



Attendance Policy

Last Reviewed	July 2023
Reviewed by	Trust Board
Date of Approval	July 2023
Lead responsibility	Director of School Improvement (Sec), Attendance Lead
Next Review	July 2026

The Alban Academies Trust ('AAT') believes that setting high expectations for all children will allow them to develop academically and emotionally.

All references to Senior Leader -must say 'Designated Senior Leader with responsibility for Attendance'

1 PRINCIPLES

The Trust will ensure all schools within the AAT:

- 1.1 Develop and maintain a positive and effective whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance, is an integral part of the school's ethos and fulfils statutory duties.
- 1.2 Demonstrate that attendance is everyone's business and embed a 'support first' approach
- 1.3 Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, children and young people, taking into consideration the vulnerability of some children and young people and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitivity and work with them to remove any barriers to attendance
- 1.4 Have clear processes in place to address persistent and severe absence, making cohorts who are severely absent the top priority for action and support.
- 1.5 Are conscious of potential safeguarding issues related to attendance.
- 1.6 Recognise the needs of the individual child or young person when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- 1.7 Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- 1.8 Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- 1.9 Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools within the AAT.
- 1.10 Promote effective partnerships with the Hertfordshire ISL Attendance Team (Hertfordshire LEA attendance service) and with other services and agencies
- 1.11 Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities, ensuring DfE guidance for academies and local authorities is followed - [Working together to improve School Attendance - September 2022](#)
- 1.12 Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement and make sure it is resourced appropriately to create, build and maintain systems and performance
- 1.13 Provide good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND). Ensuring compliance with Statutory Guidance for governing bodies of proprietors of academies in England - [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions, December 2015.](#)
- 1.14 Apply this policy fairly and consistently and recognise the individual needs of children and young people and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Schools will consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 1.15 Understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity, recognising that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues

2 TRUST ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 This policy has been developed at Trust level and therefore covers policy that is relevant and followed by all the schools within the Alban Academies Trust. The appendices contain specific school level documents and details of any differing procedures if applicable and relevant to this policy.

2.2 Attendance Registers

- 2.2.1 The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.
- 2.2.2 The AAT ensures that in all its schools:
- 2.2.2.1 The Headteacher will be responsible for the implementation and management of this policy underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities, which are communicated to and understood by staff, children and young people and families, ensuring compliance with DfE guidance for academies and local authorities - [Working together to improve School Attendance - September 2022](#)
 - 2.2.2.2 There is a clear vision for high attendance underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by staff, children and young people.
 - 2.2.2.3 There is a designated member of Senior Leadership, with overall responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of children and young people, who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the attendance management, accurate completion of admission and attendance registers, tracking and intervention systems, provide regular reviews to their senior team and an annual report to the designated governing board committee as well as calendared updates to the AAT.
 - 2.2.2.4 All teaching and non-teaching staff know and understand their responsibilities for attendance, adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness, and are actively working to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole, receiving the training and professional development they need.
 - 2.2.2.5 Attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding.
 - 2.2.2.6 Staff, children and young people and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe - ensuring compliance with [Keeping children Safe in Education 2022, Statutory guidance for school and college - September 2022 - Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
 - 2.2.2.7 Parents and carers will take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their child or young person, in line with their legal obligations. They will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school.
 - 2.2.2.8 A designated member of Senior Leadership is responsible for ensuring clear messages about attendance, punctuality, how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes are communicated through regular channels of communication, including sensitively praising and rewarding good attendance where appropriate.
 - 2.2.2.9 The Local Authority is notified of any child or young person who is regularly absent from school, has irregular attendance or has 10 or more consecutive school days absence via a 10 Day Absence Form.
 - 2.2.2.10 Share information, effective practice, and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, the LA and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming severe or persistent .

