



## **COURT FIELDS SCHOOL**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Executive Headteacher: Sarah Watson  
Acting Headteacher: Polly Matthews

Date: June 2023  
Due for review: Summer Term 2024

**Purpose:**

- to ensure and encourage a high level of attendance for all students in order that they maximise their educational achievement.
- to ensure that the attendance of students is in line with Court Fields School's definition of regular attendance. This is 96%.
- to ensure no unauthorised absences.

**Key Points:**

- Effective monitoring of attendance is vital.
- Registers must be accurate and kept in accordance with this policy.
- The appendices to this policy outline the roles (Appendix 1) and expectations of everyone involved in ensuring good attendance. These include
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Form Tutors
  - Heads of Year
  - Pastoral Manager
  - Pastoral Attendance Assistant (School)
  - Deputy Heads / Assistant Heads
  - Education Safeguarding Officer (County)

**Barriers to Attendance**

- Chronic illness/anxiety
- Low value placed on education in the home
- Weak parenting – collusion or inability to get child to school
- School refusal/EBSA
- Bullying/anti-social behaviour in school
- Influence of peers – older or disengaged from school eg CE, county lines etc
- Caring responsibilities
- SEND needs not met or undiagnosed SEND
- Inability to access curriculum
- Poverty – eg uniform or transport issues
- CP issues eg neglect, family tension and abuse
- Multiple suspensions

The key to improving attendance is therefore to build cultures which are inclusive, supportive and welcoming, to recognise and address these barriers and to ensure that children understand why they belong in school.

The School Day It is an expectation that all students are in school by 8:35am for the warning bell and in tutor by 8:40am when formal registration begins. Students remain in school until 3:15pm when they are dismissed from lesson 5. It is an expectation that students partake in extra-curricular and enrichments wider than the core curriculum. This may mean students spend additional time at school after 3:15pm.

## Attendance and Punctuality

Across the Trust good, excellent and outstanding attendance and punctuality are acknowledged and rewarded.

- Governors, Directors and staff within the Trust recognise the high correlation between achievement and attendance and strive to maintain high levels of attendance for all students.
- Parents have the responsibility to ensure attendance at school. Unless there is a major health concern attendance should rarely drop below 96%.
- We ask for the cooperation of all parents in helping the school to monitor attendance closely.
- We award students termly for attendance via our Class Charts platforms. 100 Club also runs half termly, awarding students for 100% attendance during specified periods.

Any planned medical absence should be notified by telephone or letter. As far as possible, appointments should be made out of school hours.

Once the school has obtained confirmation the school will authorise the absence if the reasons given are considered appropriate e.g. illness, unavoidable medical appointment etc. If the reasons given are not appropriate the absence will be considered as unauthorised and the parent contacted. The school will follow up any absence which has not been notified.

## Illness & Medical Absence

Absence, whether due to illness or other reasons, impacts on a child's educational and pastoral outcomes. Absence due to illness should only occur if your child is unable to attend school. If your child's attendance drops below 96% (defined as regular attendance by Court Fields School) and this is due to a significant amount of illness, you may be asked to provide medical evidence for the period of absence.

Examples of medical Evidence (this is the responsibility of the parent to provide to the school directly):

- Medical appointment card/printed slip
- medical appointment letter
- copy of prescription showing name and date
- Prescribed medication with pharmacist label showing name and date
- Hospital Discharge letter
- The local record

**Please note: We never ask for 'doctor's notes' so please do not approach your GP asking for this.**

## **Punctuality**

Arriving late to school and into lesson is very disruptive for the teacher and other class members. It also means that late student themselves miss important input from teachers and/or tutors.

If for whatever reason, you know your child will be arriving late, please call the absence line or provide your child with a written note.

Lateness of more than 30 minutes after registration will count as an absence from that session and will therefore require a note/telephone call from parents. *If there is no good reason this will count as an unauthorised absence.* Lateness to school will be subject to sanctions unless there is a genuine reason.

