



Highsted Grammar School

Attendance Policy



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Key Contacts		
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Head of Year 12 and 13	Ms Coles	Coles.j@highsted.kent.sch.uk



1. AIMS

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [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.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 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

3.2 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 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

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Deputy Headteacher, Miss T Cornish and can be contacted via attendance@highsted.kent.sch.uk or 01795 424223

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- 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 headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Miss K Pope and can be contacted via attendance@highsted.kent.sch.uk or 01795 424223

3.5 Form tutors and class teachers

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on SIMs.

Form tutors will take a register on SIMs during form time (8.40-9.05). Pupils who arrive during or after this time will sign in at reception and will be marked in as Late for AM registration (L). Class teachers will take a register in the first 10 minutes of their lesson starting and mark pupils as present. Pupils who arrive after this time will be recorded as Late.

3.6 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the head of year/pastoral lead in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance



3.7 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school on 01795 423223 and press 1 to report their child's absence before 8.40 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Provide medical evidence such as a doctor / consultant note if your son/daughter's attendance is below 90% and you have received a letter informing you that their attendance is a cause for concern.

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session on time
- [Sixth form] Call the school to report their absence before 8.40 on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence

3.9 South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS)

SEAAS are an external service provider employed by Highsted Grammar School to monitor students' attendance levels. The SEAAS attendance advisory officer will have access to the school's information system, SIMS and will work with the Year Teams on a weekly basis, highlighting any student who falls below the expected 96% level attendance.

SEAAS are expected to: -

- To support Highsted promote regular attendance and punctuality, and to reduce absence levels by acting on referrals and leading on effective interventions to reduce absences across the school.
- Monitor weekly and termly data on attendance/absence for all students.
- If there are concerns about a student's attendance level, SEAAS will work with school, pupils and parents to improve the attendance; this may include written or verbal communication, home visits, meeting with families, initiating appropriate legal action.
- In cases where attendance does not improve, and / or parents / carers are not engaging with the process, SEAAS will consider all the legal options available to them including penalty notices and referrals to the Local Authority for prosecution under Sec.444(1) Education Act 1996.

4. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

4.1 Attendance register

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

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.40am** and will be kept open until **9.10am**. The register for the second session will be taken at **14.20** and will be kept open until **14.30**.

4.2 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 8.40am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office (see also section 7).

Absence Procedures

The school day starts at 8:40 am and ends at 3:15 for Year 7/8, 15.20 for Year 9, 15.25 for Year 11 and 15.30 for Year 12/13. Students should arrive no later than 8:30 am to give them enough time to get to Form for 8:40 am.

An attendance register will be taken each school day at the start of the first session and once during the second session. Students will be recorded as: -

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

Registers will be recorded according to the Department for Education Attendance and Absence codes and Local Authority agreed operating procedures for coding and register management.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us before 8:40 am on the first day of absence and every further day of absence until they return by phoning our absent line 01795 423223 and press 1



- Provide medical evidence such as a doctor / consultant note if your child's attendance is below 90% and you have received a letter informing you that their attendance is a cause for concern.

If your child is absent we will

- Contact you on the day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Contact you if your child has an attendance of less than 90% to inform you that documentation will be required to authorise any absence due to illness. This can be a doctor's note, hospital letter, appointment card, copy of prescription or packaging from prescribed medication.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Head of Year if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the SEAAS if attendance is a concern.
- Refer to Local Authority Officer if attendance is a concern.

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 in advance.

4.3 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.

Where there are planned absences, the parent must contact the school and speak to the attendance officer. Confirmation of the appointment will be requested e.g. appointment card, confirmation letter etc.

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. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The Head of Year will monitor pupil's punctuality issues. Contact with parents will be made if there are concerns. If the concern persist a parent meeting will be arranged to discuss issues.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call 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 conduct a home visit or contact the police



- 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 an education welfare officer (appendix 5)

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be included on written reports

5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an unavoidable cause; for example, a one-off emergency situation which prevents the child from attending school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific 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, please see appendix 4. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

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
- Traveler pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travelers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travelers. 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
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Headteacher may grant term-time holiday

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or 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 consider:



- 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.

6. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

Highsted Grammar school celebrates good attendance through: -

- Weekly form time attendance session. Form and individual attendance figures are celebrated
- Assemblies
- Termly letters home to notify parents of attendance
- Termly certificates/postcards home
- Attendance displays and posters throughout the school

7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING

Highsted Grammar school monitors attendance through: -

- Attendance officer tracks attendance of pupils
- Heads of Year track and monitor pupil's attendance across their year groups and will liaise with form tutors
- Highsted attendance process will be implemented where there are concerns. Parents will be communicated with using Letter 1 (see appendix 2). If attendance does not improve letter 2 will be issued (see appendix 3). If attendance continues to not improve the pupil will be referred to SEAAS (South Eastern Attendance Service)
- SEAAS (South Eastern Attendance Service) will meet with Heads of Year bi-weekly to discuss interventions for pupils whose attendance is a concern

7.1 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

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.



7.2 Analyzing 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

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors, Head of Years 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

7.4 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
- Use of letters to communicate with parents
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Work with SEAAS (South Eastern Attendance Service) to provide support and interventions

7.5 Children Absent from Education

All staff should be aware that children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honor'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage.

Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. It is important that staff are aware of their school or college's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

The school will: -

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils at risk
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns



8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, annually by Miss T Cornish, Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



10. 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
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
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
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveler absence	Pupil from a traveler 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

Code	Definition	Scenario
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



APPENDIX 2 - Attendance: Letter 1

Dear Parent/carers

Highsted Grammar School is keen to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their full potential academically and socially. Therefore, the Governors, Headteacher and staff in partnership with parents / carers, have a duty to promote full attendance with the expectation for all students to aim for 100%.

Following a review, Student's Name attendance has recorded a level below the recommended safe level of attendance expected at Highsted Grammar School of 95%. Evidence shows that this level of attendance may have a detrimental impact on attainment. This level of attendance activates stage 1 of the attendance action procedure.

Therefore, I ask as a matter of urgency that you please make every effort to ensure that Student's Name attends school regularly and punctually, to ensure that their overall school attendance improves.

Please be advised, if there is no sustained improvement in Student's Name school attendance, the matter will be referred to South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service, (SEAAS), who will work with you to improve your child's school attendance.

If you are aware of any factors which may be impacting on Student's Name attendance or punctuality, please contact your child's Form Tutor. Alternatively, please speak to Miss Pope, Attendance Officer at Highsted Grammar School for Girls on 01795 424223.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Miss Tanya Cornish
Deputy Headteacher



APPENDIX 3 - Attendance: Letter 2

Dear Parent/carer

I write following my previous letter with regard to Student's Name attendance.

Although Student's Name may have been affected by genuine illnesses, there is a real concern that their attendance level continues to decline. Student's Name current level of attendance is %.

Any absence from school can seriously disrupt Student's Name learning, not only do they miss out on teaching whilst they are away, but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

Unfortunately, since the previous communication, there has been no sufficient improvement with Student's Name attendance. Therefore, the matter will now be referred to our SEAAS Attendance Advisory Officer, Mrs Allen.

Due to the lower-than-expected level of attendance, medical evidence would need to be provided for any future absences taken from school, for the period of absence to be authorised. **Unauthorised** school attendance can result in you finding yourself liable to a **Penalty Notice or Prosecution** for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of your child in accordance with Section 7 Education Act 1996.

In the meantime, should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Mrs Allen, SEAAS at laurenallen@seas.co.uk or on 07930 883663.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Miss Tanya Cornish
Deputy Headteacher



APPENDIX 4 - Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence

Highsted Grammar School

Application for Exceptional Leave of Absence

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the Pupil Registration Regulations, removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term time will not be authorised.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school of £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale, the Attendance Service will institute legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child/children attend(s) school regularly.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final.

Parents who consider that their particular circumstances are genuinely exceptional, and who wish to apply for Leave, should complete Section A below.

