

# Serenity School

## Attendance Policy

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## Serenity School Attendance Policy

Serenity school prides itself on a good record of attendance and believes that good attendance is a clear indication that pupils are happy in the school environment and subscribe to its learning culture. The school recognizes that regular attendance is not just a legal requirement but a contributory factor in raising educational standards. Our expectations on attendance are in the best interests of the pupils. Parental support where attendance is concerned, is paramount.

We are committed to providing a full, effective, and efficient education to all pupils (The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7) and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Pupils with 100% attendance will receive a certificate in assembly each week and will be put into a draw for a weekly prize. At the end of term, all pupils with 100% will receive a certificate and a prize. Throughout the term, regular letters or phone calls will be made home to commend high attendance.

This policy contains within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

## School Procedures for Monitoring Attendance

All pupils are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year unless there is a justified reason for absence. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorized, unauthorized or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). If there is no reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorized. The Office Manager and Attendance Officer will monitor attendance daily by keeping registers to record attendance of all pupils.

To ensure that attendance is monitored effectively, Serenity School has an Attendance Officer who is responsible for contacting parents and liaising closely with tutors and reporting back to the Headteacher for students in KS3-5. The Attendance Officer also collates and analyses attendance data to identify trends and to enable action to be taken should it be necessary.

## Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year as set out in the SDP. The Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance against target. **Our overall school target 2023: 92%**. Additional targets are also set for persistent absenteeism and school refusing pupils.

## Registration

Registration is a legal requirement and by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Registers are a daily record of the attendance of all pupils and may be required in a court of law, for example, as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. The attendance register has to be called at the start of each morning and afternoon session and must show whether each pupil registered at the school is present or absent. This is recorded on BROMCOM MIS.

Pupils must be physically present at registration to receive a mark. It is not acceptable to mark a pupil present because that pupil has been seen in school.

## Registration Codes

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
	Cancelled	Cancelled
#	Cancelled	Planned whole or partial school closure - not counted in possible attendances
/	Present	Present
?	Missing Mark	Precreation Mark
\	Present	Present (PM)
0	Authorised Absent	I: Confirmed Case of COVID-19
7	Cancelled	X: Self-Isolating (Contact with Outside)
8	Cancelled	X: Self-Isolating (Contact with Covid Case)
8	Cancelled	X: Self-Isolating (Contact with Inside)
9	Cancelled	X: Suspected Case of COVID-19
B	Educational Activity	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)
C	Authorised Absent	Other authorised circumstance
D	Cancelled	Dual registration
E	Authorised Absent	Excluded
F	Authorised Absent	Extended family holiday
G	Unauthorised Absent	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Authorised Absent	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Authorised Absent	Illness
J	Educational Activity	Interview
L	Present	Late before reg. closed
M	Authorised Absent	Medical/dental
N	Unauthorised Absent	No reason yet provided
O	Unauthorised Absent	Unauthorised absence
P	Educational Activity	Approved sporting activity
R	Authorised Absent	Religious observance
S	Authorised Absent	Study leave
T	Authorised Absent	Traveller absence
U	Unauthorised Absent	Late after reg. closed
V	Educational Activity	Educational visit
W	Educational Activity	Work experience
X	Cancelled	Non-comp school age absence
Y	Cancelled	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Z	Cancelled	Pupil not yet on roll

## Lateness

As a school, we actively discourage lateness and will monitor patterns of recurrent lateness which could provide grounds for prosecution.

Pupils who are late disrupt their own education and that of others. Recurrent patterns of lateness or persistent lateness may warrant the intervention of the Attendance Improvement officer. Should the school find that the pupil is not responding to warnings and interventions implemented by the school and that punctuality continues to deteriorate, he/she will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

In the secondary and sixth form phases, every student is expected to be in school by 9:30am and are to be present in their form room, after which time they will be registered as late. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. An absence note will be required. The afternoon registration will begin at 12.30pm, where registers will remain open for 30 minutes.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

Continuing and/or regular lateness (which is considered as being late more than 3 times in a row or in a week) will be challenged by the Attendance Officer. After 3 unauthorised late marks, a letter will be sent out to parents to enquire about the reasons for the student being late. If lateness improves, no further action will be taken. If lateness continues, a phone call or a meeting may be scheduled with the family. A Fixed Penalty Notice Request may be forwarded to the LA for consideration, if a pupil continues accruing unauthorised late marks, following a written and verbal warning sent to parents.

