



**FORT  
PITT**  
GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL

# Attendance Procedures

(Including procedures relating to leave of absence taken in term-time and punctuality)

*Amended: July 2023*

*Next Review date: July 2024*

*Agreed by the Local Governing Body:*

*Attendance Lead: Mr D Reader*

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## Context

Fort Pitt Grammar School recognises that there is a high correlation between school achievement and attendance. Our expectation is that students should strive for 100% attendance with a minimum of 96%.

For the purpose of this policy, a parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child or young person (i.e lives with and looks after the child)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

## Key Principles

- It is a child's legal entitlement to receive a full-time and suitable education.
- It is the legal requirement of the parents/carers to ensure this happens.
- Attending school safeguards the welfare of the child whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- Attending school aids the intellectual, social and emotional development of the child.
- All children whose attendance is considered to be poor will be treated as vulnerable.

*These principles are included within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989.*

## Aims of the Policy

- To ensure all children attend school regularly and punctually with an attendance no lower than 96%.
- To ensure that no child has an unauthorised absence at any time throughout their school life.
- To ensure that all those responsible for a child's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities with regards to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby minimising persistent absence.
- To ensure that parents/ carers and children are aware that students with high attendance are more successful in transferring to higher education and employment or training.
- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of all students, including the key groups through close tracking of attendance and assessing the impact of any absence.
- To follow the Department for Education (DFE) Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance,

## Key personnel

**Attendance officer** – Mrs J Benavente [absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk](mailto:absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk)

**Senior Leader responsible for attendance** – Mr D Reader [dreader@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk](mailto:dreader@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk)

## Roles and Responsibilities of School

- Provide and promote a positive, supportive and welcoming atmosphere to ensure that children feel safe in the school environment.
- Ensure that all parents/ carers are aware of and know where to find the school's attendance policy and are in agreement with the rules and procedures.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality through regular communication with students, parents and staff.
- Celebrate good attendance with both students and parents.
- Ensure that the procedures for reporting absence are clear.
- Record, maintain and monitor accurate attendance and punctuality data, including individual lesson attendance. Reporting this data to the governing body and local authority as required and setting appropriate targets for the following year.
- Report attendance figures to parents/ carers alongside regular progress data 3 times a year.
- Monitor the attendance of all students, including that of the key groups (SEND, Looked After Children, Pupil Premium Students, those from minority groups, Young Carers, 'vulnerable' students), assessing the impact of any absence and taking appropriate supportive action when required.
- Communicate promptly in the event of a student absence.
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure that in the event of attendance issues, our attendance officer works closely with the pastoral team, safeguarding team and any external agencies in order to improve the child's attendance.
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of DFE attendance codes, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Communicate effectively with outside agencies including the Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP) from AASSA (Medway Council), Medway Special Educational needs (SEND), School Health, Early Help/Family Solutions, Social Services etc
- In the event of unauthorised absences, for example term time holidays, the school will refer this to the AASSA (Medway Council) to request that a penalty notice/s be issued on behalf of the school.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle back in to school after a long absence in order to support them reintegrating into lessons and catching up with missed work.
- Keep accurate records of suspensions and, in accordance with statutory guidance, report them to the Local Governing Body.

- Inform the local authority if a student is placed on a reduced timetable for any reason.

### **Roles and responsibilities of parents/ carers**

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/ carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the Headteacher creates an offence in law.

We expect the parent/ carer to:

- Ensure their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Contact the school when their child is unable to attend, with a specific reason, on every day of absence by 8.25am.
- Keep absences to a minimum. A note of explanation of absence from a child's home does not mean the absence becomes authorised. The decision on whether or not an absence is authorised will always rest with the Attendance Officer in agreement with the Headteacher.
- Keep the school well informed, in cases of lengthy absence. Regular daily contact may be required in some cases.
- Let the school know if their child will be late, e.g car breaks down, public transport issues, emergency appointment.
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment, unless in an emergency situation. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Provide details of at least two contacts for emergency use.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Only request a leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole day appointments, as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to illness.

