



LACE HILL ACADEMY

Attendance Policy

	Date
Discussed and agreed by Chair and to be agreed at FGB	6.3.2023
To be reviewed	February 2024

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Attendance Policy

Intent

This policy has been drawn up using a range of national documents and guidance, listed at the end of the document.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and our school's Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Buckinghamshire's County Council. This Attendance Policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- admissions
- child protection & safeguarding
- behaviour & exclusion
- special educational needs

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

This policy will be publicised annually in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website. Alternative languages are available on request.

1. Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential.

Lace Hill staff are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High progress rates, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

2. Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education, employment or training

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. We will work with parents to ensure our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance are clear.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular newsletter and on our website
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance by awarding certificates for 100% attendance each term

Implementation

3. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Headteacher

The Headteacher (Sarah Jones) is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

4.2 The Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team, Mrs Jones (Headteacher), Mrs Harper (Assistant Headteacher) and Miss Biltcliffe (Assistant Headteacher), will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. We will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. We will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers 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**.

4.3 The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

4.4 Classroom Staff

Classroom staff are responsible for the following:

- Ensuring that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promoting and rewarding good attendance at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaising with the Office Staff on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicating any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

4.5 Parents and Carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Ensure their child to attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Ensure their child arrives on time for registration
- Register their child at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence (before 9.30am), or by email if a phone is unavailable.
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

5. Recording Attendance

Legally, the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session.

6. Lateness / Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late, they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information and cause disruption to the lesson for others. These are just a few reasons that could then lead to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8:45 am (gates open at 8:40am) and all **pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. Morning registration closes at 9:00 am.

Afternoon registration closes by:

- Reception 12: 40 pm
- Y1 1:15pm
- Y2 1:05 pm
- Y3 12.50 pm
- Y4 1:00 pm
- Y5 1:15 pm
- Y6 1:15 pm

Please note different times are in place for different year groups due to staggered lunch start times.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- If a child arrives late before or after the register closes, they will be marked as late (L)
- Children must sign in at reception if they arrive after the close of the register (after 9:00 am).
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that, where possible, doctor and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- If a child arrives late and/or after the close of the register, in exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher can, at their discretion, authorise this.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered.

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies, if deemed necessary. If no alternative is available, the school will place a child into the after school club and provide the parent/carers with the bill.