Late to school will be sanctioned in line with the school behaviour policy.

## **Term Time Leave/Holiday Requests**

Holidays/leave of absence in term time will not usually be authorised because they will affect a student's education. There is no automatic right to take children away from school for a holiday. A leave of absence will only be given for exceptional circumstances. The school may request a Penalty Notice for over 10 sessions of unauthorised absence where the student's attendance falls below 95%.

## **Relevant Legislation/Guidance**

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist. The regulations also stated that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for 'exceptional circumstances'. This legislation expects that any term time leave must be requested in advance, in writing, direct to the Headteacher, and this should come from the person with whom the child normally resides, must be authorised by the person with whom the child normally resides. The Headteacher will then determine whether the reason is exceptional.

Exceptional circumstances **may** include:

- Emergency service / forces personnel with proof of enforced holiday period
- Forces personnel returning from or embarking on active service.
- Holiday industry employees with proof of this being the **ONLY** time period allowed by employer
- A transcontinental leave request to see a terminally ill close relative.

In addition, in 2015 Somerset County Council further clarified the definitions for leave in term time as the following:-

- Rare
- Significant
- Unavoidable
- Short

By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Any other requests for leave during term time, such as educational or sporting trips/visits will be looked at on an individual basis on receipt of a written request. The following criteria would, in such circumstances, be taken into account:

- Number of days requested
- Is the request in reasonable time (received at least three weeks prior to first date of proposed absence)
- What will the student be missing during the period of absence? (e.g. exams, controlled assessments, key revision period etc.)
- Is it in the child's best interests?
- Current attendance of the student

If a child has been absent from school due to illness/other authorised circumstance, but the school has reason to believe that the absence would not in actual fact fit that criteria (e.g. the student is actually on a holiday etc.) the school will request additional supporting evidence and unauthorise the absence unless this evidence is received.

If a leave of absence in term time is requested the following procedure must be followed:

- Parents should complete a form from the school office and return it to the school office (see example in Appendix 2)
- If the request is due to work commitments preventing time off at other times then evidence from the workplace should be provided.

### **Additional guidance**

The government made updates to School Attendance in May 2022. Full information can be found here:

- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1073591/School\\_attendance\\_guidance\\_May-2022.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1073591/School_attendance_guidance_May-2022.pdf)

### **Penalty Notices**

The school follows DfE guidance and will take legal action against parents/carers who do not send their children to school regularly. We do try to work with parents to ensure there are no barriers to school attendance. If strategies for supporting regular attendance do not work, the school will take legal action.

In the first instance, a Penalty Notice will be issued. If this does not result in improved attendance, a fine will be issued (Appendix 3). The school works closely with the Education Safeguarding Service to ensure full attendance and adherence to procedures.

At Court Fields School, regular attendance is classed as attendance of 96% or more. Attendance below this level could result in the issue of a Warning Penalty Notice, Penalty Notice or court action.

### **Strategic Planning and Data Analysis:**

Court Fields uses ClassCharts to analyse data daily, tracking absent students and ensuring key staff follow up where appropriate. A weekly attendance summary table ensures gaps and trends are monitored regularly and acted upon. Heads of Year meet with the Pastoral Manager fortnightly to plan actions and next steps for families where absence is a concern, alongside securing the implementation of the attendance flow chart (Appendix 3). Heads of Year meet the AHT Pastoral weekly in link meetings to review attendance. Attendance is a regular focus on the Strategic Leadership Team's meeting agendas, as well as Year group Raising Achievement Plan (RAP) meetings. Year teams meet every term to ensure Year group RAPs review data and tackle PA.