## Absence

There are only two types of absence:

- a) authorised (where the school approves a pupil's absence);
- b) unauthorised (where the school does not approve a pupil's absence).

All pupils of compulsory school age will be expected to attend school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is unable to attend because of clinical and/or public health advice, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, we will:

Follow up on their absence with their parents or carers, by telephone call, text and email, and notify their social worker, where they have one.

## Authorised Absence

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be out of school or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for absence.

Although school attendance is mandatory, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school and an absence may be authorised. See below the categories of authorised absence, which can be granted by the Headteacher, such as Family holidays in exceptional circumstances, medical, days of religious observance, interviews, study leave, exclusions & COVID-19.

## Categories of Authorised Absence

### Family Holidays during term time

Parents do not have the right to take pupils on holiday during term time. The school has the right, however, to grant authorised absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents can request leave in advance using the Leave of Absence Request Form. Parents must specify which dates they plan to travel, on which date the pupil will return from leave, giving reasons for why the trip is necessary during term-time. The Headteacher will then respond to the request in writing. Where permission is not granted, the Headteacher will provide reasons and outline the potential consequences, should the family still decide to travel.

A Leave of Absence Request Form may be obtained from the School Office. It must be completed and submitted to the office at least fourteen days before the first day of intended absence.

The Headteacher will, when deciding whether to permit the absence, take into account the following points:

- Prior attendance.
- Examinations.
- Reason given.
- Exceptional circumstances.

If the Headteacher does not permit the absence and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence will be counted as unauthorised and parents are likely to be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. Each request will be judged on a case by case basis.

If parents keep their child away for longer than was agreed, the extra time will also be counted as unauthorised.

A pupil who does not return to school within twenty school days of the agreed return date, or parents do not provide the school with another return date, may lose their school place unless there is a justifiable reason for the prolonged absence.

### Medical

Illness or an appointment with a doctor or dentist may be treated as an authorised absence. Every effort should be made to make the appointment after school or during school holiday. An appointment card should be provided to the office or a note from the GP.

Where attendance falls below 95% over the period of a term, or where there is a pattern of recurrent absence, medical evidence should be presented in order for the absences to be authorised.

### **Examples of medical evidence include:**

- Medical Appointment Card confirming attendance.
- Medical Appointment Letter.
- Copy of Prescription showing name and date.
- Prescribed medication with Pharmacist label showing name and date.
- Unfit for School declaration from GP/Consultant.
- Hospital discharge letter.

A home visit may be required if medical evidence is unavailable for absence of 3 days or more. Authorisation of absence will then be at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Absence of 5 days or more and absence prior to, or following, a school closure may also be followed up with a Home Visit in order to ensure the safeguarding of children absent from school.

Home Visits may also be necessary should absence not be reported or explained. In some cases, home visits may be conducted during school closures.

### Days of religious observance

Children may stay away on days set aside for their religion – such as Eid for Muslims and the Jewish Rosh Hashanah.

Where a religious observance is for one day, extra days for festivities will not be authorised.

### Interviews

An interview for a job or for a school or college place confirmed by a letter of invitation will be authorised.

Absence for interview during Years 6, 11 and 13 for the above purposes will be recorded as 'approved educational activity'.

### Study leave

Study leave may be granted for Year 11 and 13 only at the discretion of the Headteacher and will not, but for exceptional circumstances, exceed fifteen school days unless with the discretion of the Head teacher.

### Child caring for a sick or disabled relative

A child cannot legally be made to stay at home to look after a sick relative.

### Exclusions

A pupil who has been excluded for a fixed period remains on school roll and the absence will be treated as authorised. The absence of a pupil who has been excluded permanently will be treated as authorised for the first five school days; dual registration from the sixth day, (the School will provide suitable full-time education) while any review or appeal is in progress.

In the case of permanent exclusion, the pupil's name will be removed from the school roll on the first school day after the day on which:

- the independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion;
- the independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion but does not direct reinstatement;
- the prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal;
- the parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in writing that he/she does not intend to appeal.

Until such time, the absence will be recorded as stated.

### Coronavirus (COVID-19)

During a pandemic such as Corona Virus (COVID-19), we will resume taking our attendance register. We will also follow guidance from the Department for Education on how to record attendance and what data to submit.

Pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’ should be recorded using code **X**.