2.2.2.11 [Where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) AAT procedures are detailed in Annex

3 DEFINITIONS - AUTHORISED/UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- 3.1 Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. As headteachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purpose of a family holiday.
- 3.2** Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:
- 3.2.1 Sickness (may require medical evidence)
 - 3.2.2 Medical/dental appointments
 - 3.2.3 Days of religious observance
 - 3.2.4 Exceptional family circumstances
- 3.3 Note: The AAT emphasises to parents that all medical/dental appointments should be made outside school hours where possible.
- 3.4 Absence from school will not be authorised for:
- 3.4.1 Holidays
 - 3.4.2 Unsatisfactory explanations (e.g. shopping, minding the house etc)
 - 3.4.3 Caring for sick siblings or parents
 - 3.4.4 Birthdays
- 3.5 Persistent absence (PA) is when a child or young person is missing 10% or more of school. An individual child or young person is deemed to be PA if they have missed more than 10% of school, regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised.
- 3.6 Severe Absence is when a child or young person is missing 50% or more of school. An individual child or young person is deemed to be Severely Absent if they have missed more than 50% of school, regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised.

4 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.
- 4.2 Parents/carers are responsible for informing the school of the reason for any absence on the first day of absence (by letter, phone call or personal visit) on the morning of any absence. If further absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding.
- 4.3 Parents/carers will be informed on a regular basis of their child's attendance/absence
- 4.4 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child or young person stays at school once they have registered
- 4.5 Robust first day calling procedures are in place including priority routines for vulnerable children including children with a social worker. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding.
- 4.6 Truancy is recorded as an unauthorised absence. A number of systems are put in place to inform children and young people that this behaviour is unacceptable. Parents will always be informed and an appropriate sanction will be put in place. A record will be made for the student's file.

- Through investigation, if necessary, support will be offered to the child or young person who has truanted from a lesson.
- 4.7 Where necessary, home visits will be carried out in line with the school's safeguarding responsibilities to engage families and ensure children are safe.
- 4.8 The Senior Lead with responsibility for attendance, in conjunction with the AAT lead will put in place a targeted action plan with clearly defined review dates, to remove barriers to attendance and to reengage all children and young people with persistent and severe attendance. Where needs and barriers are individual to the student, bespoke support will be considered and the impact of any intervention will be monitored
- 4.9 Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. The AAT works in partnership with the Statutory Attendance and Participation Team to devise a strategic approach to attendance. Support may be requested from the LAAO (Local Authority Attendance Officer) for guidance with implementation of plans. If parents do not engage with formal support, the school may request statutory intervention from the Local Authority.
- 4.9.1 The AAT follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures. In conjunction with the AAT Lead the governors reserve the right to consider requesting Herts County Council to take legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Head Teacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty notice
- 4.9.2 The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.
- 4.9.3 There is no right of appeal by parents against a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- 4.9.4 If the penalty is not paid the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance. The authorising officer, (the Head of the Attendance service) has the discretion to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for a first offence in exceptional circumstances
- 4.10 Where alternative provision is offered to children and young people as part of an attendance improvement strategy, this will be at the discretion of the school and will only be via an Ofsted registered provider.

5 MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 5.1 In the belief that the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all children and young people want to be and are keen and ready to learn:
- 5.1.1 The curriculum will be monitored and developed to meet the needs of all children and young people
- 5.1.2 The implementation of attendance policy and practice will be monitored regularly.
- 5.1.3 A designated Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance is responsible for informing all school staff of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports enabling staff to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.
- 5.1.4 A designated Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance is responsible for ensuring data is monitored and analysed weekly, identifying and challenging trends and *resolving attendance issues before they become entrenched. they will also be responsible for monitoring the impact of school wide attendance efforts which will be used to evaluate strategy.*


- 5.1.5 Attendance Data will be benchmarked against local, regional and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- 5.1.6 Attendance figures and progress to achieving set targets are reported to the governing body and trusts at least term
- 5.1.7 The implementation of recognition for attendance and punctuality and sanctions for absence and lateness in line with school policy is established and monitored
- 5.1.8 The implementation of policy and practice is monitored
- 5.1.9 Establishing and ensuring implementation and robust monitoring of arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME) or at risk of becoming CME
- 5.1.10 Children and young people with Persistent or Severe Absence are set targets for improvement and are closely monitored by the relevant members of staff. These targets will be regularly reviewed by the AAT Attendance Lead
- 5.1.11 Regular structured meetings will be held with the AAT Attendance Lead in order to identify and support those children and young people whose attendance/punctuality is a source of concern
- 5.1.12 Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of their child's attendance and absence levels and of all concerns around attendance and punctuality
- 5.1.13 Annual reports will be made by the relevant senior leader to the local governing body on the issue of attendance/punctuality
- 5.1.14 Information for a summative AAT report will be shared at specific calendared data points for presentation at AAT committee meeting
- 5.1.15 Parents, children and young people will be helped to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to attainment, wellbeing and wider development and the short and long term consequences of poor attendance
- 5.1.16 Students who have been absent for any extended period of time will be re-integrated back into school through a structured and individually-tailored programme as detailed in Appendix on Mental health and Attendance
- 5.1.17 All issues which may cause a student to experience attendance difficulties will be promptly investigated

