Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2026-27

Audience:	Parents School staff Local Governing Body Trustees Warwickshire Attendance Service
Ratified:	Local Governing Board October 2026
Other related policies:	Safeguarding and Child Protection Online Safety Relationships, Health and Sex Education.
Policy owner:	Leanne Whitfield
Review frequency:	Annual

Signed by:

_____ Headteacher Date: _____

_____ Governor Date: _____

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1. Mission statement

Lower Farm Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its pupils. A key element is a child's attendance at school; only by attending school regularly (96.9% or more of the time) and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Regular school attendance is a major factor in ensuring that children are safe, achieve well and develop socially, emotionally and behaviourally. Good school attendance prepares children well for their future, preparing them for high school, further education, employment and training, and plays a crucial role in enabling them to become happy, healthy and successful adults. High achievement depends on good attendance. Children who miss out on lessons are vulnerable to falling behind and statistics show that children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Attendance Rate	Description	Approximate Time Lost Per Year	Approximate Time Lost at Primary School
99-100%	Excellent	Less than 1 week	Up to 7 weeks (half a term)
97-99%	Expected	1-2 weeks	Up to 14 weeks (full term)
96%	Less than expected	2-3 weeks	Up to 21 weeks (half a year)
90-95%	Needs intervention	3-4 weeks	Up to 28 weeks (2 full terms)
Below 90%	Persistent Absence	More than 4 weeks	More than 28 weeks (up to 1 year or more)

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and all members of the Governing body – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable
  a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
  b) to any special educational needs, they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A person begins to be of compulsory school age
  a) when they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
  b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.
- A person ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the day which is the school leaving date for any calendar year.
  a) if they attain the age of 16 after that day but before the beginning of the school year next following,
  b) if they attain that age on that day, or
  c) (unless paragraph (a) applies) if that day is the school leaving date next following their attaining that age.

Lower Farm Academy is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance and punctuality policy accordingly.

3. Roles and responsibilities

School responsibilities

All staff at Lower Farm Academy have a key role to play in the safeguarding of children and in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. All staff will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will be delegated to take the school's strategic lead on attendance and will be responsible for overseeing, directing and coordinating the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance. They will ensure that the school's Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school and will be responsible for analysing attendance data. They will also be responsible for reporting on attendance to the Senior Leadership Team and governing body.

The Attendance Lead, alongside Attendance Champions, will be responsible for attendance on a day-to-day basis and will provide support to any pupils whose attendance drops below 97%. They will be responsible for liaising with the Class Teacher and will contact the parents/carers to discuss the child's attendance and offer support when needed. The Attendance Lead will collate attendance data and provides this along with information on the impacts of the school's actions to improve attendance to SLT on a weekly basis.

A dedicated member of the admin team is responsible for maintaining the electronic registers, signs children in who arrive late, carries out first day calling and produces and sends letter to parents and carers, as directed by the Attendance Lead.

School Attendance Champions

Mrs Whitfield – Pastoral and attendance Lead / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mr Payne – Deputy Head
Mr Tyson – Assistant Head for KS2, Year 4 Class Teacher
Mrs Long – Assistant Head for KS1, Year 2 Class Teacher
Mrs Whitmore – office@lowerfarmacademy.org

Governors' responsibilities

The Governing Body will make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the practices of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Parents'/carers' responsibilities

Parents/carers have a duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving suitable full-time education.

Lower Farm Academy expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly (97% or more) and on time
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school
- parents will also be expected to:

- notify school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless medical evidence is provided which defines the necessary length of absence.
- provide specific medical evidence for absences when attendance falls below 96%
- Work collaboratively with the school to address attendance issues, aiming to improve student attendance and, ultimately, enhance outcomes for their children.

Pupils' responsibilities

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality and ensure they attend the school regularly (97% or more) and on time. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly or are causing them to arrive at school late, they should speak to their class teacher, a member of the pastoral team or the attendance lead.

4. Registration

Class Registers

Class registers are recorded using the Management Information System (MIS). The system ensures that no children are missed and that pupil information can be shared quickly and securely. Registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session.

Morning registration

In the morning the registers will be taken at **8:45am.** Children who arrive after this time will need to report to reception and sign in as late (L). The registers will close at 9:00am across the school. Anyone who arrives after this time will be marked as unauthorised (U) unless a reason is provided that the school deems to be acceptable.