### **Reducing persistent (<90%) and severe (<50%) absence:**

At Court Fields School, there is a relentless drive to ensure that students get the best opportunities. We have high expectations to support this vision. Therefore, we will actively challenge families to access support available to secure their child's attendance at school. This may involve: working with the Pastoral Manager, gaining consent to place the family on the agenda at a half termly Team Around the School meeting. There may be a need to involve wider support services to understand how to remove the attendance barriers best, including SEN services, CAMHS, ESS, CSC, FIS, PFSA and others. More recently, the Somerset Educational Psychology team have produced information and resources linked to emotional based school avoidance, which the school will use to improve persistent and severe absence.

### **Procedures in Place to Ensure Good Attendance**

**First Day Calling:** Wherever possible parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence via a text message. The Pastoral Assistant/Manager may also call key students. These are students whose attendance is being monitored by the Heads of Year.

**Absences:** Parents are requested to contact the school on the first day of absence. The attendance will be authorised via the Pastoral Manager or Pastoral Assistant. If there is any doubt about a reason, the school will contact parents to query the reason. If the school is not satisfied with the reasons given, it will unauthorise the absence and in some cases will request further evidence. The absence flow chart will be followed in regard to this and future absence.

**Medical reasons:** If the school requires more information about a medical condition, or is not satisfied with a reason, consent may be sought from the parent/carer to contact the GP directly. If permission is not given, the school will expect the parent/carer to provide necessary medical information themselves. The absence flow chart will be followed in regard to this and future absence.

**Truancy:** Heads of Year conduct spot checks on students to check for truancy. Teachers are required to maintain electronic registers and use SIMS data to check absences, particularly if

a student has truanted previously. Sanctions for truancy will be given in line with the behaviour policy.

Students will be expected to spend at least the equivalent of the time missed in detention and this will be arranged by the Head of Year. Truancy for a whole day should be punished by an equivalent number of hours at break, lunch or after school (An S3 Sanction as per the behaviour policy). Internal Suspension during lesson time is not to be used to punish truancy: it rewards students for truanting a lesson by then keeping them out of the lesson they wished to miss in the first place.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Executive Headteacher:

Mrs S Watson

### **Post Holders at Court Fields School:**

Acting Headteacher:

Mrs P Matthews

Assistant Head with responsibility for attendance:

Mrs S Westwood

Pastoral Manager:

Mrs S Heggadon

Attendance Pastoral Assistant:

Mrs A Lowe

Achievement for All Centre Manager:

Mrs H Towler-Williams

Data Manager

Mrs K Reed



**APPENDIX 2**

**REQUEST FOR TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Reminder to parents/carers: there is no automatic right to holidays within term time. We believe that children need to be in school to make the most of their education. There are situations which may be authorised, please refer to the Attendance Policy for further details. If your request is not authorised you run the risk of being fined.

NAME(S) OF STUDENT(S) ..... TUTOR GROUP(S) .....

If you have children in another school who will also require leave of absence please give their names and school.

NAME(S) ..... SCHOOL .....

Please state your reasons for requesting term time leave of absence. If this is because your employer will not grant holiday during school holidays please attach a supporting letter from your employer:

**DATES REQUESTED:**

**FROM:** ..... **TO:** ..... (inclusive)

Please continue overleaf if necessary

**Please return this form to the Front Office.**

A confirmation letter will be sent to you by post once a decision has been made.

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**For office use only:**

**Current Attendance Percentage:** ..... %

Leave of absence authorised? **YES/NO** By whom ..... Date .....

Reason:

