

Attendance Strategy

Trust Board Approval Date	31 August 2016
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Web Access	Internet
Owner	Chief Executive Officer

**“They’re only a few minutes late every day,
why are school going on about it?”**

Arriving 10 Minutes late
every day

Means they miss 32 hours
of lesson time each year

**Which is equivalent to
6 whole school days lost
out of class per year**

“It’s only one day, they’re there for the rest of the time. “

Just 1 day off/absent
every week

Means 2 months of lost
education

**That’s 7.5 weeks, or a
whole
half term of missed
lessons**



Government research shows that 17 days missed per year often results in a drop of one grade at GCSE. Missing school seriously affects life opportunities

1. Introduction & Aims

1.0 Introduction

The Pontefract Academies Trust (the “Trust”) is committed to having policies and procedures in place to ensure that all learners educated in its schools attend every day. Improving school attendance and reducing absence is a priority for the Trust and continues to be a challenge for its schools, children and young people, families and the Local Authority (LA). There is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement, and regular school attendance is vital if children and young people are to achieve and fulfil their potential, particularly as the curriculum becomes more demanding.

This strategy has been developed to support schools to work cooperatively, in a consistent manner, make the best use of resources, and to send an unswerving message to children and families that school attendance matters.

It will outline

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Best Practice
- Working with the Education Welfare Service (EWS)
- Legal Action
- Model Attendance Policy.
- EWS referral Flow Chart
- Holidays in Term Time Flow Chart.

2.0 Aims

The Trust strategy aims to:

- Improve attendance across all its schools so that it is consistently above national averages;
- Reduce persistent absence across all its schools so that it is consistently below national averages;

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.0 Schools play a central role in ensuring that children and young people attend every day. This includes all stakeholders, including staff, parents, pupils and local governors taking a positive and pro-active role in the promotion of good attendance.
- 2.1 Schools have a key role to play in the early identification of patterns of absence, and for subsequent early intervention at individual, cohort and whole school level.
- 2.2 Strategies and procedures for reducing absence and promoting attendance must be clearly set out in each school's attendance policy, which must identify how individual cases will be managed and how the school works with the Trust appointed Education Welfare Service (EWS) to ensure best practice.
- 2.3 The process of escalating identified cases must also be outlined in each school's attendance policy and parents must be made aware of the legal sanctions which may be used to enforce S444 of the Education Act 1996.
- 2.4 Schools must designate a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to have an overview of attendance and the Local Governing Body designate a Local Governor with to focus on attendance.
- 2.5 Schools within the Trust will take responsibility for low level attendance issues before requesting support from the EWS. This will include First Day Response calls, early home visits, meeting with parents, correspondence and telephone calls in order that sufficient evidence is gathered to support a EWS referral.
- 2.6 Schools across the Trust will have a rigorous approach to poor punctuality and term time holiday absences, and work with the EWS to deploy legal sanctions in the form of Parental Prosecutions and where appropriate, Penalty Notices (PNs) to address the matter.
- 2.7 At the end of each term, schools will provide attendance and persistent absence data for consideration by the Trust Board.

3. Best Practice

- 3.0 To ensure a consistent and positive approach to attendance each school will:
- Designate a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) responsibility for attendance;
 - Designate a Local Governor to focus on attendance
 - Have a First Day Response system in place, and the capacity to follow up pupil absences by the undertaking of home visits as appropriate
 - Identify patterns and trends of absence.
 - Initiate parental meetings to discuss reasons for absence, poor punctuality and term time holidays.
 - Identify cases for escalation in consultation with Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
 - Initiate 'Fast Track to Attendance' meetings.
 - Liaise with the EWO at an agreed time to discuss attendance issues and guidance on gathering evidence in accordance with the Service Level Agreement (SLA).
 - Prepare referrals with supporting evidence for the EWS including Fast Track, PNs, Parental Prosecutions, Elective Home Education, Children Missing Education and Child Employment and Performance Licensing.
 - Reward, where possible, cases where there is improved and full attendance.
 - Initiate school wide displays promoting attendance.
 - Collate and retrieve attendance data.
 - Collaborate with network partners across the Trust.

4. Working with the Education Welfare Service

4.0 In accordance with their Service Level Agreement (SLA), the EWS will provide:

- Consultation sessions, either face to face, by phone or by email to discuss issues, consider the possibility of EWO involvement and/or to plan the EWO's work with the school.
- Advice, consultation, assessment and intervention for children and young people of school age who present with attendance concerns. This is casework involvement from the EWO, and the discussion relating to school's pre-referral work.
- Support school staff to develop and implement strategies for children and young people with irregular attendance. This is advice and discussion regarding the way to move a case forward.
- Consultation, casework and support to provide a vital link between parents, carers and school, and a range of services involved with the student where the issues are complex. As part of casework and advice and guidance to school the EWO provides a link between home/school and other agencies, (e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference investigations.)
- Consultation, casework and support to provide a vital link between home and school, including making home visits as appropriate, where there is an EWS referral
- Negotiated, agreed and tailored staff development and training delivered on a Trust site, or at a site arranged by the Trust. Support to teaching and other staff, and to support their professional development, through advice/consultation re the needs of the students in school.
- Summary reports of involvement will be produced within 5 working days.
- Attendance at Joint Consultative Meetings (JCMs), and other regular meetings planned by the school to support pupils (for example, Pastoral Support Plan meetings, Planning Meetings etc.).

4.1 The EWO will:

- Conduct themselves according to published codes of professional practice and ethics, including the Trust's Code of Conduct and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards for Social Workers.
- Share good practice from local, regional and national developments.
- Be familiar with and advise the Trust and its schools on recent relevant legislation and guidance.
- Be familiar with and advise the Trust and its schools on LA and national policies and procedures for improving school attendance and reducing absence.
- Provide objective, evidence based assessments and advice, which might, on occasion, challenge the prevailing views of the school.
- Arrive punctually for scheduled appointments and contact school if, for any reason, they are likely to be delayed.
- Complete a record of discussions within 5 working days.
- If the need for a formal, typed report is agreed, provide it in a timely fashion with copies to parents and other relevant agencies.
- Maintain file records in line with professional guidelines and ethics.
- Maintain records of the time spent on behalf of the Trust and identify statutory/SLA work load.
- Inform the school as soon as possible if a visit has to be cancelled.
- Undertake Trust wide "drop-in" clinics on a monthly basis, at agreed venues for school staff to access advice and guidance.