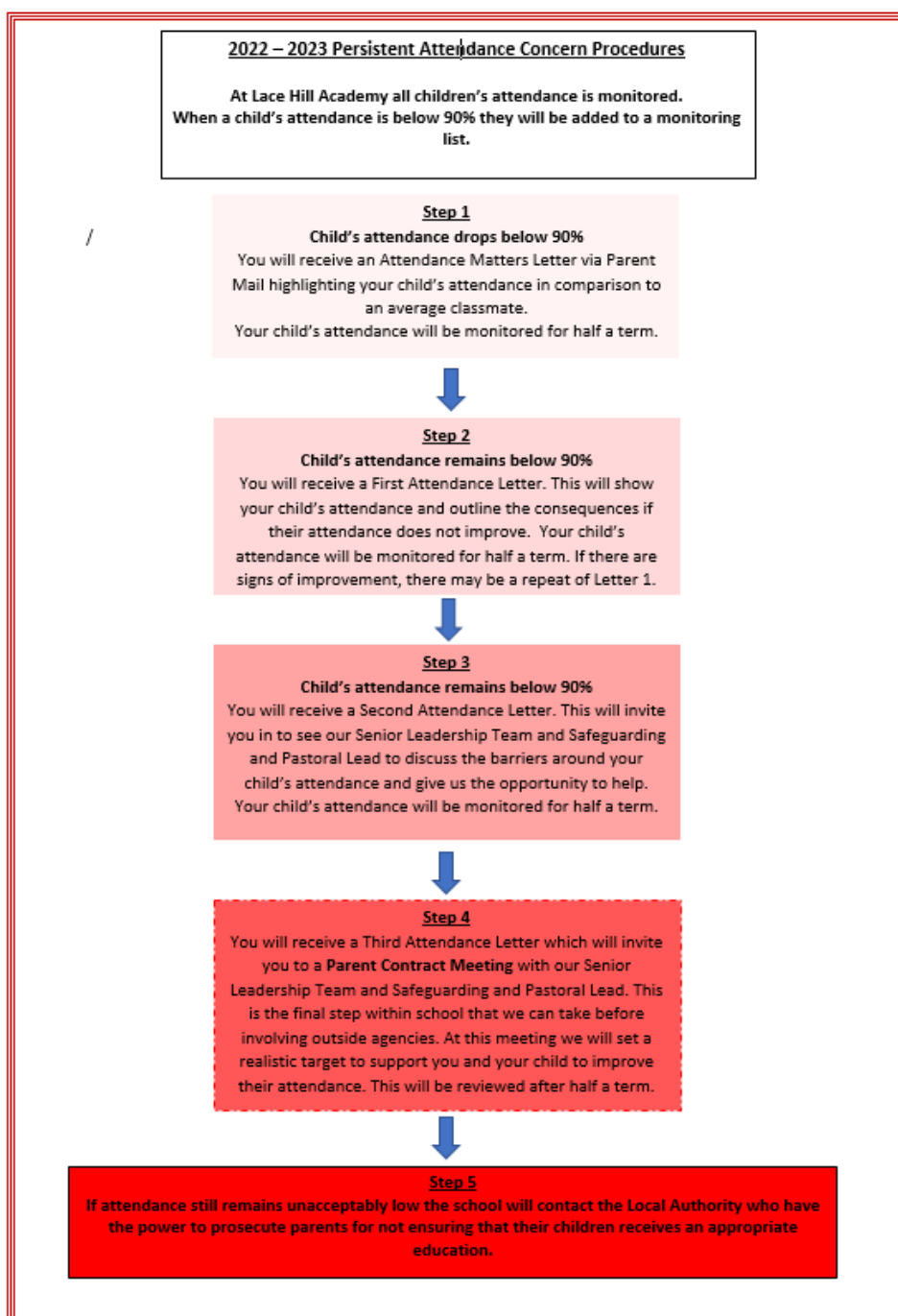
7. Attendance monitoring

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor student absence on a daily, weekly, monthly and historic basis.

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If a child is not in school for 3 days, the Senior Leadership Team may make the decision to carry out a welfare call at the child's house, even though you will have informed us daily for the reason they are absent.

If your child is absent you must **contact us before 9.00am on the first day of absence** by telephone or email with an explanation of the absence. You must call in every day before 9.00am on the days that your child is not in school. If we are not able to get in contact with you, your child will be deemed as missing and further advice will be sought through the Local Authority.

If your child is absent starts to cause concern we will follow the steps below:



Persistent Absence

If your child misses 10% (3 weeks / 30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Where this absence is authorised, school will meet with parents / carers in order to ascertain any underlying medical reasons for the level of absence. The school may decide not to authorise any future absences without medical evidence.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 96%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards or below 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, we will agree a plan with you to ensure that attendance improves.

Children at Lace Hill are dependent on their parents/carers, who are responsible for their level of attendance and punctuality. It is vital that children enjoy coming to school and, whilst being encouraged to attend well and on time, will not carry blame and be made to feel unhappy if their parents are not supportive or effective in these areas.

8. Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised**. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Any supporting evidence for the request must be attached to the application.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in this policy, parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code set out by the Local Authority.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

9. Understanding types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absence:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

10. Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

10.1. Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Our school and the Local Authority will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Buckinghamshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1)The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance**
- 2)The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence**

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** (as defined above) the school must enforce Buckinghamshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct – link below:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/schools/code-of-conduct-for-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-school/>

10.2 Penalty Notices for non-attendance- Buckinghamshire's Code of Conduct

The code of conduct states that the Circumstances that Penalty Notices may be Issued

- Irregular school attendance;
- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- Parentally-condoned absences;
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time;
- Being in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion

The Local Authority are responsible for issuing penalty notices on behalf of schools in the county.

If a penalty notice is issued, it will be one fine to cover the whole period of the absence. So the fine would be the same amount for an absence of five days or 10 days. For example, a parent could be issued with a £60 fine if their child misses one day of school each week over a five-week period. Another parent might be issued the same fine for one two-week block of absence.

<https://www.bucksc.gov.uk/services/education/education-support/>

11. Advice and Guidance for Parents

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

You will receive regular communication from the school through the Parentmail communications, school website and the school bulletin. Please read this important information and ensure you are engaging in it so you know the most update information about what is going on at school.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school - chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to give the Office Staff comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If children leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to

try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C (an authorised absence).

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport

Parents can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national or international event or competition. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Impact

Lace Hill Academy recognises the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality and will continually evaluate the attendance trends within the school to ensure that children attain their potential and are fully prepared for the next stage of their education. It fully utilises its attendance strategy to evaluate attendance trends and to quickly react to any concerns.