### **Roles and responsibilities of students**

We expect students to:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering with the Attendance Officer when late, and signing out at reception when leaving the site for permissible reasons.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Information about the cause of an absence is always required and should be submitted in writing, via letter or email ([absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk](mailto:absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk)). Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a GP note, appointment letter/ email, prescription etc. A screen shot of these via email is acceptable.

**Please note that in all situations it is the judgement of the Headteacher as to whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.**

### **Authorised Absences**

Types of absence that are likely to be authorised include:

- Illness – specified with symptoms. Please note that specific symptoms should be provided when reporting absence due to illness. 'Unwell', 'Ill', etc are not acceptable reasons for absence.
- Medical or dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time.
- Emergencies – reason should be specified when reporting absence.
- Funerals of close relatives – as agreed with the Headteacher.
- Compassionate Leave – as agreed with the Headteacher.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

Types of absence that are likely to be unauthorised include:

- Holidays and day trips in term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances as agreed with the Headteacher.
- Absence for family events, such as marriages, birthdays.
- Truancy.
- Death of a pet.
- Minding other younger children in the family.
- Staying at home because other family members are unwell.
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark. Unless a valid reason is presented to the attendance officer.

### **Absences that may be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher**

- Funerals and other significant family events – The Headteacher will authorise a suitable time for compassionate leave.
- Participation in sporting and artistic events not arranged by the school – The Headteacher will consider authorisation depending on the nature, location, timing, attainment levels and attendance record of the student.

**The school can, if required, 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.**

## Registration and Punctuality Procedures

It is a legal requirement for the school to take the register twice a day.

AM Registration – 8:25 to 8:40 am

PM Registration – 2:10 to 2:15 pm

The registers will remain open for 10 minutes. Students arriving after the start of the registration period but before the end of the registration period will be **coded L (Late before register closes)**. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register.

Students arriving after the registers have closed will be **coded U (Late after registers close)**. This will count as an unauthorised absence for the whole of the morning session, until a satisfactory and valid reason is provided by the **parent/ carer**.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration without valid reason is considered as an unauthorised absence and may be subject to legal action.

### Procedures for Lateness

- Students who arrive late for registration (i.e after 8.25 am) will be coded **L (Late before registration closes)**.
- A student who arrives late must report to the attendance officer at the front of reception or in the main office.
- A student is deemed absent for the morning session if they arrive after 9.00am without reasonable explanation. The absence will be classed as authorised if an adequate explanation is received in writing, but unauthorised if the explanation is unacceptable.

### Procedures for Reporting Absences

Parents / carers should telephone or email the school on the **first day** of any absence no later than 8.25 am.

**Email:** [absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk](mailto:absence@fortpitt.medway.sch.uk)

**Phone:** (01634) 842359

**Letter:** Attendance Officer

Fort Pitt Grammar School  
Fort Pitt Hill  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 6TJ

**Please note:** The reason for any illness must be specified. Writing generic comments such as 'Unwell' or 'Ill' will not be sufficient. Parents/ Carers need to be specific regarding symptoms so that the school can manage the health and welfare of the student on their return.

If no call or email is received on each morning of absence offering a reason for absence, parents will be contacted by the **Attendance Officer**, initially via text. If a response is not received within 15 minutes, a phone call will be made. If there is no response the **Attendance Officer** will then phone emergency contacts in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. Safeguarding of students is paramount and it is essential to ascertain the location of any student not in school and all attempts will be made to contact, using all contacts logged on the school's management system. If the student is absent for a prolonged period of time due to illness, the school may request a re-integration meeting with parents/ carers to ascertain the health and well-being of their child.

### **Continuing Absence Procedures**

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not attended school and contact has not been made with the school, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/ carers, including making enquiries to emergency contacts and known friends and wider family. In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from family or for unsatisfactory explanation of absence, a home visit will be made by a designated member of staff to ascertain the safety and well-being of the child.

