy will treat each application individually and consider carefully the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution if the absence meets the criteria (set out in para 7.3.8 of this policy).

4.2.3 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are times where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child due to 'exceptional circumstances.' At Acle Academy leave of absence shall not be granted unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. This may only be granted at the discretion of the Principal. Acle Academy will respond to all applications for leave of absence in writing.

4.2.4 A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority (if the absence meets the criteria (set out in para 7.3.8 of this policy)). should:-

- The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Principal but is still taken.
- A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.

4.2.5 When absence is granted by the Principal, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

### **4.3 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance**

Acle Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

### **4.4 Traveller Absence**

1. The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.
2. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, s. 86 of The Education Act 1944 states that a Traveller parent shall be entitled to be acquitted if his or her child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) during the period of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted, if the family are of no fixed abode.
3. However, it should be noted that this provision applies only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.
4. When trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around Norfolk, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.
5. Acle Academy will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended Acle Academy in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at

other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at Acle Academy will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

6. Acle Academy can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:
  - Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and
  - Inform the school regarding proposed return dates
7. Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:
  - The child is on roll and attending another visited school
  - Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
8. Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

#### **4.5 Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school. That decision is at the discretion of the Principal. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- An unwillingness to attend school
- An inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/family organisation
- A refusal to attend school on health grounds where medical evidence has been requested for such absences and this has not been provided
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of the school

#### **4.6 Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for **any** reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or full prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

#### **4.7 Late Arrival at School**

At Acle Academy all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year.

The school day begins at 8.55 am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The school register will be taken during form time 9.00 am to 9.25 am. All pupils arriving after 9.00 am are required to report to the main office, where possible with their parents, and are expected to sign in using the electronic InVentry system, and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is between 9.00 am and 9.25 am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

The school register will officially close at 9.25am. All pupils arriving on or after this time (unless they have provided evidence of having been at a medical appointment) will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival resulting in L or U register coding. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note the afternoon register is taken in Period 4 between 1.30pm and 1.45pm immediately after the lunch break. L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session at 1.45pm.

#### **5. Deletions from the Register**

5.1 Pupils will only be deleted from the register in accordance with statutory Regulations. If there are any concerns regarding the deletion of a student from the Registers then contact should be made with the Attendance Officer who will explain the relevant regulations.

Acle Academy will follow Norfolk County Council's Children Missing Education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

#### **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

At Acle Academy, we believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governors of Acle Academy will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy

- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governors' meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Management Team at Acle Academy will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance

The Attendance Officer will

- work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support.
- support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:
  - Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data
  - Undertaking regular attendance meetings with the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance and other relevant staff members
  - Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
  - Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance
  - Managing individual pupil casework files
  - With the support of other Departments , where appropriate, coordinate individual action plans for pupils causing concern including the consideration of the use of a Family Support Plan (FSP) and/ or the implementation of a parenting contract
  - Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
  - Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes
  - Making referrals to appropriate external agencies

All staff at Acle Academy will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner and inform the Attendance Officer of the names of students who are absent without notification
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer/ Assistant Principal responsible for attendance in relation to reasons for absence of students in their form and ensure documentation provided by students to them is passed to the Attendance Officer as a matter of priority.
- Discuss absences with students and utilise the Return to School form for all periods of 3 or more days absence and for any period of absence relating to a student whose attendance is less than 90%.

Pupils will:

- Attend school at all times unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or carers to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen and ensure that note is delivered to the Attendance Office
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation.
- Ensure that evidence of any medical appointments that take place during the school day are passed to the Attendance Officer in advance
- Make any request for leave of absence on the School's official leave of absence form.

Acle Academy requests that parents will:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Inform the school of the reason for their child's absence on **every** day of non-attendance (via the telephone absence line by phoning 01493 750431 and selecting Option 1) by 9am unless specific arrangements have been made with the Attendance Officer. Please note the absence line is able to receive messages outside of school opening hours.
- Provide a written explanatory note for their child's absence on their child's first day returning to school. This is required in addition to a daily absence reporting call.
- Where the student has been absent for a period of more than 3 days, provide where possible, medical evidence in the form of :
  - An appointment card for Doctors/Nurse Practitioner/Dentist/Hospital Department
  - Copy of medication prescribed or advised.
  - Advisory note from a pharmacist.
- Respond to any absence reporting text messages or telephone calls as a matter of urgency.