Review arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team every year (earlier if there are any legislative changes). At every review, the policy will be presented to the Governing Board.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Guidance document on attendance:

The following DfE document is used to guide attendance recording:

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039223/School_attendance_guidance_for_2021_to_2022_academic_year.pdf

Appendix 2

Attendance descriptors

99-100 %	Excellent –Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
96-98%	Good
93-95%	Becoming unsatisfactory
90%	Cause for Concern – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. This is described as Persistent Absence
Below 85%	Serious Cause for Concern – Absence IS causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It IS affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. We will work with you to improve your child's attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Appendix 3

Dear Parent/Carer of,

..... has been absent from school more than an average child in their class.

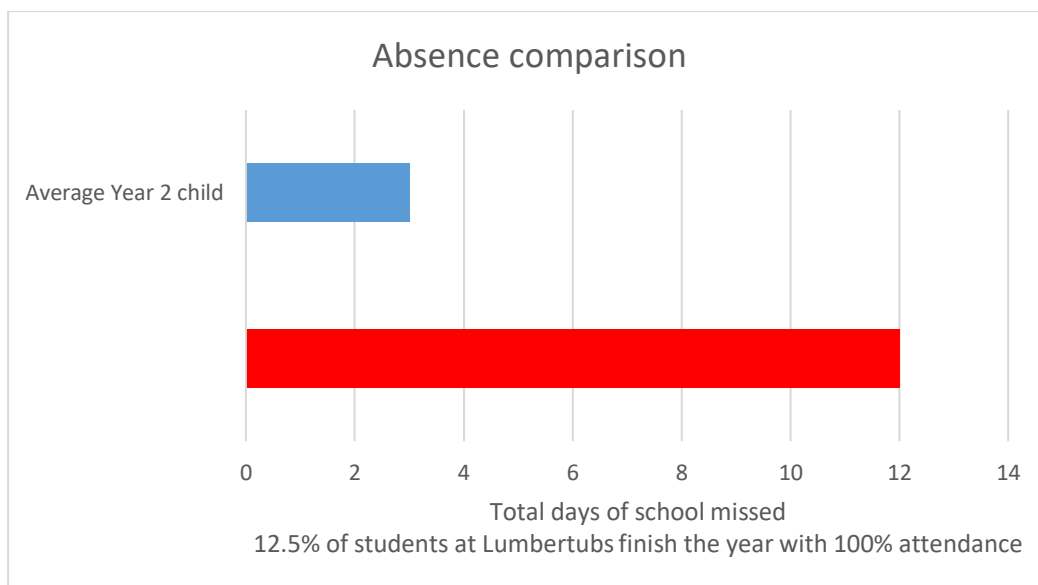
So far this academic year your child has missed days of school.

Children can fall behind when they miss so much school having an impact on their learning and development.

We believe that with your help attendance can improve over the next term and we appreciate your support.

Please see below a comparison of your child's absences compared to an average classmate.

Yours Sincerely,



Appendix 4

Notification of attendance falling below expectations

Dear

By law parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child's regular school attendance.

I am writing to you as your son/ daughter's attendance at school is currently irregular and therefore a cause for concern. His/Her attendance has been monitored and is currently XXXX%. The expectation is for a minimum of 96% attendance for all students.

Every effort will be made to support XXX if you feel s/he is experiencing significant difficulties that may impact upon her/his attendance. Should this be the case, please contact me to discuss the matter further. In the meantime, I will continue to monitor XXX's attendance for a further five weeks, during which time I expect to see a significant improvement.

Only the Headteacher (or Assistant Headteacher in the absence of the Headteacher) has the authority to authorise absence; further absences may not be authorised without supporting evidence that your child was unable to attend school with good reason.

Should XXX's attendance remain irregular, I will invite you in for a Parenting Contract Meeting to see what further support we can offer you to improve your child's attendance.

Many thanks

Appendix 5

Request for a Parental Contract Meeting

Dear

As you are aware, we have been concerned over your son/daughter's attendance for some time now. We have written to you to bring this to your attention and have been monitoring the attendance over a five-week period. Unfortunately, during this time we have not seen a significant improvement in the attendance and therefore we would like to invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting.

If this date is not convenient please make contact as soon as possible to rearrange.

Date:

Time:

Venue: Lace Hill Academy

The aim of the meeting is to explore the reasons behind the irregular school attendance and to look at ways in which we can offer support.

We are committed to working with all families to ensure that children are reaching their full potential – regular attendance is essential for this. Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract Meeting is voluntary, you should be aware that if you decline the offer of support and XXXX's attendance remains irregular, the Local Authority may take formal action.

If you need to re-arrange the appointment time, then please contact the Office with an alternative date and time that you can come in for a meeting.

Many thanks