4. Working with the Education Welfare Service

4.2 Individual Schools should:

- Negotiate and clarify with the EWO the purpose and outcomes of their involvement.
- Designate a member of staff within the school with the responsibility to liaise and plan with the EWO.
- Provide comprehensive data relating to whole school and individual attendance.
- Provide records of interventions, evaluations of previously tried strategies.
- Negotiate priorities and activities for each school visit with the EWO and ensure that where possible, meetings which require the EWO to attend are arranged for the day of the routine EWO visit.
- Obtain informed parental consent prior to the EWO undertaking any individual work with a child or young person.
- Keep to the negotiated timetable for the EWO's visit.
- Make time available for key staff to consult with the EWO.
- Provide a working space appropriate to the agreed programme of work for the EWO.
- Retain responsibility for the delivery of initial interventions relating to irregular attendance.
- Inform the EWO as soon as possible if it is necessary to change the agreed programme for a visit or if it is necessary to re-arrange the visit.
- Provide the EWO with access to the school's attendance data systems.

5. Referrals to EWS

5.0 The priorities for EWS to accept a referral will be as follows:

- Pupils with regular unauthorised absence **where school interventions have failed to secure improvement**; particularly vulnerable pupils, including Children subject to a Child Protection Plan, Children in Need, Looked After Children, Children held at Level 4 by an Early Help Hub, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and those at risk of permanent exclusion.
- Poor punctuality (after the closure of registers).
- Child Employment issues and the issuing of Performance and Sports Licences.
- Children Missing from Education.
- Pupils where Elective Home Education is being considered.
- Vulnerable pupils, e.g. those at risk of radicalisation.

5.1 Schools must be aware that a completed referral form (EWS62) must accompany all referral requests. The form must reflect, and evidence the work done by the school prior to the referral, e.g. First Day Response, home visits, correspondence, warning letters and meetings, and there should be meaningful and regular discussion with the EWO prior to the acceptance of the referral. A referral will not be accepted if the above criteria have not been met. All referrals will be discussed with EWS management to ensure criteria are met.

5.2 Following a referral the EWS will work in a range of ways to support young people in accessing education. This may include Fast Track, PN, casework and progression to legal work.

5.3 Pre-referral actions for schools

5.4 In any half term period if a pupil has 3 or more broken weeks it is advised that some form of action should be triggered. (A broken week is where a pupil is absent for 2 or more sessions (whole day) per week for three consecutive weeks).

Unreasonable absences

The following, **when used on a regular basis**, are deemed unreasonable:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea.
- Shopping.
- Tiredness/failed to get up on time.
- Missed the bus.
- Head lice.
- Mild coughs and colds.
- Headache /toothache.
- Problem in school (staffing/friendships/bullying/subjects).
- Minor injury (e.g. bumps and bruises).
- Stomach ache/ period pains.
- Trouble in the community.
- Parent/carer illness or appointments.
- Full day's absence for a medical appointment where half a day is appropriate.
- Birthdays.
- Family celebrations.
- Death of pets.

6. Safeguarding

6.0 Absence Procedure

1. **Day one of absence** – designated school staff to make contact if no reason for the absence has been provided. If the child has a Child Protection Plan/Level 4 Intervention, school should inform the pupil's social/case worker.
2. **Day two of absence** – repeat above and exhaust all contact details for the child.
3. **Day three of absence** – home visit as appropriate.

Schools should have an alternative plan in case the designated member of staff is absent or unable to undertake these duties.

6.1 Home visits: in line with the Trust Home Visit Policy

When a child has been absent for three days and school has concerns and attempts to contact have been unsuccessful (i.e. after you have used all telephone numbers provided) then a home visit must be conducted by a member of school staff, following Trust Home Visits Policy guidelines (see Appendix 3).

If the home visit is unsuccessful, staff will leave a card/note requesting that the parents/carers contact school. If the situation does not change, then after five days school should inform the EWO.

If the home visit is successful then staff should express their concerns over the absence(s) and deal with any issues appropriately.

The following should be considered:

- Are contact numbers on the system incorrect?
- Have there been any issues in the community/family?
- Does the family need support? If so is this internal/external?
- Is a referral to Social Care necessary?
- Is a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment necessary?
- Is absence due to a term time holiday?

(Please refer to Appendix 2 – EWS Referral Flow Chart)

6.2 Term Time Holidays

If a child's absence is due to a holiday, this will obviously affect their overall attendance. The school's Attendance Policy should include information regarding term time holiday absence, and its position regarding the use of PNs. Wakefield Council issues these at the request of schools, for an unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more, in accordance with the this Strategy. Requests for PN for term time holiday absence should be made using the EWS62A referral form.

The Trust accepts that holidays in term time can only be authorised by Head Teachers in exceptional circumstances and with prior notice.

6. Safeguarding

- 6.3 The High Court case of *The Isle of Wight vs Platt* on 13th May 2016, where the court effectively ruled that 'regular attendance' as required by Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 is deemed to be at or above the 90% threshold for persistent absenteeism has an obvious impact on the issue of PNs for holidays in term time. Their ruling effectively means that if a child's overall attendance remains above 90% at the time of the holiday then a PN cannot be issued as their attendance is deemed to be regular.
- 6.4 All holidays remain unauthorised and will be subject to a PN if a child's attendance is below 90% for the previous three consecutive academic terms prior to the date of the holiday.
- 6.5 The Trust requires school attendance policies to reflect this current ruling that PNs are not issued for holidays in term time which meet the above standard.
- 6.6 PNs for irregular attendance will also need to meet the same standard i.e. no action to be taken until attendance falls below 90%.
- 6.7 The Trust would emphasise that the above definition of regular attendance bears no relation to what they see as being good attendance which we see as being at the national average or above.