### **Ten days' absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. In the event of this happening the school will attempt to make contact with all of the emergency contacts on file, attempt a home visit at the last known address. If the school has exhausted all lines of inquiry the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The local authority Attendance Advisory Practitioner will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

### **Illness at school**

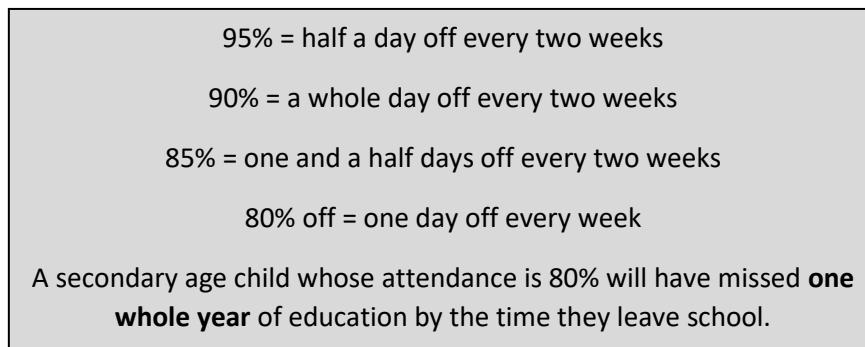
If a student is unwell in school, they should report to the trained first aiders in reception. Reception will decide whether or not to contact parents/ carers. **Students are not permitted to call home in this instance.** If a parent receives a call from their child, they should then speak directly to reception to ensure that the student's health and well-being can be checked.

### **Persistent absence**

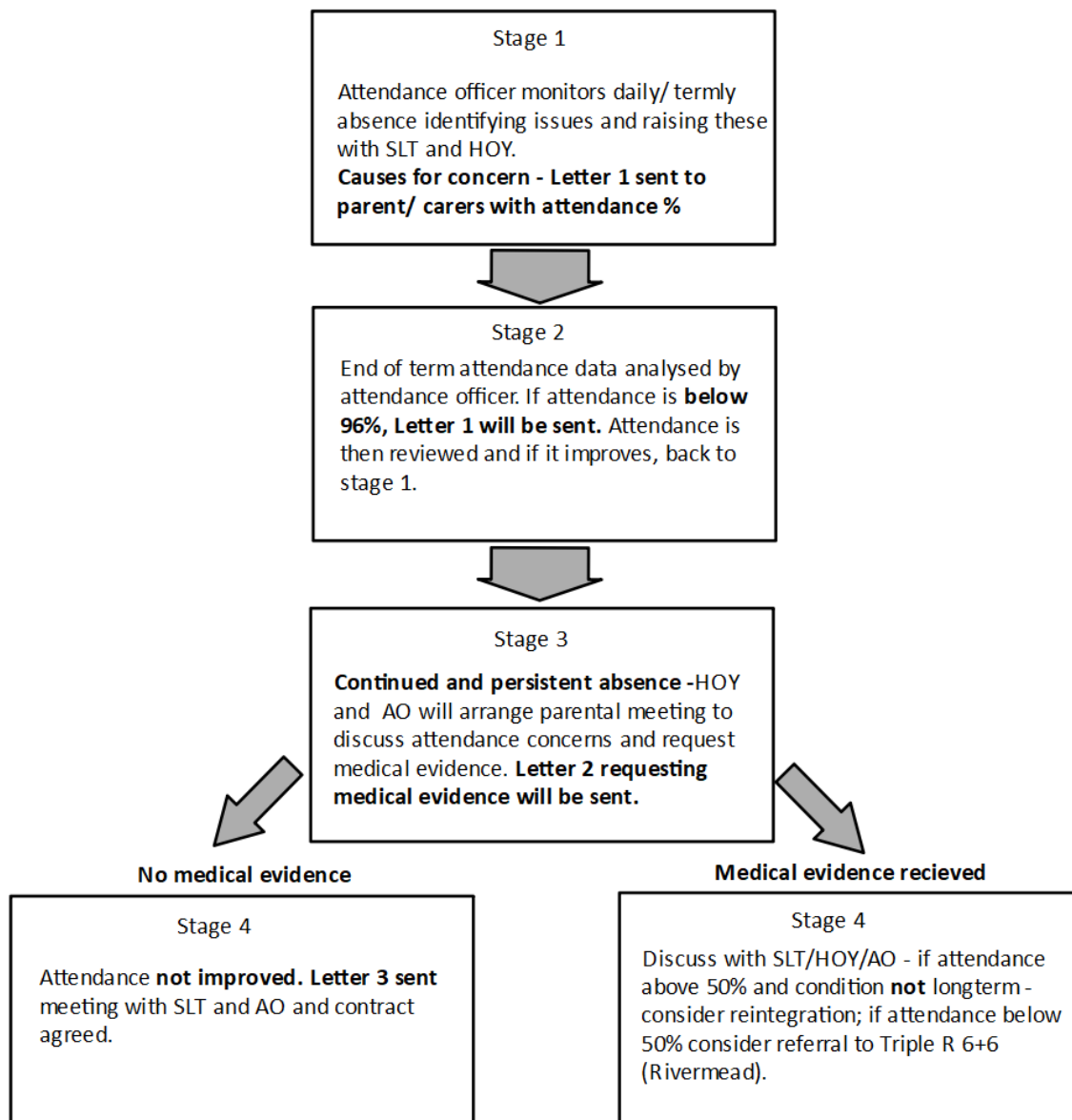
A pupil is classed as a **persistent absentee (PA)** when their attendance drops to **90% or below**. For whatever reason, whether it is authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Once your child's absence drops below 96%, it will be closely monitored. If it drops below 90% you will receive communication in writing from the school regarding this. **Please see the flow chart below.**