Examples in which ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID 19)’ could apply:

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms of confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

Attendance Codes used in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19):

Mark	Type	Description
#	Cancelled	Planned Whole or partial school closure (not counted in possible attendances)
0	Authorised Absent	I: Confirmed Case of COVID-19
7	Cancelled	X: Self-Isolating (Contact with Outside)
8	Cancelled	X: Self-Isolating (Contact with COVID Case)
8	Cancelled	X: Self Isolating (Contact with Inside)
9	Cancelled	X: Suspected Case of COVID-19

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), Serenity school will offer access to remote education. This will include a variety of online resources and virtual platforms. To ensure learning is being accessed, parents and carers will need to ensure pupils are engaging with the material sent out and return this to the school, or virtual lessons are being accessed. Serenity School will keep a record of and monitor engagement with the activity. Non engagement will follow the same procedure as unauthorised absence (letters will be sent out, phone calls made, meetings scheduled, etc.).

In the case of absences or non-engagement for children who are LAC/CIN/TAF/CP, the social worker and/or case worker must be contacted to ascertain the whereabouts and wellbeing of the student. Any concerns regarding attendance, lateness, or school engagement must be communicated with all

relevant professionals involved in the child's case to ensure the students wellbeing.

In addition to the virtual learning, weekly welfare calls will be made during these times to all students, and at least once a week the staff member must speak to the child. If a parent refuses or does not cooperate with this, this may be flagged up as a safeguarding incident and followed up by the Safeguarding Lead.

Other

The school has the discretion to authorise absence in the following cases:

- a traveller child travelling.
- family bereavements.
- family prison visits.
- special occasions (e.g., family wedding but not birthdays);
- public performances/film or TV work (under Local Authority licence).

## Unauthorised Absence

If a pupil arrives after registration closes, it is regarded as an unauthorised absence. A written explanation is essential. The School will contact parents on the same day or as soon as possible thereafter to seek a justifiable explanation for the absence from lessons to see whether it is a form of truancy and will be treated as such. Any explanations provided afterwards, must be given to the school within 10 school days of the absence after which point, it will be treated as unauthorised.

If the school does not receive notification of absence on the morning of the first day of absence, the Office Administrator will contact the parent/carer by phone and send a text message that day. In the event of three consecutive days of absence the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and Headteacher will be informed of unexplained absence, a letter will be sent home requesting contact.

The school has a documented flowchart for patterns of behaviours to consider when addressing the absences of pupils by category (CHIN, LAC, CP) therefore ascertaining a pupil's whereabouts and safety and the next course of action. Where an attendance referral is made, the school's Education Welfare Officer will carry out an unannounced home visit, amongst other checks, to establish the safety and whereabouts of the pupil.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absences; parents do not have this power. The Education Welfare Officer or other appointed school staff need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person, if they doubt the explanation. It is for the school to judge whether the explanation given is satisfactory justification for the absence.

Serenity School follows the DfE guidance in categorising two types of unauthorised absence: child-initiated truancy and parentally condoned unauthorised absence. They amount to the same thing: the unauthorised absence of a pupil of compulsory school age.

Parents who condone unauthorised absence, e.g. take their children shopping on a school day, are helping them to play truant. If this happens, parents are liable to prosecution.

Excessive Absence

Excessive absence of any sort, authorised or unauthorised, can seriously disrupt the continuity of



learning and encourage disaffection. As a school, we will work closely with the Educational Welfare Officer to identify and investigate emerging patterns of absence by individual pupils or groups of pupils.