- Ensure all requests for leave of absence are made at the earliest opportunity ideally one month prior to absence and in any event at least 7 days prior to the period of absence planned.
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours and where this is not possible at such a time as to limit interruption to a student's learning.
- Ensure that evidence of any medical appointments that take place during the school day are provided to the Attendance Officer in advance
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

## **7. Attendance Protocols**

If a child is absent, the following will be initiated by the school:

- Absence procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school by the end of form time (9.25 am) and where no reason for absence is known. This may initially be in the form of text message or telephone call.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents/carers, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned.
- If school cannot make contact with a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out.
- School will telephone home if a pupil leaves the school without permission

In certain circumstances the School may also:

- Visit the home of the pupil if a student has been absent for a period of more than 3 consecutive days
- Visit the home of the pupil or request a welfare check to be made by the police regardless of the period of absence
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvement
- Refer to an external agency/ support service to offer support, guidance and advice
- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to be made to establish the whereabouts of the child through Children Missing Education procedures
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken

- Refer the matter to an appropriate external agency for multi-agency support, such as implementing a Family Support Plan or referring to Children Services, where there are safeguarding concerns

### **7.1 Expected absence procedure for parents:**

A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to:

- Contact school by telephone call by 9 am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence via the telephone absence line on 01493 750431 and selecting Option 1.
- If no contact is received, the Attendance protocols will be instigated
- In addition to telephoning the school daily to advise of absence, provide a written explanatory note for their child's absence on their child's first day returning to school. Provide, where possible, medical evidence, where the student has been absent for a period of more than 3 days. in the form of :
  - An appointment card for Doctors/Nurse Practitioner/Dentist/Hospital Department
  - Copy of medication prescribed or advised.
  - Advisory note from a pharmacist.

### **7.2 Support Systems**

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- School Nurse Service
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Engaging the support of other agencies

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Principal will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority.

### **7.3 Attendance Procedure-and Reward System**

7.3.1 Regular checks will be conducted to check on patterns of attendance.

7.3.2 All unauthorised absence will be investigated daily.

7.3.3 Students with attendance of less than 90% at any given time within the Academic year are considered Persistent Absentees and attendance intervention will be considered. An Attendance Support Panel may be offered where attendance strategy targets will be agreed between the school, parent/carer and student and both parents/carers and students are expected to comply with them.

7.3.4 In cases where an attendance support panel is not deemed appropriate or following an attendance support panel attendance fails to improve or there is no cooperation with the targets set legal action through the Local Authority's Fast Track Proceedings will be considered and if appropriate commenced, with whatever support is available from the Local Authority. Parents/carers could face prosecution or be issued with a fixed penalty notice.

7.3.5 Consideration will also be given to any other appropriate attendance interventions available to the school and the Governing Body including the use of Parenting Contracts in accordance with section 19 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

7.3.6 Students without regular attendance and those considered as Persistent Absentees will not be permitted to undertake school trips, save for at the discretion of the Assistant Principal responsible for attendance.

7.3.7 Acle Academy wishes to keep parents and carers as informed as possible regarding their child's attendance. Traffic Light Letters are sent on a termly basis, detailing pupils current attendance and the interventions that the Academy have in place to support an improvement in attendance. Additionally attendance herringbones will be sent each time tracking data is circulated. Pupils falling below 94% will be required to produce medical evidence as stated above for all periods of absence relating to illness or any medical condition. In addition the use of an Attendance Support Panel and other interventions as detailed in section 7 may be considered

7.3.8 The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention through the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice where they have:

1. 10 consecutive sessions<sup>1</sup> of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time or

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the school day consists of 2 sessions.

2. 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday.

Any pupil at Acle Academy who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

7.3.9 If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If a Notice is unpaid within 21 days, the fine will double to £120 per parent per child if paid within 28 days. If a fixed penalty notice fine is not paid in full within the timescale set out above, the Local Authority is required to start legal proceedings against the parent(s) in the local Magistrates' Court for the offence of failing to ensure their child has attended school regularly.

7.3.10 The School uses a number of methods to promote attendance throughout the school year, these rewards recognise high levels of attendance on an individual, house and registration form basis and may include:

- text messages to parents/carers
- reward trips
- vouchers and other rewards
- certificates and trophies
- allocation of house points

Such rewards are implemented on an individual and house basis at regular intervals throughout the school year and on a registration form basis weekly.

## **8. Related Policies**

To underpin the values and ethos of our school and our intent to ensure that pupils at our school attend school regularly and reach their full potential the following policies are integral to this approach:

- safeguarding including child protection
- admissions
- anti-bullying
- exclusion
- SEND policy
- behaviour and rewards

## **9. Statutory Framework**

This policy has been devised in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- School attendance, DFE (2016)
- School attendance parental responsibility measures: statutory guidance, DFE (revised March 2017)
- Norfolk County Council Children Missing Education Practice & Procedures
- 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', DFE (2019)