6.8 Medical confirmation

Where a child has regular medical absences, the school may seek medical evidence to support an absence. Only the Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School has the authority to authorise absences, not the parent.

6.9 Legal Action

Under S444 of the Education Act 1996 parents have a responsibility in law to ensure their children attend school regularly. Whilst proactive and supportive work may bring about improvement in attendance, often this is not successful. In cases of non-engagement and repeated absences it may be necessary to invoke legal action.

It is important that all schools throughout the Trust adopt a common approach in relation to sanctions and adhere to their use as recommended and discussed with EWS.

7. School Attendance Legislation

- 7.1 Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory education age¹ receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by education otherwise.
- 7.2 If a child of compulsory education age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at alternative provision made for them then the parent may be guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- 7.3 Under Section 447 of the Education Act 1996 a LA must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) under section 36 of the Children Act 1989 before prosecuting a parent under section 444. An LA may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting the parent.
- 7.4 Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444. Parents may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444 by paying a penalty.
- 7.5 Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil. A parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion. These days of exclusion are known as "specified days of exclusion" and will be detailed in a notice given to the parent under section 104 of the 2006 Act. This notice will be combined with the notice the school must issue when a child is excluded. The parent is responsible for the child during the specified days upon receipt of the notice. Section 105 allows for a penalty notice to be given to a parent guilty of an offence under section 103. The school must have notified the parent at the time of the exclusion of their duty and the days to which it relates.
- 7.6 The education-related provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to all parents who fall within the definition set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. 'Parent' means all natural parents, whether they are married or not; and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. Throughout this document, references to 'parent' mean each and every parent coming within the definition (whether acting jointly or separately).

¹ Compulsory education age is defined as beginning from the start of the first term commencing after the child's fifth birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

7. School Attendance Legislation

7.7 Parenting Contracts

Parenting contracts can be used to encourage parents and pupils to improve attendance and punctuality. They are formal agreements between parents, the school and the LA which set out steps which will be taken to secure improvements in attendance. Although they are not legally binding they can be used as evidence in the Magistrates Court if a parental prosecution is pursued.

7.8 Penalty Notices

Parents and pupils are supported at school and by LA officers to overcome issues that prevent regular school attendance through a wide range of intervention strategies. Where this intervention fails PNs are appropriate interventions to get pupils back into school or alternative education. They are also an appropriate sanction for a parent who has failed to ensure their child is not found in a public place while excluded; and, where a parent is judged capable of securing their child's attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

7.9 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 set the framework for the operation of the penalty notice scheme. The LA has the prime responsibility for the protocol within which all partners named in the Act will operate. The Education Legal Service delivers this LA responsibility and PNs will only be issued within this Strategy. The issue of PNs must conform to requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

7.10 A PN can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. Use of PNs will be restricted to two per pupil per academic year. In situations where a parent meets the criteria for more than one penalty notice to be issued, because there is more than one child with irregular school attendance, the issue of multiple PNs may occur.

Circumstances in which a penalty notice might be issued are:

- Irregular school attendance;
- Overt truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps);
- Parentally-condoned absences which are not authorised by school;
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time;
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed);
- Being in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion; and,
- Pupils on the "Fast Track to Attendance" scheme.

7.11 To ensure consistent service of Penalty Notices the following criteria will apply:

- Where there are at least 10 sessions (half days) recorded as unauthorised absence due to a holiday in term-time; or
- Where a child has at least 10 sessions (half days) lost to unauthorised absence during the previous six months period. A suitable circumstance is where a parent continually fails to provide a reasonable or acceptable explanation for a pupil's absence; or where a pupil has a record of unauthorised absence from school and the circumstances appear to have been avoidable; or

7. School Attendance Legislation

- Where a child who has been excluded is present in a public place during the first five days. A penalty notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate after considering the parents action or inaction which led to the child being in a public place at a proscribed time, the parent's justification if any, and the parent's attitude to having failed to meet their statutory responsibility.
- **However as stated previously the High Court ruling of The Isle Of Wight vs Platt (2016) and their definition of regular attendance being deemed to be at 90% will apply when decisions re issuing PNs are made.**

7.12 Education Supervision Orders (ESO)

The LA may apply to the Family Proceedings Court for an ESO as a means of attempting to ensure a child's regular school attendance, whether or not the child is registered at a school. The LA may consider the ESO as a more appropriate way forward than a Parental Prosecution or it may be issued in conjunction with a Parental Prosecution. This is usually decided at an **Education Planning Meeting**, which is chaired by the EWS and to which a representative of the LA's Legal Services will be invited to provide advice and guidance.

7.13 Parental Prosecution

This form of legal action is brought under the 1996 Education Act, Section 444 as a last resort when all attempts to encourage and support improvements have failed; when the parent has not engaged, or when a FPN remains unpaid. The EWS may bring a case to the Magistrates' Court for any school or Academy providing there is sufficient weight of evidence and it is in the public interest to do so.

There are two levels of offence, Section 1 and 1A. Section 1 offences are absolute offences (guilty until proven innocent) and are usually dealt with by means of a fine, Community Order or Conditional Discharge. Section 1A offences mean the LA must prove the parent "knowingly" allowed the child to be absent from school. The penalties include fines, Community Orders and also custodial sentences.

8. School Attendance Policy

8.0 Each school is required to

- populate the Trust Model Attendance Policy attached to this Strategy;
- propose it for approval by the Local Governing Body in early Autumn term;
- Implement the policy following approval, including making it available to parents and learners on the school's website.

[insert school logo]

[school] Attendance Policy

Local Governing Body Approval Date	
Effective Date	
Planned Review Date	
Web Access	Internet
Owner	

[school] Model Attendance Policy

We believe that in order for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important that parents ensure this. This Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.