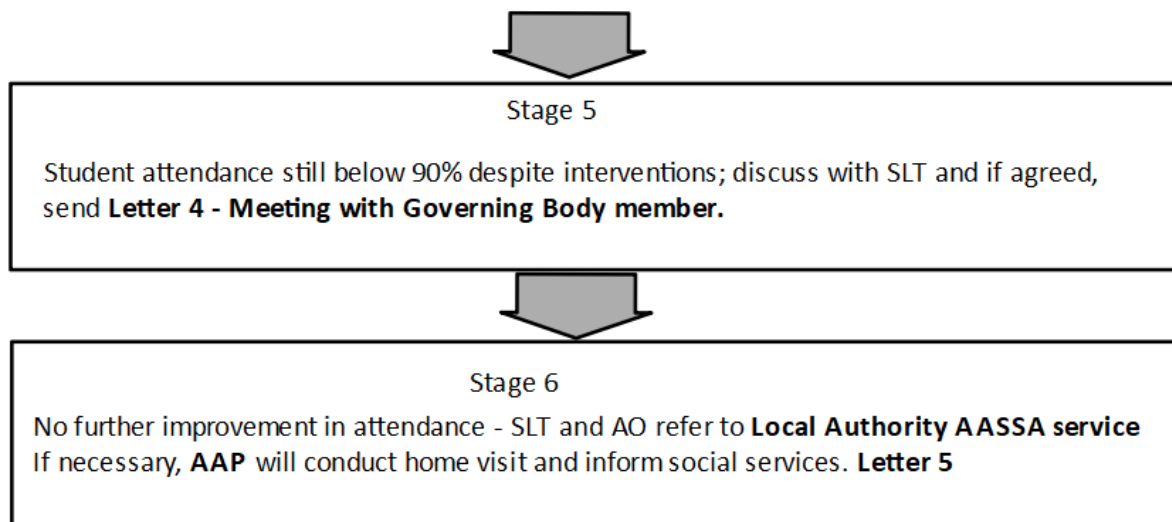


## Understanding absence percentages



## Attendance Monitoring Flowchart





### **Attendance Letters**

**Letter 1** – Attendance concern letter – Sent where absence is less than 90% or if attendance trends are a cause for concern.

**Letter 2** - Medical evidence required letter – Sent when medical evidence is required to support absence.

**Letter 3** - Attendance contract letter – Sent to arrange meeting with SLT and AO to agree contract to improve attendance.