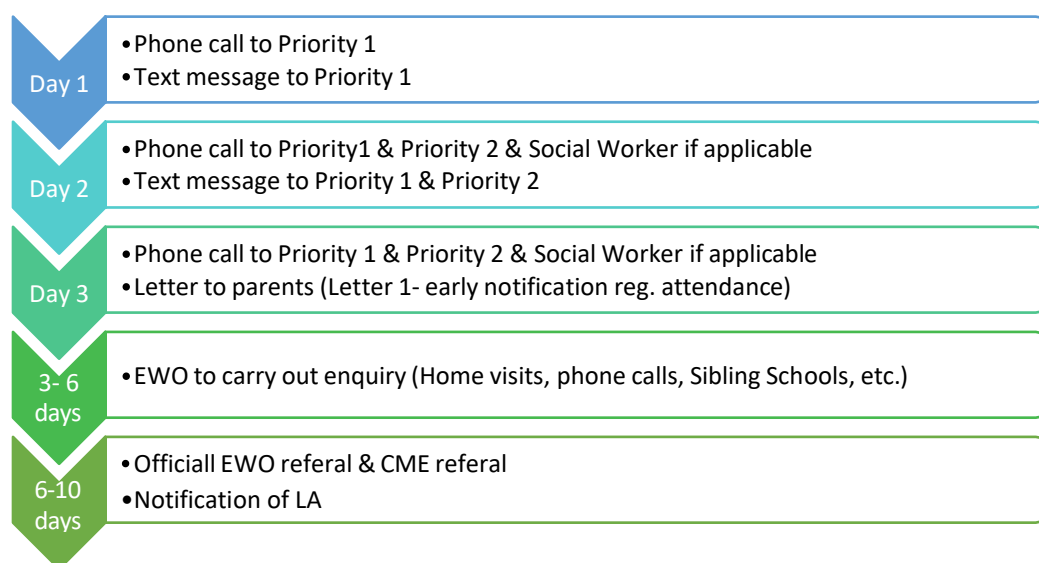
Where there are genuine concerns that persistent absence is the result of, for example, school phobia, the school will liaise with the SENDCO and the EWO to make special provision for the pupil. The pupil's timetable may be amended and/or adjustments made to the pupil's school arrival and departure times, if appropriate.

Since 2000, it has been possible for parents of truanting children to be fined up to £2500 or imprisoned for up to three months and be subject to a criminal record.

Parents can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for lateness and for unauthorised absences, including extended holidays. The penalty increases after 21 calendar days. If this is still unpaid after 28 days, the parent could be subject to legal action.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to each person with parental responsibility for each child that has accrued unauthorised absences. E.g. If two adults with parental responsibility take two children on an unauthorised holiday, each parent will receive two FPNs; one for each child.

## Procedure for School Absences



### First Day Absence

If a child is absent, Parents/Carers will be expected to contact the school office and leave a message stating the name of the pupil and reason for absence before 9:20am. If a call has not been received by 10:00am, the school Office Administrator will contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence. This information will then be recorded as required.

### Day 2-3 Absence

If a child remains absent for more than 2 consecutive days, phone calls should continue to be made to priority 1 and priority 2 contacts. In the case of children who are CIN/CP/LAC/TAF/etc. the social worker must also be contacted to ascertain the whereabouts of the student.

In the case that the school has not received any information by the third day, a letter will be sent out by the Education Welfare Officer, requesting parents to make contact and to explain absences.

The process outlined below must be followed from the first day of absence and as soon as contact is made with the parent and/or the pupil returns to school, attendance should be monitored in line with the most appropriate process. Where no contact is made with the parent following the process below, the CME process should be triggered.

When attendance falls below 95% attendance (more than 3 days absence)

Deteriorating attendance must be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity in order to promote the development of good habits and prevent further absences from accruing.

When a pupil finishes an academic year at the expected level of attendance of 95%, they would essentially have been absent for 10 school days. Our role is to maintain this level of attendance so that the pupil is not adversely affected by non-attendance at school. When attendance drops below 95% over a period of time, parents may not necessarily be aware of this in which case, the school will inform the parents of this at the earliest opportunity. The school will also send a letter to parents reminding them of their legal obligation to ensure regular attendance at school, to inform them that their child's attendance has dropped below the expected level of attendance, that it will continue to be monitored and that a further deterioration in attendance will lead to attendance intervention possibly from the Educational Welfare Officer.

Where pupil's attendance has dropped below 95% attendance primarily due to sickness absence, the Sickness Absence Leaflet may be attached to a letter and sent out as an attempt to deter further absences.

6-10 days of Absence

In the case that a child has been missing from education for 6-10 days, the Education Welfare Officer is to action a referral carrying out relevant checks to ascertain whereabouts of pupil(s); Home Visit, neighbours, calls, letters, sibling schools, sibling school EWO, check with any other involved professionals and so on.