Aims

There is a direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of the Attendance Policy is to raise levels of attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

(First table both settings)

<p>“They’re only a few minutes late every day, why are school going on about it?”</p>		
<p>Arriving 10 Minutes late every day</p>	<p>Means they miss 32 hours of lesson time each year</p>	<p>Which is equivalent to 6 whole school days lost out of class per year</p>
<p>“It’s only one day, they’re there for the rest of the time. “</p>		
<p>Just 1 day off/absent every week</p>	<p>Means 2 months of lost education</p>	<p>That’s 7.5 weeks, or a whole half term of missed lessons</p>

(Warning table secondary only)

	<p>Government research shows that 17 days missed per year often results in a drop of one grade at GCSE. Missing school seriously affects life opportunities</p>
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Objectives

- To reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in attendance.
- Work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve the attendance on an individual and whole school basis.

The Law

Section 444 of the Education Act states that, if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence and that parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the LA in the Magistrates court, or the need to issue Penalty Notices. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent knowingly allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

The difference between Regular and Good Attendance – Isle of Wight Vs Platt 2016

Following the above court case, the law currently sees 'regular attendance' as being at 90% or above. However this is not 'good attendance'. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are deemed in law to be persistent absentees. A school week is 10 sessions/5days: so in reality any child whose attendance is at 90% has, in the average school year of 380 sessions/190 days, missed 19 days of education. This equates to just under 4 weeks of education missed (3 weeks 4 days): this is an unsatisfactory level of attendance. The Pontefract Academies Trust and this school see good attendance as being 96% or above, meeting the national average. This equates to only missing 15 sessions/7.5 days over the whole academic year.

Parents can help us by:

- Ensuring that your children attend regularly and are on time.
- Telling us the reason for any absence and when the child will return (if known), on the first morning of any absence. (Preferably before 8:30 a.m.).
- Not keeping your child away from the school for trivial reasons. Accept your obligations contained in the Home-School Agreement you received when your child joined school (see Appendix __ *where appropriate*).
- Where possible, arranging medical or dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.

- Keeping the school updated (by telephone or letter) if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness.

As a school we take measures to safeguard our learners by:

- Following up any unreported absences after registration, with a text on the first morning followed by a phone call if we receive no response to the text.
- If we are unable to contact a parent/carer, we will visit the homes of pupils who are regularly absent and whose attendance is below 90%. This will occur before 11:30 a.m. where possible.
- Notifying the relevant Social/Case Worker if a child subject to a Child Protection Plan or at Level 4 Intervention is absent without explanation.
- Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance.
- Reporting regularly to parents about their child's attendance.
- Letting parents know if we have any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- If we continue to have concerns about a child's attendance we will work alongside the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) to help the child and, if relevant, their family, overcome any difficulties.

Authorised Absences *(Primary version)*

We recognise that whilst all children should aspire to 100% attendance, there may be occasions when a child cannot attend school. Authorised absences include the following:

- Illness or injury.
- Medical or dental appointment (if unable to make out of school hours).
- Family bereavement.
- Religious observance.
- Exceptional Circumstances – as decided by the Head Teacher.

Unauthorised Absences *(Primary version)*

Unauthorised absence might include:

- Waiting at home for a delivery.
- Going for a family day out.
- Sleeping in after a late night.
- Going shopping, or for a haircut.

- Celebrating a birthday.
- Parental/Carer illness (minor).

AUTHORISED ABSENCE (*Secondary version*)

Parents and students should only plan absences from lessons if there is no alternative and the reason is a good one. In these circumstances, you will need to place a note in the Student Planner and provide supporting evidence before the event where possible. Where absences cannot be foreseen in advance the parent or student should let school know as soon as possible on the same day (failure to do so may mean that the absence is not authorised).

Absence from school *will* be authorised if it is for the reasons listed below:

- Illness
- Unavoidable Hospital/Dental/Orthodontist's appointments that cannot be arranged outside school hours, backed by evidence of an appointment card (confidential information could be removed)
- Relevant Religious Festival
- Close family bereavement – in this case a phone call will be acceptable in the first instance followed by a note from a parent or a responsible adult
- Attendance at the funeral of a close family member or friend
- A career related/College interview (appointment letter must be provided)
- A Work Experience placement
- Participating in school run extra-curricular activity, such as Drama, Music, Sport etc.
- With an LA Licence to allow absence for sports competitions and Performing Arts such as participating in Drama/Film and Theatre productions
- Attendance at a Probation meeting/Court appearance
- Authorised study leave

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be considered, such as the number of absences already taken, repetitions of the same excuse and whether students are able to provide suitable evidence for absence.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE (*Secondary version*)

Absence from school *will not* be authorised for:

- Holidays during term time (see below)
- Doctor's/Dentist's routine appointments
- Looking after brothers, sisters or sick parents
- Looking after the house
- Accompanying family members to appointments
- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Leisure activities
- Unsatisfactory absence notes

- Patterns of absence which arouse suspicion after investigation
- Periods during school or external examinations especially SATs and GCSEs

Penalty Notices/Holidays in term time

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for the administration and issue of Penalty Notices for schools within Wakefield.

Penalty Notices may be requested by the school when a child has been absent for 10 sessions or more, in accordance with Wakefield Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Currently, any Penalty Notice issued in relation to school attendance is £60 per child, per parent, if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. An unpaid Penalty Notice will be withdrawn by the EWS and a parental prosecution brought in its place, before the Magistrates Court under S444 of the 1996 Education Act.

The Head Teacher cannot grant any leave of absence for term time holiday absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Pupils have an entitlement to an education, not a term time holiday.

Holidays in term time - Isle of Wight vs Platt 2016

The High Court case of The Isle of Wight vs Platt on 13th May 2016 ruled that 'regular attendance' as required by Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 is deemed to be at or above the 90% threshold for persistent absenteeism. A Penalty Notice will be issued if a child's overall attendance falls below 90% whether due to irregular attendance and/or due to a term time holiday.