Appendices


1. Attendance Intervention Roadmap - attached
2. Policy - Where a mental health issue is affecting attendance - attached
3. 12 Step Emotionally Based Avoidance pathway - attached
4. Attendance Targeted Action Plan - school specific
5. EBSA Reintegration Plan - school specific
6. Template for school specific attendance - school specific

ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION ROADMAP


Form Tutor/Class Teacher

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- ❖ Discussion with parents (Primary)/student (Secondary) about attendance.
 - ❖ Call to parents/carers.
 - ❖ Raise any further support required with Head of Year/Performance Director/Director of Learning (Secondary)/Headteacher (Primary).


AAT Attendance Lead & SLT Attendance Lead (Secondary)/Headteacher (Primary)

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- ❖ Letter b home.
 - ❖ Medical evidence may be required before any absence can be authorised.
 - ❖ Meeting with AAT Attendance Lead
 - ❖ Meeting to agree Attendance Improvement Plan.

Head of Year (Secondary)/Headteacher (Primary)

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- ❖ Letter a sent home
 - ❖ One-to-one meeting with student (Secondary), parent (Primary).
 - ❖ Look at any absence trends/recorded concerns and strategies to improve attendance.
 - ❖ Phone call to parents/carers to discuss concerns and strategies for improvement.
 - ❖ Parent/carer meetings with AAT Attendance Lead..

AAT Attendance Lead & SLT Attendance Lead (Secondary)/Headteacher (Primary)

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- ❖ Issue 1c breach letter with details of FPN protocol.
 - ❖ Liaise with Herts ISL Attendance Team and consider referral for Early Assessment.
 - ❖ Consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice where appropriate

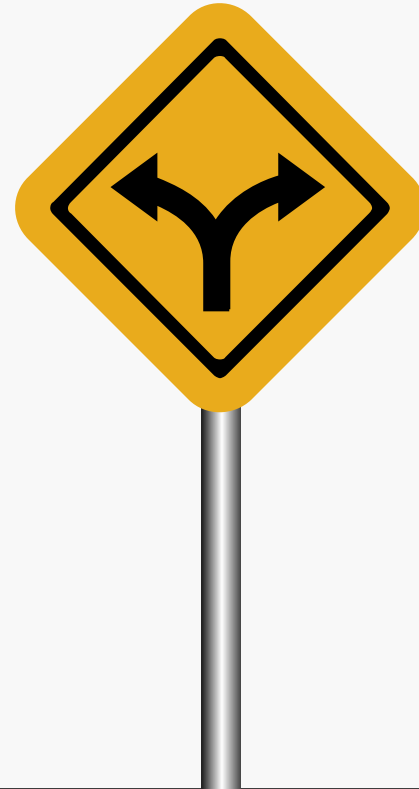
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STAGE 1 - Below 95%

Form Tutor (Secondary)/Class Teacher (Primary): Leads all interventions at this stage.

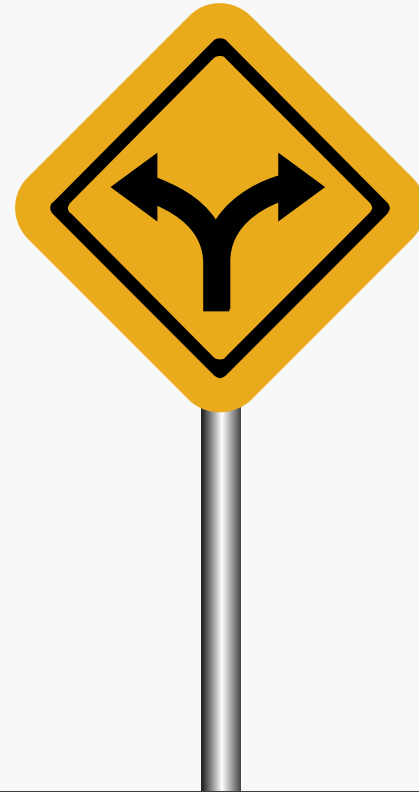
1. Discussion with student (secondary) /parent (primary) about absence.
2. Phone call home to parents if reason for absence is unclear/unexplained.
3. Raise with Head of Year (secondary)/Headteacher (primary) if further support/closer monitoring is required.
4. Consider the risk of EBSA/mental health issues affecting attendance and flag to Attendance Lead/AHT/Headteacher (Primary) if this is an issue.
5. 1a attendance letter to be issued.