**Letter 4** - Governing Body Letter – Sent to arrange meeting with Governing Body and SLT to discuss attendance concerns

**Letter 5** – Local authority referral letter – Sent to inform parents/ carers that the attendance concern has been referred to the local authority and will be followed up by them.

**Referral to Medway LEA – In the event of 10 or more unauthorised absences, and following meeting with parents and possible home visits, a referral will be made to the AASSA service at Medway.**

### **Requesting leave of absence**

Requests for leave for special occasions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances; therefore, the child's birthday, a relative's birthday, relative's visit, shopping trips etc. would not be considered sufficient cause. The school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence to attend funerals. Where the pupil is absent for more than the agreed period early contact will be made with the family.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parent/carers of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance of that child at the school/ academy where he or she is a registered pupil. Failure to discharge this duty may result in the LA prosecuting the parent/carers. The 1996 Education Act clearly states, "If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence". If found guilty of the offence, each

Parent/Carer may receive a fine or a Conditional Discharge. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced the use of penalty notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a penalty notice being issued''

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers will NOT grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

### **Unauthorised Holidays**

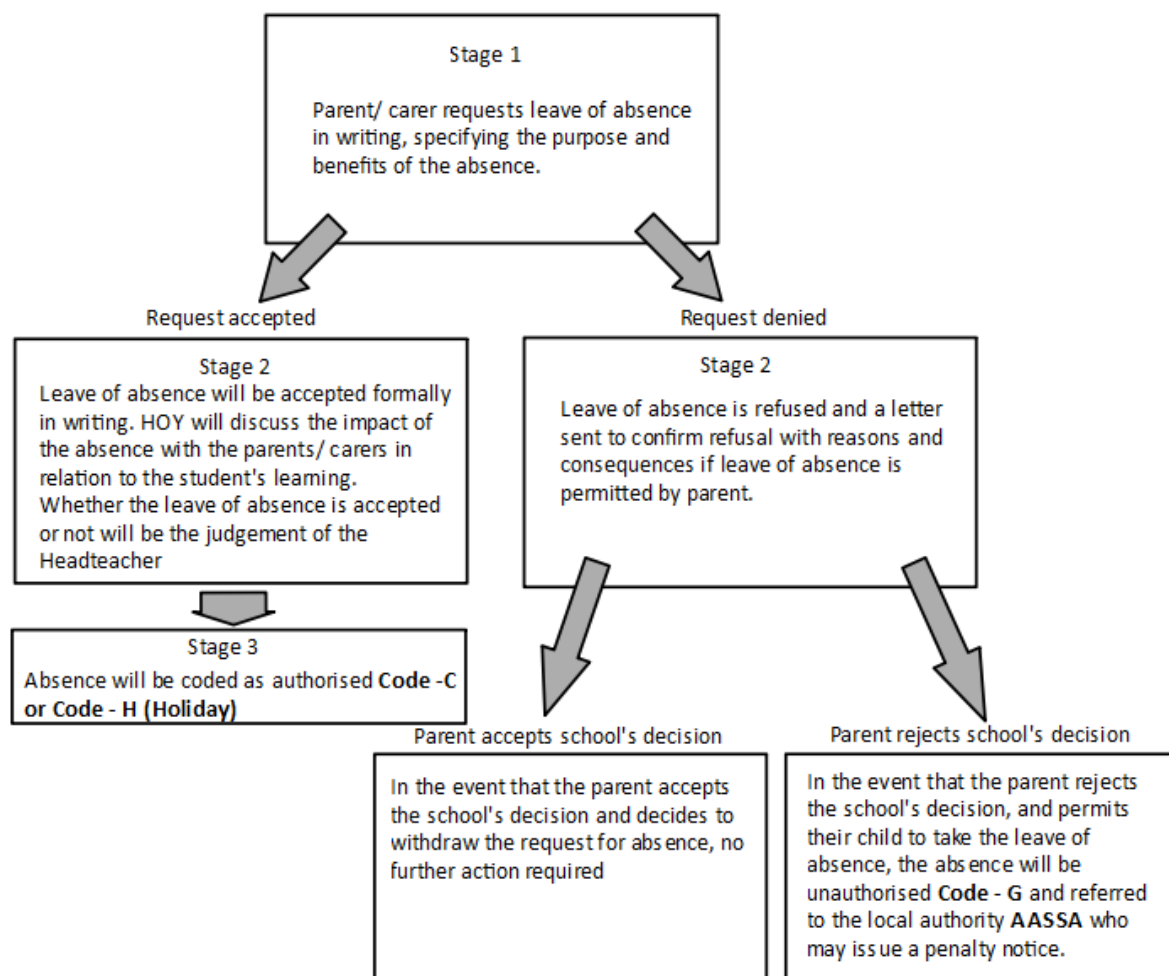
A referral is made to AASSA on behalf of all schools and academies, for unauthorised holidays resulting in 10 sessions of absence (5 school days) or more. A Penalty notice is issued to each parent/carer for each child for £60, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice, within 28 days, will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance