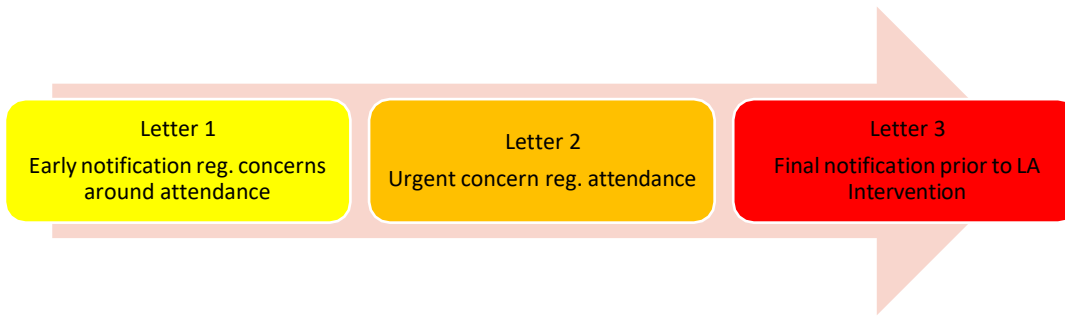
If the child is not located, the in-house Education Welfare Officer will complete a CME referral with the Headteacher, attaching all evidence of interventions from the school. The in-house EWO might also contact the local borough and consult with the Education Welfare Office to gain support.

If pupil is located and evidence suggests that they will not return to School, then Education Welfare Officer to forward all information to the school to complete an Off-Roll Notification Form attaching all evidence gathered. This is to be forward to the Local Authority and the School to continue sending letters on Day 6 and 9, as usual.

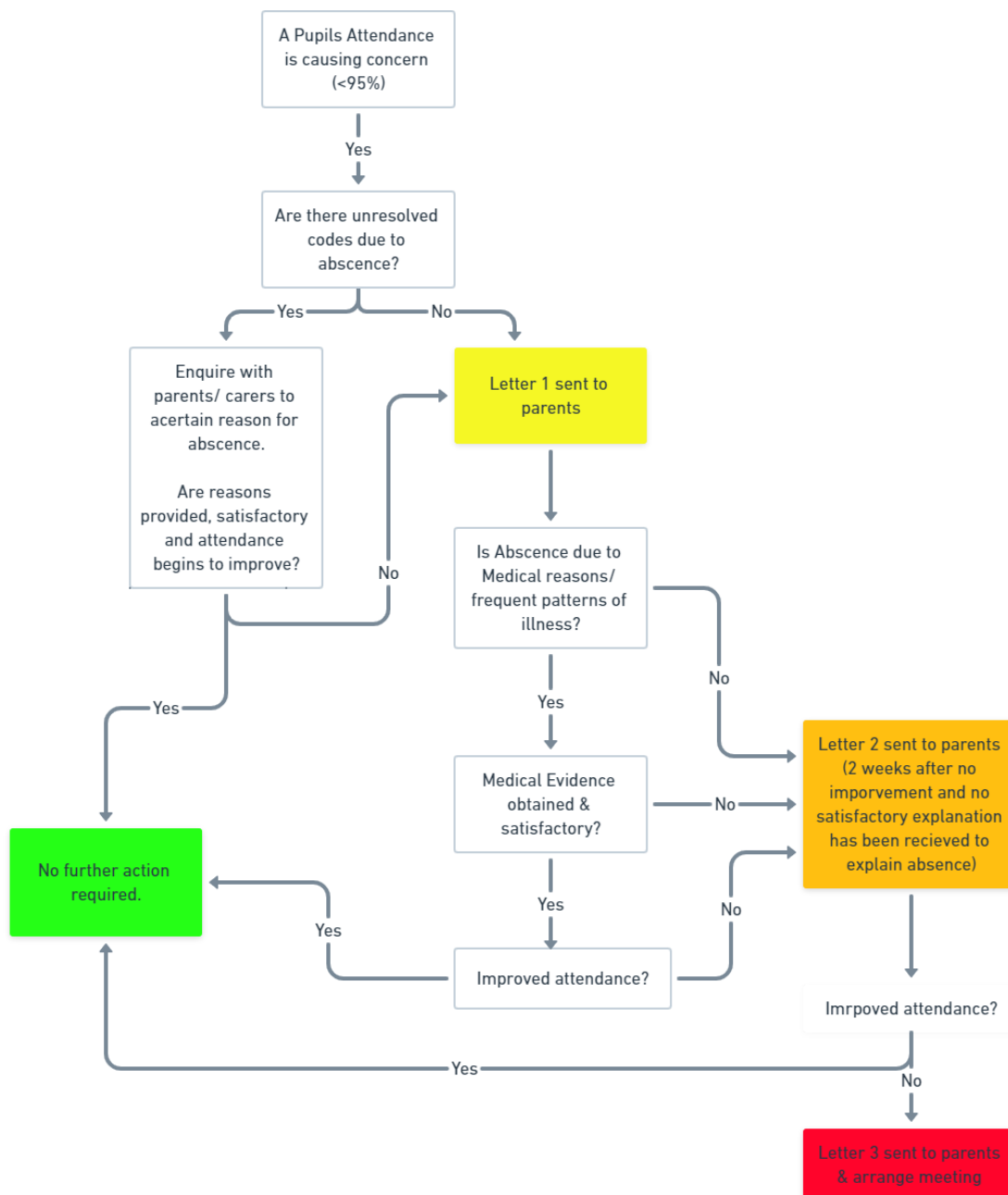
The Office Administrator, EWO, and Headteacher will work and liaise closely throughout this process, however the overarching responsibility will be the Headteacher.