All holidays remain unauthorised and will be subject to a PN if a child's attendance is below 90% for the previous three consecutive academic terms prior to the date of the holiday.

School would emphasise that the above definition of regular attendance bears no relation to what we see as being good attendance which we see as being at the national average of 96% or above. (Please see page 2 of this policy for clarification).

(Please see Appendix 1 - 'Holidays in Term time Flow Chart').

Medical and dental appointments

Parents/Carers should book routine/non-urgent medical or dental appointments outside school hours, or during holidays to avoid their child's education being disrupted.

- If your child is referred for a non-urgent medical appointment at hospital, where possible please request as late an afternoon appointment as possible so that they lose as little lesson time as is possible.

- Parents/Carers should ensure that when a child attends a medical or dental appointment they are only absent for the duration of the appointment and do not keep them at home for the whole day.
- School will only authorise absences for non-urgent medical or dental appointments providing that a doctor or dentist's letter, appointment slip or card clearly stating the appointment date and time is brought in to school (a copy is acceptable).

Diarrhoea and vomiting illness

Where children have diarrhoea and / or vomiting then school will adhere to the advice of the Government's Health Protection Agency and request that children are kept away from school for 48hrs after the **last** episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

This is because if there is a bacterial or viral cause for the illness, the children can still be infectious for the first, usually 24 to 48 hours and 48 hours post recovery.

Punctuality (*Primary version*)

- School opens at ____ (*enter relevant time*) so your child needs to be on the playground by ____ (*enter relevant time 15 minutes after school commences*).
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes in class are used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day.
- If your child misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for your child.
- If a child is late to school after the close of registration at _____ (*enter relevant time*), they will receive a mark that shows them to be at school, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.
- Lateness is monitored and where children are persistently late their parents/carers will be invited into school for a formal meeting to discuss this.

Punctuality (*Secondary version*)

School starts at **8.50am** when students are expected to be in their Tutor rooms. Registration closes at **9.05am** and students arriving after that time may be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Repeated Unauthorised absence sessions for lateness could result in a Fixed Penalty fine being issued in line with Government and LA code of conduct.

Students should attend all lessons on their timetable punctually. If a student knows that they are going to be late to a lesson, they must have a note in their Student Planner. If late into school students should sign in at the Student Services Office.

Valid reasons for lateness may be that the bus did not arrive/broke down etc. NOT that the bus was missed.

Unauthorised lateness will result in school sanctions being administered (*see relevant policy*).

The Education Welfare Officer(EWO)

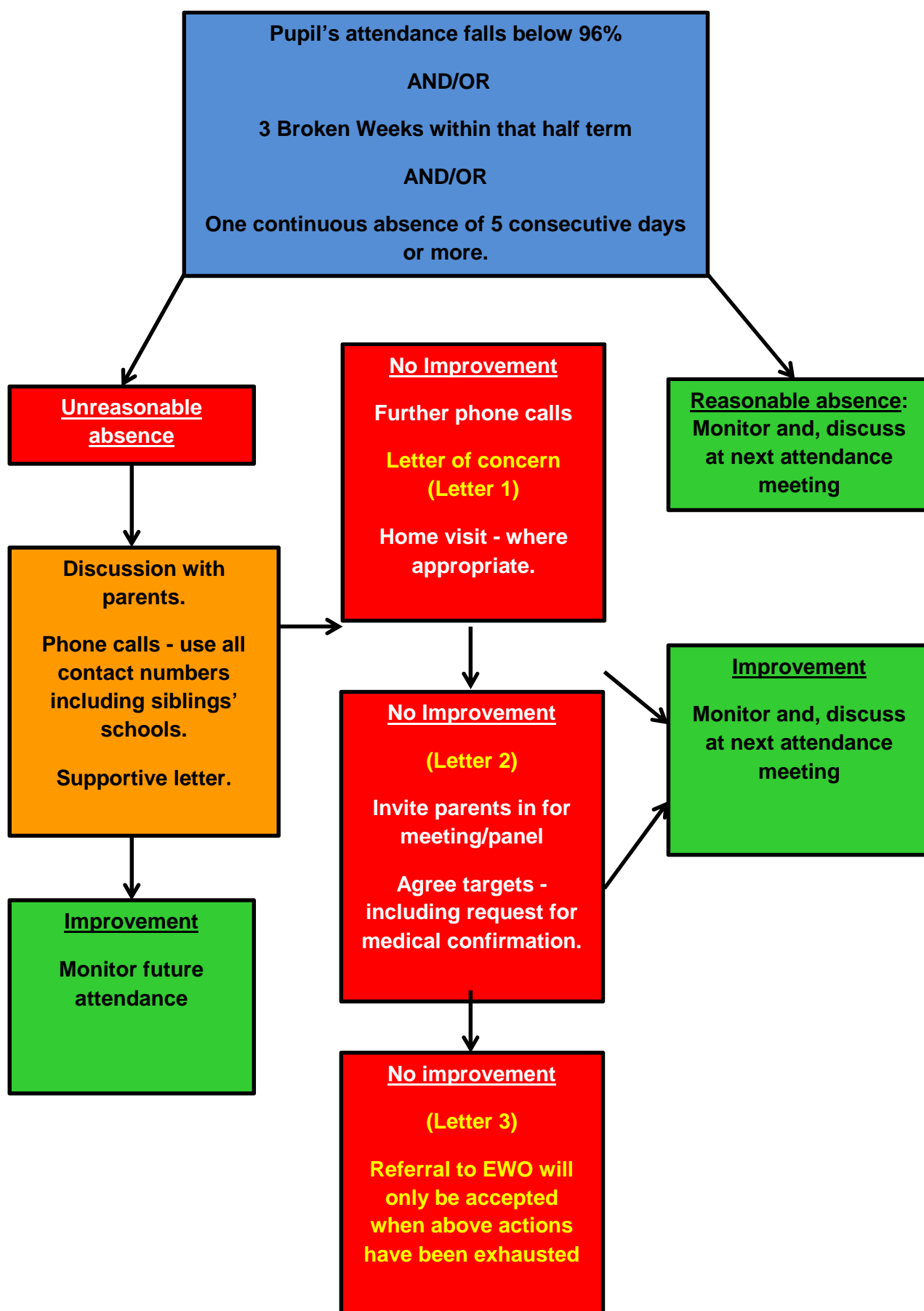
Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the LA Education Welfare Officer. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, Education Welfare Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or parental prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for help or information. EWOs are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