Afternoon registration

Registers must be submitted straight after lunch at 13:00 before afternoon lessons commence.

5. Categorising absence

Any child who is not present during registration will be marked as absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher or other designated staff. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences and should be aware that while calling the school or providing a note for an absence complies with safeguarding procedures, it does not automatically mean an absence will be authorised.

Lower Farm Academy recognises the clear links between attendance and achievement, and attendance and the safeguarding of children. If absence is frequent or continuous, we will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

An absence will only be authorised where the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the absence and appropriate notification has been received from a parent or carer.

Only the Headteacher, or a member of staff authorised to act on their behalf, can approve and authorise an absence. This means that not all absences supported by parents or carers will be recorded as authorised.

We understand that many children experience normal worries about attending school, such as concerns about friendships, schoolwork, assessments or changes in routine. Whilst we recognise these feelings can be difficult, children are still expected to attend school regularly and we will work alongside families to support consistent attendance.

We also recognise that some children may experience more significant social, emotional or mental health difficulties. In these circumstances, we are committed to working closely with parents, carers and other professionals, where appropriate, to identify and remove barriers to attendance, whilst ensuring that children receive the support they need to engage successfully in school.

Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

Religious observance

Lower Farm Academy recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times. Parent/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

Persistent absence

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

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

Absence and Attendance Recording, Including Leave of Absence

When marking our registers, we will apply the national codes as outlined and regulated by the Department of Education guidance to accurately record and report attendance.

Leave of absence

The headteacher, or a member of staff authorised to act on their behalf, can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. The headteacher will restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstance set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. These circumstances are:

· Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad

· Attending an interview

· Study leave

· A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

· Exceptional circumstances*

The headteacher can also allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities or to attend other schools or settings.

*The law states that a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if the school considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Permission may only be given by a person authorised by the school's proprietor to do so. Each application must be judged individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

In general, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil may be absent.

The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Parents making an application for Leave of Absence are advised to provide sufficient information and notice to allow the Headteacher to consider all exceptional circumstances and notify the parents of their decision. The school may request further information or supporting documentation where appropriate.

If parents have not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to confirm whether the leave is authorised prior to the start of the absence.

Where applications for Leave of Absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to attend school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, the absence will be

recorded as “unauthorised”. If additional days are taken either before or after the requested period, they may also be considered as part of the leave of absence.

Applications for Leave of Absence that are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation, and any such absence will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’.

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service of Warwickshire County Council. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council’s Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings.

When absence is granted by the head teacher or a member of staff authorised to act on their behalf, the parent 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 a possible children missing from education procedure being instigated.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices will be issued by the Local Authority on request of the Head teacher to parents or carers if your child(ren) are absent from school. Penalty notices will be issued in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council’s Code of Conduct WCC PN code of conduct.

The national threshold set out in the statutory guidance states that a penalty notice must be considered for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10-week period may span different terms or school years.

The school will prioritise a ‘support first’ approach offering support to families in cases where it is appropriate. Penalty notices can still be issued where support is not appropriate, such as leave of absences in term time or when support has not been engaged with.

If the Local Authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate in an individual case, the Authority shall retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. An example of this is where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absences for birthdays or other family events.

Penalty Notices will be issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).

· First penalty notice: The amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.

· Second penalty notice within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount.

A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent of the same child within a rolling 3-year period has been set within the National Framework, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996 or alternative action may be considered including other legal interventions.

Monitoring Attendance

We monitor attendance closely at Lower Farm Academy, as early intervention is essential when tackling issues relating to poor attendance and punctuality. The responsibilities set out earlier in this document outline who is responsible for monitoring attendance data across the school. The office staff ensure that attendance is recorded accurately on our registers and Arbour and Children and Families monitors attendance data weekly, at class level, and at individual pupil levels where concerns have been raised. This is then linked in to the use of Attendance Improvement Plans. We follow a **traffic light staged attendance system (see below)**; the purpose of each stage is to help parents/carers understand our expectations of attendance.

At Lower Farm Academy, we use a **traffic light system** to monitor and respond to pupil attendance. This approach ensures that attendance concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately, with clear expectations and supportive interventions.