Letters

There is a three-tier letter of response to unexplained absences during the first three days where the final letter will be sent home requesting a meeting between the parents and the school.



## Flowchart for Procedures of Absences



## Procedure for Challenging Sickness Absences Rationale

All absences must be explored from the first day as a measure of safeguarding pupils. Once the reason for absence is known and/or contact with the parent is made, the school can discern between the absence management processes to decide which is most applicable and thereafter follow that process. To promote consistency in approaching and reducing persistence absenteeism related to sickness absences, a process has been outlined.

## Termly Trigger Framework

A case by case approach would be used when managing absences pertaining to sickness. Understandably, it is difficult to judge when intervening and/or challenging such absences is appropriate given the sensitivity of the situation. However, an intervention at school and/or Education Welfare Officer level can be explorative and supportive as opposed to punitive or disciplinary. The view of the intervention initially is to promote pupil attendance and explore the barriers with suggestions of how they may be overcome.

In order to support the school in identifying when it would be appropriate to do this, pupils' absences will be monitored against the Termly Trigger Framework below:

**Term 1 - Illness absences exceeds 4 days**

**Term 2 - Illness absences exceeds 7 days (cumulative)**

**Term 3 - Illness absences exceeds 10 days (cumulative)**

When absences exceed the days listed here, the pupil's attendance would have dropped below 95% giving the school sufficient justification to intervene. Once such a trigger is hit, the school, with support from the EWO if required, would consider the following:

- other absences and reasons for those absences (O, L, U, Es etc)
- historic attendance patterns
- sibling attendance patterns
- pupil's medical history/background
- parental engagement levels
- views of the Tutor and/or other school staff members
- whether explanations provided for absences seem authentic

These considerations can be made internally amongst school staff (and EWO, if required) and next steps can then be discussed. Possible interventions may include:

- to continue monitoring attendance,
- invite parents for an informal meeting,
- attendance clinic with the EWO
- request evidence for future absences
- propose an Early Help Assessment
- meet with the pupil/attendance clinic with EWO and pupil
- meeting between pupil and Tutor
- make appropriate referrals, if relevant/appropriate e.g. counselling
- write to the parent
- send a leaflet regarding sickness absences
- a letter highlighting concerns

- a telephone call to the parent

We will ensure that all interventions are evidenced and that the outcomes of the interventions are shared with all relevant professionals.

Should these suggested interventions fail to reduce genuine sickness absence and it is felt that absences are not for genuine reasons, then they may be unauthorised, consequently triggering the Fast-Track process. This process addresses the accruing of unauthorised absences with the potential of legal action being taken should attendance drop below 85%. If attendance is above 85% but unauthorised absences have been accrued, it may be appropriate to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice following a warning letter to that effect, from the school.

It is valuable to remember that a pupil is considered a persistent absentee once their attendance falls below 85% irrespective of the reasons for absence; whether they are authorised or not. As a result, pupils absent due to sickness are likely to be impacted in ways similar to their peers who may be truanting. This is likely to be reflected in their friendships, attainment levels, levels of motivation, attitude towards their education, importance attached to attendance and increase the possibility of engaging in non-academic activities outside of school.

## Support

Identified pupils with specific medical, therapy or Special Educational needs, who have a high level of absence, will be supported by the following strategies:

- Weekly monitoring of attendance and absence
- Recording absence as authorised
- Working with the Local Authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance as good as can be expected for these pupils and the school
- Provide home visits where appropriate including use of transition and home learning packages offered by Serenity School.
- Recognise that some pupils are not 'available for learning' and work with the LA and other agencies to allocate appropriate provision which may not be within our school

## Use of data

The governing body is registered with the Data Protection Registrar in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Attendance data is used on reports and in references and in applications to institutes of further education.

The Attendance Officer will collate attendance statistics as required by the SLT.