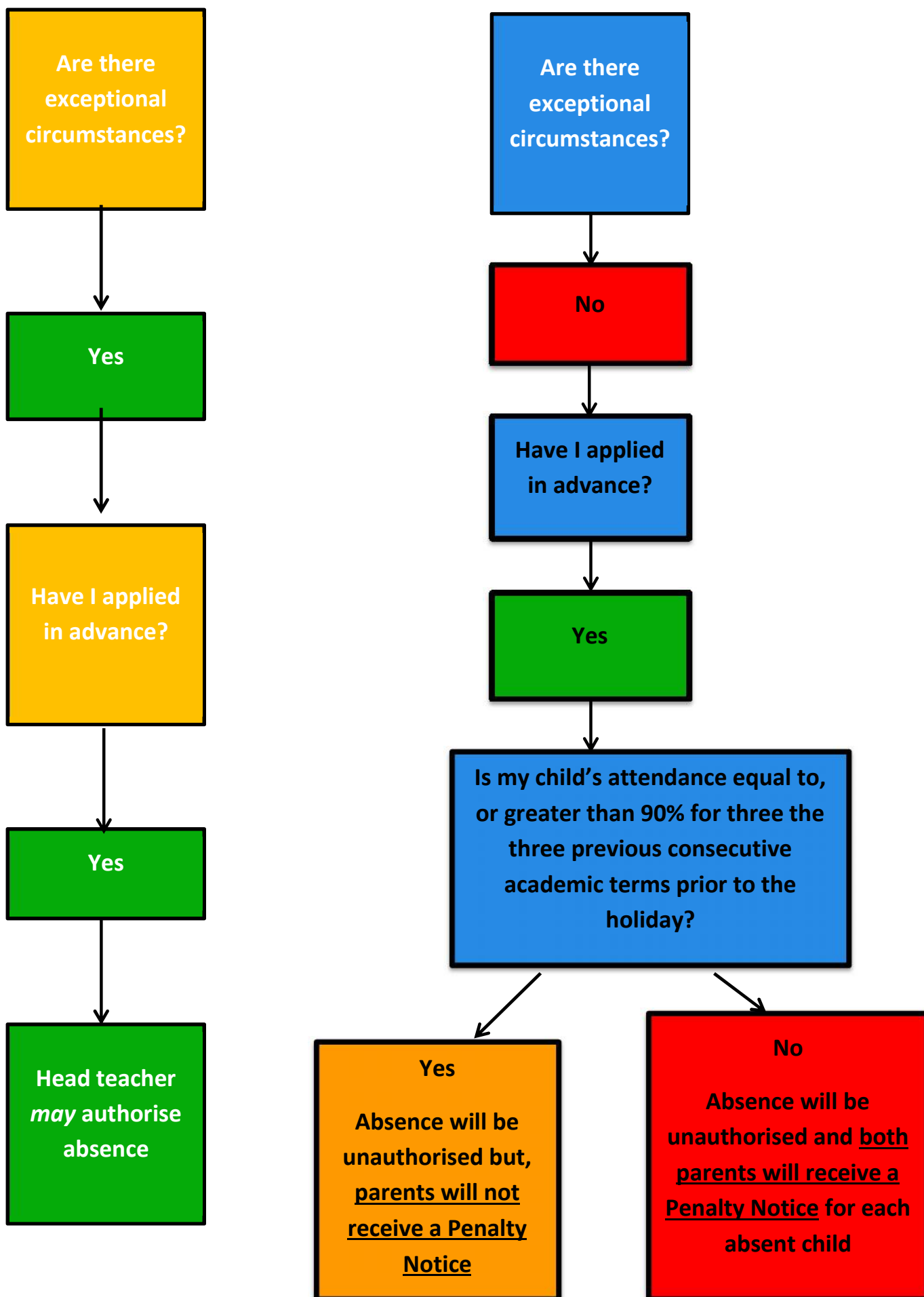
Education Welfare Service (EWS) / Local Authority (LA)

- The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level through a referral system or using the Fast Track to Attendance Programme, and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- The EWS will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to children missing Education. Child Employment and Licensing.
- EWS will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the school.
- The LA will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

Appendix 1: Referral flow chart



APPENDIX 2 – Holidays in Term Time Flow Chart



Appendix 3 - Home Visits Policy

Aims

The aim of the home visit policy is to ensure good working practice and to provide guidelines in reducing risks to employees of the Trust when undertaking home visits.

- To ensure that designated staff follow the correct procedure prior, during and after carrying out a home visit.
- That staff have followed Health and Safety procedures in notifying the school of home visit and expected return time.
- That necessary information has been obtained prior to home visit in order to carry out risk assessment.
- A general risk assessment should be prepared to cover home visits. (See attached risk assessment).

Reasons for home visits

Staff make home visits in order to better meet the needs of the child and family. In promoting a partnership between parents and school, home visits provide the means for effective team problem-solving, observing children in their home environment, and encouraging parent involvement. Home visits may also lend distressed parents often much needed support to foster positive parenting. Effective home visiting furthers the mental, emotional, and physical health and development of the child by serving the whole family.

Home visits are important in helping the school to make contact with new, or hard to reach parents/carers. They are particularly useful as they enable the parent/carer to still have contact with the school, but in their own environment.