STAGE 2 - Below 90% : Persistent Absence

Head of Year (secondary)/Headteacher (primary): Leads all interventions at this stage.

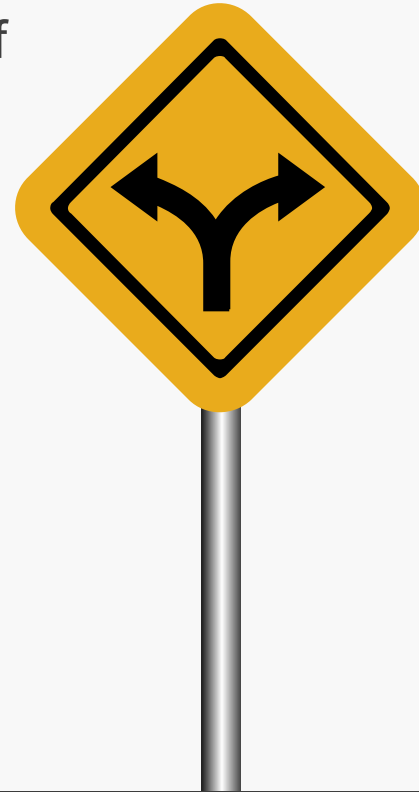
1. 1a letter (issued by School Attendance Administrator)
2. One-to-one meeting with student (secondary)/parent/carer (primary).
3. Analyse any absence trends (e.g. days/times) and concerns that have been recorded.
4. Phone call to parents/carers to discuss concerns and strategies to improve attendance.
5. Put in place appropriate support/reasonable adjustments and ensure all actions logged.
6. 1b Letter home (Issued by School Attendance Administrator).
7. Medical evidence may be required before further absence can be authorised.



STAGE 3 - Below 80% : risk of becoming severely absent (50%)

AAT Attendance Lead: Leads all interventions at this stage with support/guidance of SLT Attendance Lead (secondary) /Headteacher (primary).

1. Student(Secondary)/Parent (primary) meetings with AAT Attendance Lead.
2. Meeting to agree targeted action plan with clear review dates to be reviewed on a regular basis.
3. Parents/carers reminded of their legal obligations and the potential consequences of their child's attendance not improving.
4. AAT Lead will issue 1c Fixed Penalty Notice breach warning letter if appropriate.
5. AAT Lead will seek guidance from Local Authority/refer for Early Assessment/issue a Fixed Penalty Notice Letter



STAGE 4

AAT Lead: Leads all interventions at this stage with support/guidance of SLT Attendance Lead (Secondary), Headteacher (Primary).

If attendance has not improved on an Attendance Improvement Plan, school will need to decide whether to monitor attendance for a further period of time, make a referral to the Herts ISL Attendance Team or to proceed with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If at any point during the process, parents/carers appear to disengage, (i.e. do not attend meetings/are unwilling to attend meetings), the case can be referred to Herts ISL Attendance Team at an earlier stage.



Stage 4 Fixed Penalty Notice Guidelines

The AAT follows Hertfordshire County Council's Penalty Notice for Truancy Code of Conduct and procedures. In conjunction with the AAT Lead, the governors reserve the right to consider requesting Herts County Council to take legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school. If a pupil has at least 15 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term (including unauthorised holidays), the Head Teacher may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a Fixed Penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid, the Local Authority may prosecute parents/carers for their child's irregular attendance. The authorising officer, (the Head of the Attendance service) has the discretion to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for a first offence in exceptional circumstances.

Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil.

(1) If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.





