



Attendance Policy

Author	DSL
Name of responsible officer	L Paston (Interim Headteacher)
Approving Committee	Governing Body
Statutory Basis	Statutory Policy
Requirement to publish on website	Yes
Reviewed	March 2025
Date ratified by approving committee	March 2025
Review period	Every year
Review date	March 2026

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Our school vision is to be an aspirational and inclusive school where pupils are above all, SAFE, made to feel special and have their needs met. Our pupils are inspired, enjoy learning, thrive and achieve success. We are committed to developing each individual child to ensure they are happy and successful, and always aim to do the best they can.

Aim

Vermont School is committed to meeting our obligation concerning school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance including:

- Promoting good attendance - so children can maximise their educational and social achievements, enabling them to develop self-discipline and organisational skills to prepare them for the work environment.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to an education which meets their needs
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

Rationale

Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind; the link between low attendance and lower levels of achievement and progress is well known. The foundation of good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, which is something that our school prioritises.

We believe that attendance is 'everyone's business' (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024). Showing up each day, on time, is 'learning for life.' We aspire for all our pupils to have the best start in life and we recognise that attending school is vital to children's development, resilience and achievement.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of our pupils through our school website. Our policy adheres to the DfE Statutory Guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance August 2024.'¹ This policy is underpinned by a legal framework which guides all parties in the education of children in our care. The Education Act (1996) states:

"If a child of compulsory age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at his/her school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' 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:

Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

School Census Guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for school

Working together to improve attendance

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and class level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an [Attendance Recovery Plan](#) or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education

Definitions

Authorised absence: An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from the pupil's parent/carer. The school decides when it is appropriate to authorise absence and may ask parents/carers for additional evidence to support this decision.

Unauthorised absence: An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school. This type of absence can lead to Southampton City Council using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. As a school, we seek to work alongside parents/carers with the aim of limiting the number of unauthorised absences.

Late: Pupils who arrive late (school starts at 9:00) will be recorded with an L code, with the number of minutes late recorded. Pupils who are 30 minutes later past registration will be coded U. A U code is an unauthorised absence and will have a negative impact on a pupil's attendance. This will not apply when children travel via Local Authority provided school transport.

Persistent Absence: A pupil is considered to be a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over the course of their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. As a school, we seek to work alongside parents/carers with the aim of reducing persistent absence.

Severe absence: A pupil is considered to be a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 50% or more of their schooling across the school year. A child whose attendance drops to 50% each year will, over the course of their time at primary school, have missed half of all learning.

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Our Attendance Governor meets the Senior Leader responsible for attendance on a termly basis to discuss attendance trends. Attendance is also discussed as part of the Headteacher's report at the full Governing body meetings.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7).
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher
- Working with Education Welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Advising the Designated Attendance Lead (authorised by the Headteacher) when to issue fixed penalty notice.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance can be contacted via the school office by telephone: 023 8076 7988 or by email: info@vermontschool.co.uk

Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office each day after morning and afternoon registration.

School Admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system using the correct codes.
- Transfer calls from parents to a relevant member of staff to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

- Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence /lateness.

Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time.
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence by 9:00 on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise the school when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day and on time.

Recording attendance

Attendance Register - see Appendix 1

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils on this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first morning and first afternoon session of each school day. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry.
- The amended entry.
- The reason for the amendment.
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **9:00** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00 and will be kept open until 9:30.

The register for the second session will be taken at 12:45 and will be kept open until 13:15.

Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office by telephone 023 8076 7988 or by emailing info@vermontschool.org.uk

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this decision.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should inform the school office in person or by email to indicate the times of such appointments and when the child will return to school. **However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.** Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. See section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school may authorise.

Lateness and punctuality – Appendix 3

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed it will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed it will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

The Attendance Officer will contact parents to discuss persistent lateness and refer it to the School Attendance Support Service or issue a penalty notice if appropriate.

Following up Unexplained Absence – see Appendix 2

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Telephone the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may arrange a home visit.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the School Attendance Support Service.

Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via school reports and parent teacher meetings.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for Term-Time Absence – see Appendix 4

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence for a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there **WILL** be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.
- In difficult family situations, the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

Legal sanctions

The School and Local Authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, Local Authority Officer or the Police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission.
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for promoting attendance

Vermont School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. We love to celebrate success.

Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance and use a variety of awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

ATTENDANCE ASSEMBLIES: Every week we celebrate excellent attendance in assembly. The class with the highest percentage attendance for that week is announced and that class get to keep one of our attendance mascot.

WEEKLY ATTENDANCE HERO DRAW: Each week every child with full attendance and have not arrived late to school have their name put into a weekly draw. Two winners are selected at random and are able to select a prize from the prize box. So for each week your child has perfect attendance, the more chances your child has of winning the family reward.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER: Each week the top three classes with the highest percentage attendance is announced in the newsletter for parents and carers. We also announce how many children have achieved 100% attendance and the winner of our weekly Attendance Hero prize draw.