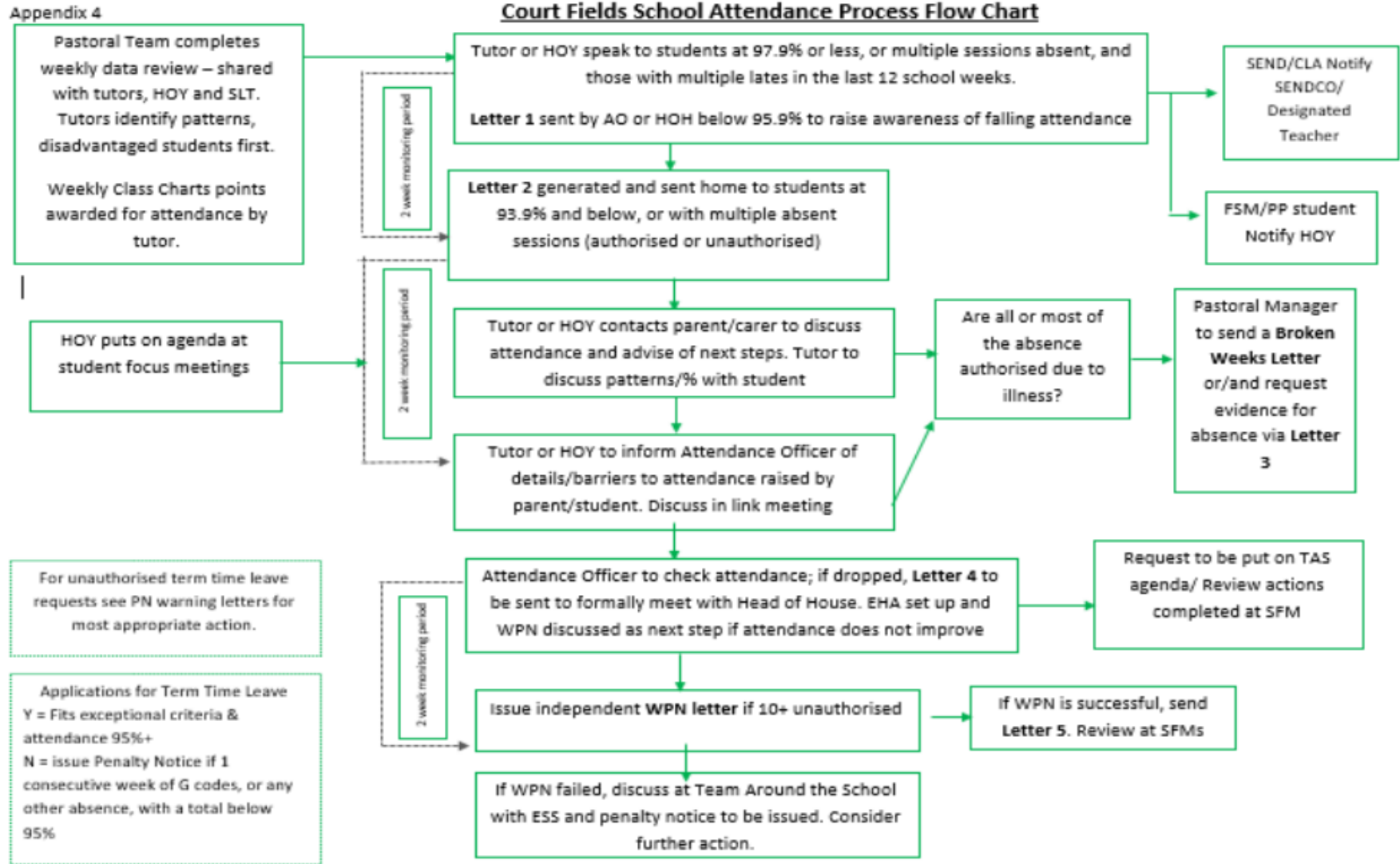
Parents informed? **YES/NO** by whom ..... Date .....