Section A

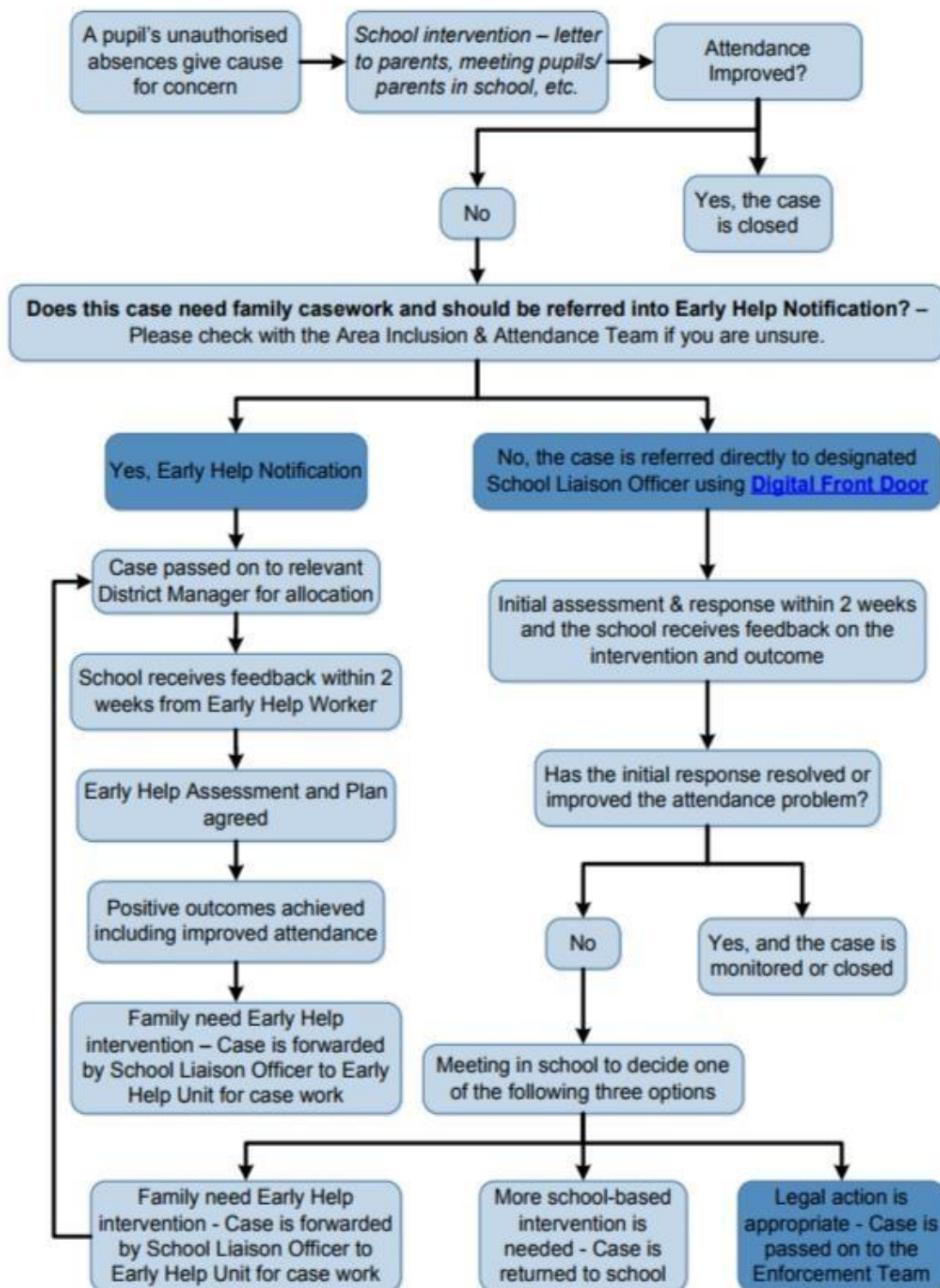
Pupil's Name:	Form:
First date of proposed Leave of Absence:	
Last date of proposed Leave of Absence:	
Number of school days to be missed:	
Details of proposed holiday (venue, accompanying adults in party, etc.):	
Reasons why the proposed holiday cannot be taken in the school holidays (<i>please continue overleaf if necessary</i>):	
<p>In submitting this application, I understand that the school's decision is final and that I will abide by it.</p> <p>Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian) Date: _____</p>	

Section B (this section will be completed by the school and returned to the parent/guardian within 7 days of the school receiving the application)