🟢 **Green Zone – 97% and Above**

- Attendance is good or excellent.
- Pupils are on track to achieve and thrive.
- Recognition in class and during assemblies.
- Eligible for attendance-based rewards.

🟠 **Amber Zone – 96.9% or below**

- Attendance may be causing concern.

Actions:

- Phone call home.
- Early support/intervention offered.
- Internal attendance target set.
- Attendance reviewed weekly.

🔴 **Red Zone – 93% or Below**

- Attendance is poor and likely to affect wellbeing and progress.

Actions:

- Letter to parents.
- Weekly monitoring.
- If no improvement after by the end of the half term, a meeting with the Attendance Champion in the new term.
- Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) created.
- Further interventions or referrals may follow.

Early Years Expectations

As attendance for children under 5 years of age is not statutory, there is not the same recourse to legal sanctions. However, the early years are a critical time to establish the good habits and routines needed throughout life and to get the key messages about the importance of attendance and punctuality at nursery and school across to parents and carers.

Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development. A regular routine supports the young child to feel settled and secure. Unsettled children have higher stress levels which, in turn, prevent them from being able to benefit fully from the learning opportunities available.

Families should know that good attendance and being punctual are expected when their child takes up a place. As attendance is an issue that affects all age groups, there needs to be as much consistency as possible between early years and school settings. This includes expectations around holidays, which for school-aged children are not permissible in term time.

6. Collection and analysis of data

The school uses the MIS to keep an electronic record of attendance.

The Attendance Strategic Leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team on a weekly basis, and to parents and the Governing body as appropriate. The report should include commentary on the progress towards achieving the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by individual children, year group, tutor group and by reasons of absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance. This data is used to identify where intervention and support is required to improve attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the Department of Education (DfE) within the stipulated time frame.

7. Systems and strategies for managing attendance and punctuality

First-day calling

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The admin staff use the following system:

- Phone parents' contact number(s).
- Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response.
- Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly.
- SLT to speak to the parents at home time if they are at school to pick up other children.
- Speak to the parents face-to-face or by phone the next day and establish reasons for absence and update contact numbers.
- The parent/carer is asked to provide a reason as to why the child is not in school. The absence reason is recorded next to the child's name on Arbor.
- If no contact has been established, the school will consider conducting a home visit or request a safe and well check from the police, if the absence is unusual or school has concerns regarding the child's welfare. This may also result in a referral to Warwickshire Children Services.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will routinely share a list of vulnerable children with the office. The admin team will notify the DSL immediately if a child on that list is not in school, on the first day of absence, and each subsequent day.

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 08:45 every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked as absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. For health and safety reasons, it is important that the school knows who is in the building.

Pupils arriving late should report to the School Office on arrival with their parent/carer who must sign them in and provide an explanation for the late arrival. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure. For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, sign out and provide a reason for leaving early.

On his/her subsequent return to school, they must sign in again to say that they have returned.

Breakfast Club

Daily Breakfast Club is available to all children. This supports parents by allowing them to drop their children off from 07:45 ensuring they are on time for school. Places need to be booked in advance via the school office. The club is supervised by members of school staff.

8. School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Attendance Lead, along with Attendance Champions, are responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Lower Farm Academy intervene in non-attendance at an early stage. The Attendance Lead reviews attendance data weekly, identifying any pupils where attendance concerns exist. They monitor the impacts of any actions taken. Any cases of concern will then be discussed in Senior Leadership Team meetings. Our policy states that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, or designated member of staff (see authorised absence), irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing on the prescribed form provided by the school. Where a parent removes a child when the application for term time leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice may be requested by the school.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence or if staff are particularly concerned, the school will contact the parents to discuss reasons for the absences with them (**as outlined within our traffic light system**). Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. If the pattern persists, a Penalty Notice referral may be issued where there is no improvement seen and Attendance Lead & Attendance Champions will liaise with Education Casework officers within Warwickshire Attendance Service.

Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders them vulnerable to harm. Lower Farm Academy takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately; failing this the police will be contacted and informed. Any child who leaves the school without authorisation will be dealt with according to the school's behaviour policy.

Referral to the Child Missing Education (CME) Service

We have a legal duty to identify children who are missing from education (CME), taking action where necessary and ensuring children are receiving suitable education. This duty applies to all maintained schools, academies, free schools and independent schools.