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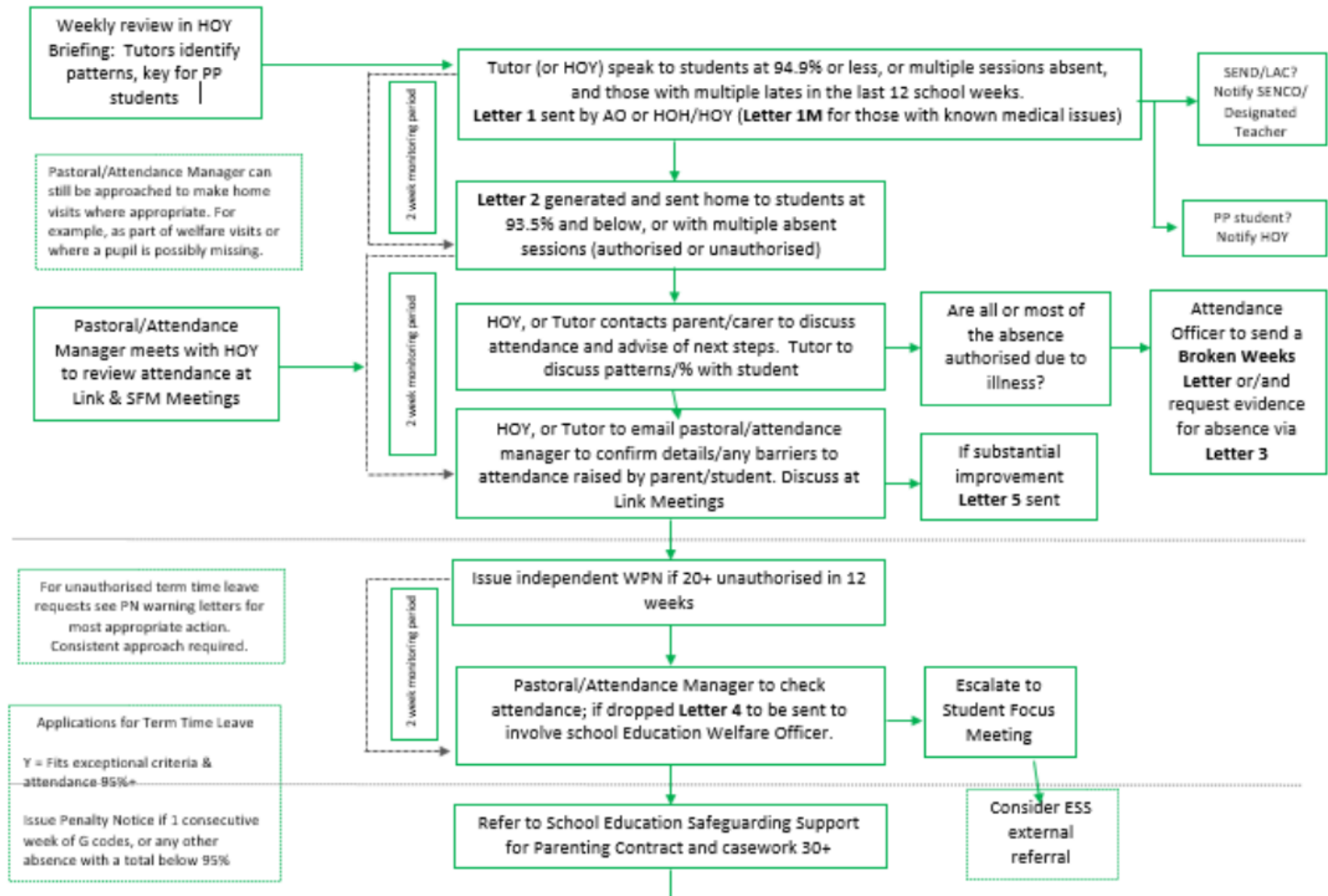
**APPENDIX 3  
ATTENDANCE TRACKING SYSTEMS**