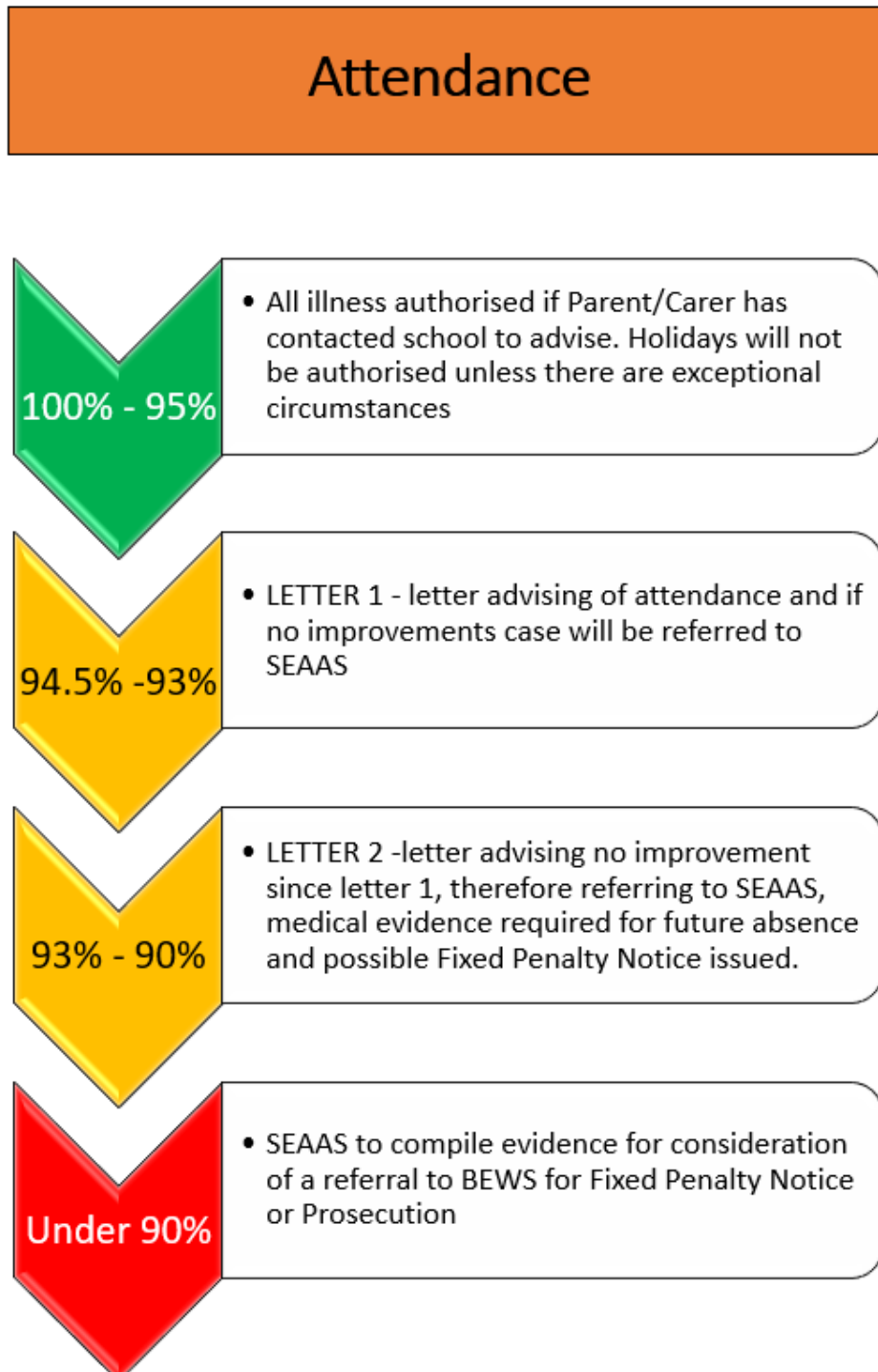
Pupil's Name:
Period of Leave of Absence applied for:
Number of school days of proposed Leave of Absence:
<p>Decision:</p> <p>The application has been approved</p> <p>The application has been refused because Headteacher</p>

APPENDIX 5 - Kent school referral pathway

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance



APPENDIX 6 - Process of letters





POLICY REVIEW DATE

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: September 2023
Last reviewed on:	June 2023	
Next review due by:	September 2024	