HALF TERM: BE IN TO WIN: This incentive will reward all pupils who are in school on the day that we choose to do 'Be in to Win'.

END OF TERM: EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE Half Term and Full Term CERTIFICATES and BADGES

Excellent Attendance Certificates are issued to all children who have been at school every day for the second half of the term (including those who have unavoidable medical absences supported by written evidence from the NHS).

All children's names are displayed on our attendance notice board along the main school corridor. Badges and certificates are awarded to children who have managed a whole term's attendance. Their names are celebrated by highlighting their achievement on our display board.

We have three terms in each academic year (Autumn, Spring and Summer). Our badge system works like this:

BRONZE BADGE AND CERTIFICATE: ONE full whole term's attendance.

SILVER BADGE AND CERTIFICATE: TWO whole term's attendance.

GOLD BADGE AND CERTIFICATE: THREE whole term's attendance.

Children with EXCELLENT attendance (from the beginning of September) are celebrated at every point along our attendance timeline. Their certificates reflect this achievement and the children have their names highlighted with GOLD on our attendance noticeboard to celebrate their success (including those who have unavoidable medical absences supported by written evidence from the NHS).

YEARLY: CERTIFICATES / BADGES / REWARDS

Those children who have been able to make it to school every day for the whole school year are rewarded with a certificate and a Gold badge and this fantastic achievement is celebrated on our attendance noticeboard. Children with EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE & NO MINUTES late will ALSO receive our much revered 100% badge which is presented by our Chair of Governors.

Attendance Monitoring

Monitoring Attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- We will monitor key groups such as disadvantaged, free school meals and SEND closely.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing Attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

Using Data to Improve Attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent Absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school and Severe Absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Contact parents when their child's attendance drops below 96% and beyond.
- Invite parents to meet with the Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance, Jo Calder, and the Education Welfare Officer to informally discuss any possible barriers to attendance and punctuality.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Refer to the Education Welfare Officer for statutory support if attendance concerns do not improve despite school based support.
- Seek a penalty notice for periods of unauthorised absence.
- Refer to other agencies who maybe able to offer additional support , eg. MHST

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy

- Safeguarding policy

APPENDIX 1 - Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off -site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non -compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day

Authorised Absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised Absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Appendix 2: Actions for Attendance

Incident	Action to be taken by parents/carers	Actions to be taken by the school
Day 1: Child is absent	Notify the school office of reason for absence and predict date of return.	If no reason is provided: • School office will attempt to contact the parent/carer by telephone and email (staff to update Arbor and inform School Office of all messages received) • Attempt to contact all other emergency contacts • Contact schools of any known siblings • School Office to update Children & Families Lead on actions taken and outcome • Home visit may take place If unable to contact the parent/carer the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
Day 2: Child is absent without reason	If no notification is received from parent/carer.	• School office to make a second attempt by telephone to parents/carers and to telephone emergency contacts listed • School Office to update Children & Families Lead on actions taken and outcome
Day 3: Child is absent	If no notification is received from parent/carer.	• Children & Families Lead to organise for a home visit. • Letter will be given to parents and follow up conversation either by telephone or in person to discuss the child's absence on their return.
Child returns after 5 days	If no notification is received from parent/carer.	Children & Families Lead to meet with parent/carer to discuss absence.
Child is absent for 10 days with no contact		If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'.
Child's attendance below 96%	School will support parents in completing a survey to help identify issues and barriers. From this, actions will be agreed and	School starts Attendance Monitoring process Stage 1 - If there are emerging concerns about attendance, a letter will be sent out outlining our concerns