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Where a mental health issue is affecting attendance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupils-attendance-guidance-for-schools>

The AAT takes a whole-school approach to the mental health of children and young people, developing a trusted relationship with parents/carers and families with an emphasis on the importance of supporting mental health and regular attendance.

We maintain high expectations for the attendance, engagement and punctuality of all children and young people who are anxious about attending school, recognising that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue, as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future.

We recognise that where a child has a social, emotional or mental health issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment, attendance may be an issue.. However, children and young people experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams and these children and young people are still expected to attend school regularly.

The AAT ensures that in all its schools:

High expectations of attendance, punctuality and engagement are set and maintained for children and young people who are anxious about attending school

All teaching staff, non-teaching staff and volunteers recognise that there can be attendance challenges where a child or young person has a social, emotional or mental health issue, particularly a severe issue for which the child is receiving clinical treatment.

Anxiety about attending school is mitigated as much as possible by putting in place a targeted action plan with clearly defined review points, to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. The plan will have a clear aim of maximising face-to face attendance on site as much as possible and will consider a range of reasonable adjustments in line with safeguarding responsibilities as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

Date reviewed:		Date agreed:	
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Professionals will provide cross-agency support through a team around the family where other services may help to alleviate a pupil's concerns about barriers to attending school, and ensure that the child or young person knows which school staff they can talk to if required.

In very exceptional circumstances, consideration will be given as to whether a time-limited phased return would be appropriate, for example where a medical condition prevents a child or young person from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. In line with DfE guidance, a part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any agreement will have parental consent and a time limit by which point the child or young person is expected to attend full time.

Parents are expected to engage with support and should feel assured that the school has a targeted action plan in place for their child or young person.

Where support offered is not engaged with or when all other options have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate, school will work with the Local Authority to consider whether to formalise support or to enforce attendance through legal intervention in the normal way

In instances of long-term or repeated absences for the same reasons, school may request medical evidence in order to assist in assessing whether the child requires additional support to help them to attend more regularly, and whether the illness is likely to prevent the child or young person from attending for extended periods.

Where a child or young adult is likely to miss more than 15 days of school, the school will inform the LA and work with the family to provide educational provision whilst determining with the LA whether alternative provision should be provided under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, as outlined in statutory guidance.

Where attendance is a concern for children and young adults with SEND, consideration will be given to the fact that a child with SEND may be more anxious about attending school and any additional needs will be considered as part of sensitive attendance conversations, ensuring any plans are agreed with parents/carers. If a child or young adult has an EHC plan, this will be communicated to the LA at an early stage once barriers to attendance relating to needs become apparent.

Date reviewed:		Date agreed:	
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12 Step Emotionally Based Avoidance Pathway

STEP 1

Meeting with parent/carer/child in school/at home/virtually

STEP 2

Gather information from parent/carer

STEP 3

Consider specific reasons for avoiding school and possible strategies. Is the child:

Avoiding things at schools that make them anxious or sad

- Address specific worries or difficulties
- Promote strategies to regulate and manage anxiety

Avoiding difficult social situations or being evaluated

- Teach social skills
- Help child develop self esteem

Gaining attention for parents/caregivers

- Encourage parent to manage own anxiety
- Refer to other agencies if family needs support
- If CYP has background of trauma/abuse – consider assigning them to a key figure who takes on the role of an additional attachment figure in school

Gaining tangible rewards outside school

- Encourage parents/carers to set limits on child's behaviours at home (gaming/phone use/tv etc)

STEP 4

Request medical evidence if required

STEP 5

Will absence be authorised for more than 15 days? If so, how will pupil access full-time learning?

STEP 6

Does child need SEND support? If so, contact SENDCO

STEP 7

Offer reasonable adjustments. Examples include but are not limited to:

Trusted adult

Safe Space

Break and lunchtime support

Strategy when feels anxious

Strategy when feels anxious

STEP 8

Signpost parent/carer/child to useful organisations

STEP 9

Desensitisation or reintegration plan (Desensitisation if student not ready to return to school at all) using checklist of options

STEP 10

Staff liaison with home

STEP 11

Welfare checks carried out

STEP 12

If plan is unsuccessful/not engaged with then consult Local Authority

12 Step Emotionally Based Avoidance Pathway