Lower Farm Academy recognises that children missing from education is a safeguarding concern, as outlined in the latest *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)* guidance.
Were a child is unexpectedly absent and their whereabouts cannot be established, the school has a statutory duty to act swiftly.

Working together to improve school attendance sets out how schools must work with local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns.

Information regarding schools' duties for CME can be found in the department's statutory guidance: Children missing education. This includes information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, along with
how schools should be supporting local authorities to help identify and support children missing in education

A pupil will be considered at risk of being missing in education if:

- They fail to attend school for **10 consecutive days** without explanation; **and**
- All efforts to establish contact with the parent/carer have been unsuccessful.

In such cases, the school will:

- Complete the **Children Missing Education (CME) Referral Form**.
- Submit the form securely to: **cme@warwickshire.gov.uk**.

This process aligns with the expectations in *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (2026), which requires schools to maintain accurate records and work in close collaboration with local authorities to safeguard children at risk of disengagement or harm.

Safeguarding Escalation

If there are **urgent concerns about a child's welfare**, the school will **not delay** referral and will take the following immediate actions:

1. **Contact the Warwickshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) via Family Connect**:
    - Phone: **01926 414144**
    - And if necessary, **contact the police**.
2. If contact is later re-established or the child returns to school, attendance monitoring and safeguarding checks will continue, including any multi-agency follow-up needed.
3. For non-urgent concerns or guidance, contact:
    - **Warwickshire access to education team 01926 736323**

All referrals and actions will be recorded and monitored in line with our safeguarding and attendance procedures. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will oversee this process to ensure timely response and appropriate escalation.

Home Visits may also be required when:
- A child is absent and no contact can be made
- Concerns exist for welfare
- Attendance doesn't improve despite initial intervention

9. Recognition and Rewards

Lower Farm Academy celebrates good and improved attendance to encourage pupils and families to prioritise daily school attendance. We use a tiered recognition structure:

- **Weekly Recognition**
  - Shared during Friday Values Awards Assembly.
  - Class competition for best attendance.
- **Half-Termly Recognition**
  - Extra playtime or a class-chosen reward.
  - Certificates for excellent or significantly improved attendance.

By highlighting attendance positively, we aim to promote and embed a culture of punctuality and regular school attendance.

Appendix 1 – Leave of Absence form.

Warwickshire County Council
Children and Young People Directorate

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR A SCHOOL PUPIL IN TERM TIME IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ONLY

Important Information for Parents/Carers

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

- **Exceptional circumstances:** All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion:
  - It must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with.
  - Schools are then expected to 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 school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.
- When making an application for Leave of Absence the resident parent is advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify of their decision.
- Requests for leave of absence should made before any arrangements confirmed or money committed.
- It is advised if you have not received notification from the school regarding the leave of absence request, it is your responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of leave.
- Failure to make a request for a leave of absence in advance will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.
- Any additional days taken either side of a leave of absence period, which has not been applied for, may be considered as part of the leave of absence period and be unauthorised.
- Unauthorised Leave of Absences will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service upon the child's return to school for consideration of a Penalty Notice.

Please see over for important information relating to the changes in relation to Penalty Notices

I wish to apply for Leave of Absence from school to be granted to:

Name of Child: _____ Form Group: _____

First Date of Proposed Absence: _____ Last date of Proposed Absence: _____

Expected date of return to school: _____

Reason for Proposed Absence – please provide reasons to support the application including evidence (*see overleaf before completing*):

.....

.....

.....

Total Days Requested on this occasion. ☐

(For siblings) I have also applied to _____ School/Academy for leave of absence for
(Insert child/children's name)

Signature of resident Parent/Carer: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

For school use only: NAME OF CHILD: _____ Date received by school: _____

1st date of absence requested by parents: ..... Last date of absence requested by parents: .....

Expected date of return to school (as advised by parents): .....

.....

Absence: Authorised / Unauthorised / Split (please delete as appropriate)

The reasons for this decision are: .....

- **LOA record sheet to be completed by school and submitted where verbal requests made/ for other relevant information**

Head teacher/Attendance Lead: ..... Date: .....

- ***Copy of this completed section should be sent back to parent with letter***