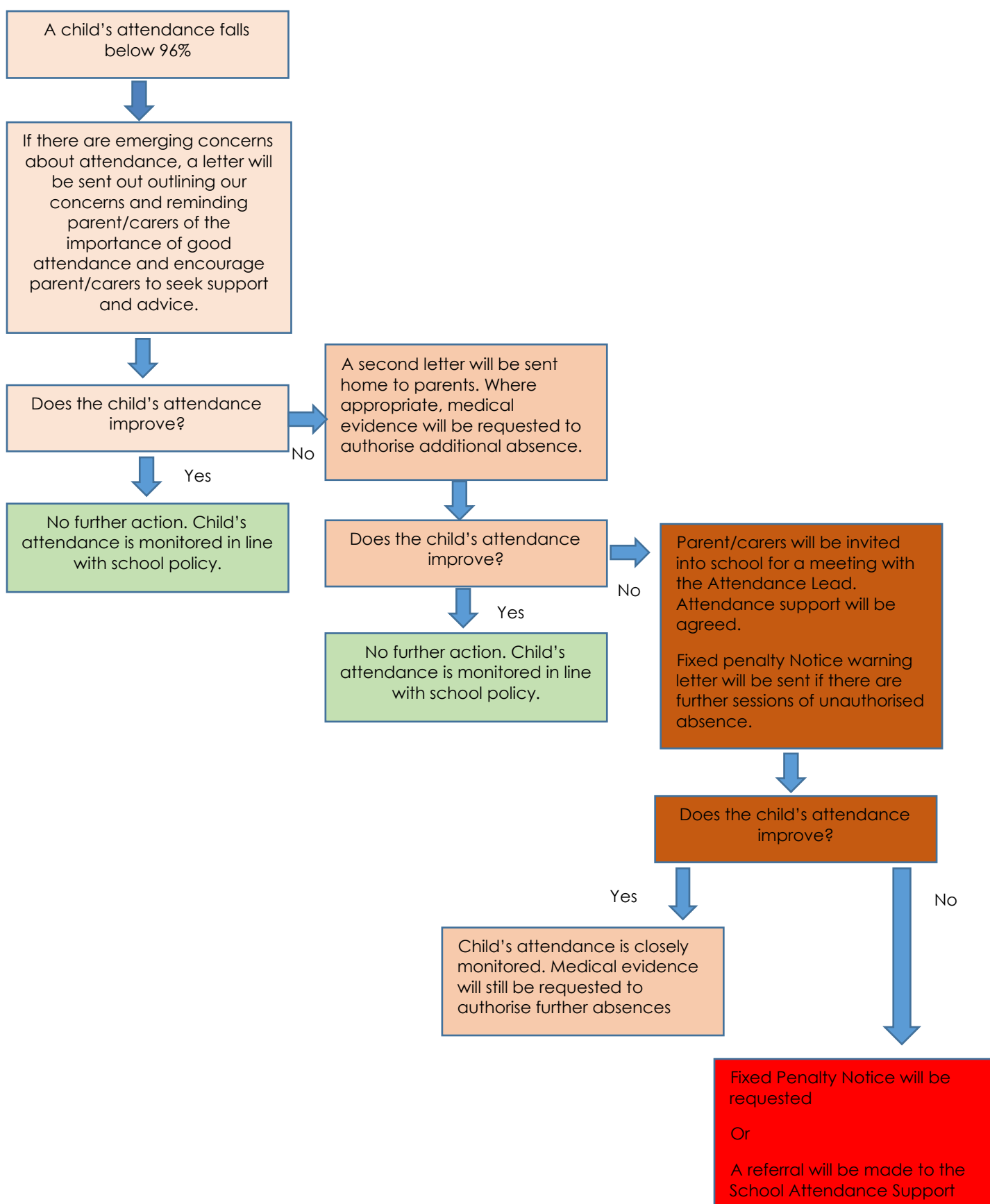
	monitored.	and reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance and encourage parents/carers to seek support and advice. Stage 2 - If absence continues to cause further concern, another letter will be sent home. Appropriate, medical evidence will be requested to support additional absences. Stage 3 - If little or no improvement is shown and attendance has deteriorated even further, we will invite parents/carers in for a meeting with the Children & Families Lead. We will advise that you and your child will be monitored. During this period, 100% attendance is required, unless medical evidence can be provided. Serious concerns - An action plan will be drawn up with clear dates, targets and actions agreed to secure better outcomes for your child. Where the school has serious concerns for a referral to the Local Authority will be considered. This could include legal action in the form of a Penalty Notice or being taken to court.
Child's attendance below 90%		School refers to EWO Carried out on a case by case basis
No response/no improvement		Court action – Local Authority to issue fixed penalty notice as deemed necessary and take the necessary legal actions.

Note: Children with a Family Engagement Worker or Social Worker will have their own attendance reported regularly to the professional working with the families.

Looked After children – weekly attendance is reported to the Virtual School via Welfare Call.

Note: that this process applies to pupil's who have unauthorised absences (when the school does not agree that the reason given for absence means the pupil should remain off school). We do not escalate to the School Attendance Support Service if absences are authorised for reasons such as illness or bespoke timetables which are agreed.

Appendix 3: Attendance Flowchart



Appendix 4: Leave of Absence form

Appendix 5: Attendance Recovery Plan Template

Pupil Name	Present	Meeting Date	Meeting Purpose
			Attendance Recovery Plan
Discussion Points:			
<u>Current attendance</u>			
<u>Current analysis of attendance (patterns)</u>			
<u>Barriers to attendance</u>			
<u>School based support for attendance</u>			
<u>Home based support for attendance</u>			
<u>Barriers to home based support for attendance</u>			
<u>General health/medication/diagnosis</u>			
<u>Child's views</u>			
Outcomes:			

Plan:	Who?	When?