<b>WEEKLY</b>	<b>FORTNIGHTLY</b>	<b>HALF-TERMLY</b>
<p>Tutors provided with Official Register Report for previous 4 weeks. Look at patterns/session absence. Follow-up 1:1 with students</p> <p>SLT/HOY/HOH provided with Attendance Pack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance Tracker</li> <li>• PA Tracker</li> <li>• Broken Weeks Tracker</li> <li>• Late Report</li> </ul> <p>SENCO provided with key attendance information, leading to targeted actions</p> <p>Disadvantage Lead provided with key attendance information, leading to targeted actions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOY RAG and annotate PA Tracker with actions/next steps and discussed at AHT link meetings</p> <p>Pastoral Manager and Pastoral Assistants actions Letters in line with Attendance Flow Chart</p>	<p>HOY provided with Attendance Concerns Tracker (90-92%) Evaluate for session absence. Annotate tracker and RAG. Follow up with Pastoral Manager at Link &amp; Student Focus Meetings</p> <p>Tutors and HOY individual meetings with students below 95%. Follow-up letter to parents/carers</p> <p>Liaison with School Education Safeguarding Support). EHA, Parenting Contracts and home visits actioned. Liaison with Pastoral Manager re WPN/PN requests.</p> <p>Pastoral Manager and Pastoral Assistants actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PN requests</li> <li>• WPN requests</li> <li>• Referrals via TAS for EWS casework</li> </ul>	<p>Tutors provided with Tutor Attendance Tracker (92-94.9%). Evaluate for session absence. Put in place actions and RAG. Annotate tracker and update HOY</p> <p>Pastoral Manager review half termly attendance with SLT Attendance Lead</p> <p>Student Focus Meeting HOY/Pastoral Manager, SENCO, Assistant Headteacher (CFS) Meets to discuss barriers to attendance, identify support and effective rewards</p> <p>Report to Governors regarding attendance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rewards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificates for 95+/100%</li> <li>• Prize draws</li> <li>• Attendance contracts/incentives</li> <li>• 100 Club (CFS)</li> <li>• 100% Attendance badges (annually)</li> </ul>





## Court Fields Attendance Process Flow Chart



We would like to remind you about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

Missing lessons makes it hard to catch up and students have to work harder when they come back. Students attend school for 190 days per year; there are 175 non-school days a year for holiday, cultural experiences and family time. Any child with attendance of 90% or below is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) by the Government. Every school is required to take action to work with families to improve attendance. It may be useful for you to know what attendance figures mean for your child.

<b>100%</b>	<b>Excellent Attendance</b>
<b>Above 98%</b>	<b>Good Attendance</b> Students with attendance above 98% have had less than 4 days of absence in the year
<b>Below 96%</b>	If your child's attendance drops below 96% you will receive a letter highlighting this
<b>94%</b>	If your child's attendance drops to 94% you will receive a letter and be asked to attend a meeting
<b>92%</b>	If your child's attendance drops to 92% the Pastoral Manager and/or Education Safeguarding Officer (EWS) will become involved
<b>90% and below.</b>	<b>Persistent Absentee (PA) as defined by the Department for Education (DfE).</b> Students with 90% attendance have had 19 days over the year Students with this attendance level are missing a month of school per year and may drop at least one GCSE grade. Parents of students with this level of attendance may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice or have legal action taken against them
<b>85%</b>	<b>Exceptionally Low Attendance/Persistent Absentee</b> Students with 85% attendance have had 29 days' absence over the year. These students are missing 6 weeks of a school year; it will be <u>very</u> difficult for them to keep up with work and they are likely to drop more than one GCSE grade. It is highly likely that a Fixed Penalty Notice will have been served and should attendance not improve significantly after this, a referral will be made for legal action to be taken against parents for failure to ensure that their child attends school regularly

### Reporting an Absence

- All absences must be reported by 9.30 am each day (and on each subsequent day) by either calling the absence line or emailing the relevant school.
- If you know your child is going to be absent, please let us know in advance. If your child has been absent due to a medical appointment, please attach or email in a copy of the appointment card/hospital letter.
- Medical Evidence **may** be required if your child has a prolonged absence of more than three days. Medical Evidence **must** be produced if we have previously written to you stating that no further absence due to illness will be authorised without it.

### Punctuality

Arriving late to school and into lesson is very disruptive for the teacher and other class members. It also means that late student themselves miss important input from teachers and/or tutors.

If for whatever reason, you know your child will be arriving late, please call the absence line or provide your child with a written note.