### **Unauthorised Absences**

In the event of 10 unauthorised sessions recorded, a referral may be made to the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA). If your child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six-school week period, a penalty notice may be issued resulting in a £60 penalty notice, increasing to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice, within 28 days, will result in a court prosecution for your child's irregular school attendance.

**Please note we have the right to change the attendance code of any student following an absence if any further information comes to light. For example, it transpires that a student has been on a family holiday, but the parent/ carers informed the school that their child was absent due to illness. Parents will be issued with suspected holiday letter, requesting medical evidence to support the absence.**

## Flow chart for requesting leave of absence e.g. holidays, sporting events, family occasions.



## Truancy

Truancy from education is the act of being absent from school without permission or valid reason. Truancy may be an absence from the school site without permission or an absence from lessons whilst on school site without permission. In the event of a confirmed truancy, the parent/ carer will be contacted immediately to confirm the safety and welfare of the student and an unauthorised code O will be entered on the attendance record.

Confirmed cases of truancy are coded unauthorised and may result in disciplinary procedures within school. Parents/ carers found to be complicit in the act of their child's off-site truancy may be subject to referral to the local authority and issued with a Penalty Notice.

## Reluctant attenders/ school refusal

Parents and carers should do everything possible to ensure that their child attends school. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, bullying or anxiety issues, the parent must discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will work with the student and parents to resolve the

issue. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend school will exacerbate the situation and may lead to referral to the local authority and other agencies (e.g. social services)

### **Reduced timetables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupil's best interest, there may be a need for a temporary reduced timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a reduced timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. The decision to offer a temporary reduced timetable is made by the school in discussion with outside agencies where necessary. Parents/ Carers cannot request that their child is put on a reduced timetable.

A reduced timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not treated as a long-term solution. Any agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. The school will regularly review the impact of the reduced timetable and meet with both parent/ carer and student to discuss. If a reduced timetable has been agreed, then the student will be coded as an authorised absence **code C** for the missed sessions.

The local authority will be informed of any student who is on a reduced timetable.

### **Providing medical evidence for absence**

Medical evidence may be any of the following:

- Hospital discharge letter
- Copy of appointment card or email from your GP. A screen shot of the appointment is acceptable.
- Copy of prescription or copy of medication label named. Again, a screenshot is acceptable.
- Note from GP (parent can request list of appointments, from the practice manager free of charge) or note from any other recognised care professional.

### **Parent/ carer contact details**

It is the responsibility of the parent/ carer to ensure that they have updated the school with up-to-date contact details, including emergency contacts, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you, the school holds the correct details. If the school believes that a parent/ carer is withholding contact details intentionally this may be considered a safeguarding concern and the local authority may be contacted. The school will remind parents to update their details biannually.

### **Amendments to the Admissions Register and Attendance Register**

Every amendment made to the admission and attendance registers must include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

### **Recording Attendance Data**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.