Home visits are to be used when:

- Pupils are refusing to come into school: this is normally the responsibility of the EWO but can be carried out by school staff or the school's Learning Mentors.
- New Foundation Stage pupils are about to join the school
- When there are attendance issues/concerns.
- When all other means of contact with a family has failed.

Home visits should not be undertaken by any member of staff without the knowledge of the Head Teacher or their Deputy and, where practicable, parents/carers should be informed of the home visit prior to staff arriving at the home.

Preparation for home visit

- Visits should be undertaken where practicable by prior arrangement.
- For Health and Safety reasons the Head Teacher or their Deputy should be notified of whom you are visiting.
- The school should have the mobile phone numbers of the relevant staff

- Cultural sensitivity/awareness should be observed during home visit, e.g. by not sending a male member of staff out alone to see a Muslim mother.

Any Child Protection concerns arising from home visits should be discussed with Designated Senior Person for Safeguarding on arrival back.

Dealing with difficulties and boundaries

Set the tone

- Be punctual when carrying out home visits.
- Introduce self and colleagues.
- Staff should always follow the client into the home; they must not enter the home first; the occupants may try to block the member(s) of staff in. Staff do not know who is already present within the home.
- Establish social connection (small talk).
- Staff should sit near the door/exit and avoid letting the client sit between them and the door.
- Include other family members present in conversation.
- Modify the environment (babies crying, TV, other distractions).
- Settle at a work place, i.e., the kitchen or living room (ask for suggestions).
- Staff should remember to use their instincts, stay calm and act confidently.

Containing Aggression

It is important, even if someone is trying to provoke a member of staff, they should not respond in kind. Meeting aggression leads to confrontation and someone could get hurt.

Staff should stay calm and speak slowly and clearly; they should not argue, be patronizing or try to outsmart the person verbally. Breathing slowly helps to control one's own tension.

Avoid body language which may be misinterpreted, such as looking down on the aggressor; hands on hips; folded arms; any physical contact. Staff should keep their distance.

Staff should talk through the problem with the client; suggest going to see a colleague, suggest a walk or some fresh air - allow aggression to be diverted against inanimate objects, such as banging the table.

Compromise - offer the aggressor a way out of the situation.

If a member of staff is unable to deflect or defuse the situation, they should get away - make an excuse to leave, e.g. remember an urgent appointment.

Staff should trust their instincts and not underestimate the situation. Things can get out of control very quickly. Be prepared!

Whilst talking, assess possible means of escape, should the situation worsen.

Staff should never turn their back. If they are attempting to get away, staff should move gradually backwards. The Police should be contacted if physical abuse/assault has occurred.

Any inappropriate, abusive, aggressive or violent behaviour towards a worker during a home visit should be recorded and discussed with the head teacher.

All workers should have access to debrief in the event of a difficult home visit.

Using Information Received

All information received will be used confidentially and will help staff to learn more about the educational, social, emotional and development needs of pupils.

Home Visits Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment for: For Pontefract Academies Trrust Staff making visits to the homes of pupils.							
Date risk assessment carried out	29.02.1016	Work location	Pontefract Academies Trust	Names of risk assessors involved	Gareth Evans	Review date	October 2016
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Control measures		What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by When?	Date completed
That the staff or their vehicles may be targeted by wrongdoers in the community.	Should staff be stranded due to their vehicles being un-driveable, then they may be at risk of becoming physically harmed or injured, or may become the victims of theft.	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Home visits usually to be carried out in pairs but lone visits can be made at the discretion of the Head Teacher or their Deputy.</p> <p>Make note of public buildings in the vicinity e.g. cafes, shops, pubs.</p> <p>Park somewhere safe and well lit if possible.</p> <p>Carry enough money for a taxi.</p>		None at this time			

Home Visits Risk Assessment

		<p>Have a reliable taxi number – carry a mobile phone, ensure the battery is charged.</p> <p>Call a team member for a lift.</p> <p>Do not take valuables with you other than a mobile phone.</p> <p>Keep all possessions about your person</p>				
<p>That a person in the household being visited might become aggressive or violent towards staff</p>	<p>Staff either emotionally or physically by being verbally abused, threatened, assaulted and so on.</p>	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Prepare well.</p> <p>Ensure you have family background information prior to the visit.</p>				

Home Visits Risk Assessment

		<p>Where possible phone ahead to determine the mood.</p> <p>Home visits always to be carried out in pairs, but lone visits can be made at the discretion of the Head Teacher or their Deputy</p> <p>Ensure there is a contact at school.</p> <p>It is important, even if someone is trying to provoke you, not to respond in kind. Meeting aggression leads to confrontation and someone could get hurt.</p> <p>Stay calm and speak slowly and clearly.</p> <p>Do not argue, be patronizing or try</p>				
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Home Visits Risk Assessment

		<p>to outsmart the person verbally.</p> <p>Breathe slowly to control your own tension.</p> <p>Avoid body language which may be misinterpreted, such as looking down on the aggressor; hands on hips; folded arms; any physical contact.</p> <p>Keep your distance.</p> <p>Talk through the problem; suggest going to see a colleague; suggest a walk or some fresh air, allow aggression to be diverted against inanimate objects, such as banging the table.</p> <p>Compromise - offer the aggressor a way out of the situation.</p>				
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Home Visits Risk Assessment

		<p>If you can't deflect or defuse the situation, get away. Make an excuse to leave, e.g. remember an urgent appointment.</p> <p>Trust your instincts and do not underestimate the situation. Things can get out of control very quickly. Be prepared!</p> <p>Whilst talking, assess possible ways you can escape if the situation worsens.</p> <p>Never turn your back, if you are trying to get away, move gradually backwards. Contact the Police when physical abuse/assault has occurred.</p>				
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Home Visits Risk Assessment

<p>Carrying out home visits during the hours of darkness</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Visit in the dark only if essential.</p> <p>Only go if confident about the relationship with the family.</p> <p>Home visits always to be carried out in pairs. but lone visits can be made at the discretion of the head teacher or their deputy</p> <p>Know where the house is first.</p> <p>Drive to the door.</p>			
<p>Aggression from a family pet</p>	<p>Staff who may be injured by biting, scratching, kicking etc.</p>	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Ask for pets to be put in another</p>			

Home Visits Risk Assessment

		room at the start of the visit.				
Spread of infection	Staff and/or persons visited may be infected by contagious diseases.	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Cover cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings.</p> <p>Use alcohol gel rub after leaving one house and before entering another.</p> <p>Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, pay attention to skin under wedding bands.</p>				
Family history is unknown	Staff either emotionally or physically by being verbally abused, threatened, assaulted and so on by persons at pupil's home.	<p>All staff to adhere to 'Home Visits Policy January 2016'.</p> <p>Visit schedule must be left with the office.</p> <p>Phone beforehand to find out more about the family and judge the mood.</p>				

Home Visits Risk Assessment

		<p>Visiting staff to phone school after each visit to confirm safety.</p> <p>Meet parents/carers at induction meetings.</p>				
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Safe System of Work (SSOW) for carrying out the activity

Instructions / Information required to undertake the task safely	Who is responsible for carrying this out
All staff to read and adhere to this risk assessment	

Checklist for risk assessment

	Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No
Have staff being trained to carry out risk assessments (RA's)?	X		Is a team approach being used for undertaking RA's?	X		Do employees and trade unions play an active role in carrying out RA's?		X

Home Visits Risk Assessment

Do the control measures adequately control the risk and lead to a safe way in which to undertake the task (i.e. a safe system of work – SSOW)?	X		Has a safe system of work (SSOW) being developed following the RA - i.e. a clear list of instructions that explain what needs to be in place to do the job safely?	X		Have the findings of the RA and SSOW been communicated to all employees (where relevant)?	X	
Can you provide evidence that staff have been shown the RA and SSOW and understand it?	X		Are RA's and SSOW easily available for all staff?	X		Do staff know where the RA's and SSOW can be found?	X	
Are RA's regularly and continually reviewed to bring about improvements in health and safety?	X		Are RA's reviewed following an accident, incident or near miss?	X		Does your risk assessment include risks to others: service users, members of the public, visitors, contractors?		X

This risk assessment has been conducted on the date specified and involved the staff listed previously.

It has been determined that the risk assessment needs to be reviewed on: Signature of risk assessors / staff involved:

Letter 1 - Letter of Concern

«Parental_Salutation»

«HouseName»

«HouseNumber» «Street»

«District»

«Town»

«Postcode»

DD Month YYYY

Dear «Parental_Salutation»

Following a review of **student's/children's** attendance in YR, our figures show that the level of «Forename»'s attendance is currently _____ %. This figure is below our school target of __%

There is a strong link between good attendance and good examination results and, as we want to help all our **students/children** to achieve their potential, we will be monitoring «Forename»'s attendance for the remainder of the year and hoping to see an improvement.

Holidays should not be taken in School time as this affects progress and «Forename»'s attendance percentage. Also, odd days missed here and there contribute to gaps in knowledge and understanding, adversely affecting progress and **preparation for coursework and examinations.**

Meanwhile, if there are any issues affecting «Forename»'s attendance, please advise us so that we can work together to support «Forename» during «hisher» important learning for «hisher» **GCSE/Key Stage 3/4 studies/learning.**

Yours sincerely

Letter 2 – No Improvement

«Parental_Salutation»

«HouseName»

«HouseNumber» «Street»

«District»

«Town»

«Postcode»

DD Month YYYY

Dear «Parental_Salutation»

Absence from School Due To Illness: «Forename» «Surname»

I would like to draw your attention to the attached Registration Certificate Report for «Forename». As you will note «Forename»'s attendance now stands at XXX%. The majority of these absences appear to be due to illness.

In line with Government guidance on school attendance, I must inform you that the school is not obliged to mark a student/child as 'ill' unless there are some supportive medical documents for the absence; for example, a doctor's note or a surgery compliments slip, an appointment slip from the doctors surgery, a copy of the prescription or the slip from the back of the prescription or a letter regarding a hospital appointment etc.

If «Forename» continues to be absent from school due to illness, the school will have no alternative but to ask you to provide proof of illness as described above. If no evidence is provided, further absences will be unauthorised and this may result in a referral to The Education Welfare Service. Ten sessions of unauthorised absence may result in a Penalty Notice Fine being issued. In line with the Pontefract Trust Attendance Policy, a Penalty Notice will be issued for £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If unpaid after 28 days it will then be progressed to Court and could lead to a criminal conviction.

If you would like to discuss this further or if there are specific longstanding or recurrent illnesses, the school would be happy to complete a referral to the Community Paediatrician for further investigation. Please do not hesitate to contact the school to discuss this further on _____

Many thanks for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Letter 3 – EWO Referral

«Parental_Salutation»

«HouseName»

«HouseNumber» «Street»

«District»

«Town»

«Postcode

DD Month YYYY

Dear «Parental_Salutation»

Following a review of **students/children**, our figures show that the level of «Forename»'s attendance is currently,% which is well below the school target of 96%. This is extremely concerning and will be having a detrimental impact upon your child's progress and achievement in school.

In view of the above, I have set an achievable personal attendance target of% to be reached within the next 4 weeks. **Please be aware that if a significant improvement does not occur in that time a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service and a penalty notice will be pursued.** In line with the Pontefract Trust Attendance Policy, a Penalty Notice will be issued for £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. If unpaid after 28 days it will then be progressed to Court and could lead to a criminal conviction.

Holidays in school time are unauthorised as this would further affect progress and «Forename»'s attendance percentage. Also, odd days missed here and there contribute to gaps in knowledge and understanding, adversely affecting progress and preparation for coursework and examinations.

Meanwhile, if there are any issues affecting «Forename»'s attendance, please advise us so that we can work together to support «Forename» during «hisher» important learning for «hisher» **GCSE/Key Stage 3/4 studies.**

Yours sincerely