

Whole School Attendance Policy 2023-24

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

All members of our school understand that our pupils may be absent due to medical reasons such as seizures, operations and low immunity. When this is the case, the school will support the child and their family and make reasons known to the local authority attendance team.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- Celebrate high attendance when appropriate by sending home certificates;
- Report to you regularly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality is and if attendance is a concern, you will be contacted;
- Work with parents/carers, carers, health professionals and social care to help increase attendance;
- Develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents/carers, pupils, staff and governors.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorised 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences that have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time, which have not been agreed;
- Days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher.

It is the policy of the school to request an appointment card or letter, in order for an absence to be authorised. If there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents/carers before an absence is authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription, appointment card, or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school, it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to disguise their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) (see Appendix 2):

From September 2015, a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year, for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carers' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absences thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents/carers will be informed of this promptly. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with monitoring progress towards individual targets.

For all pupils who are identified as A PA, the school has identified individual actions matched to the needs of the pupils and their family. Due to the serious nature of persistent absence, school will initially support raising attendance and if this is not successful, school will consider requesting support from the local authority attendance team, in order to address the matter. School will also consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices, or use other sanctions, as a means of improving attendance. If the reason for your child's absence is severe illness, seizure related or due to hospitalisation and recuperation, the school will ensure the attendance team is aware of the circumstances and only supportive action will be taken.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact school by 9.30am on the first day of absence, either by phone, in person at the school or via the school app, School Spider.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence, if we have not heard from you;
- Discuss the situation with the Headteacher;
- Our family welfare team will attempt to make contact by phone and will send a letter or invite you in to discuss the situation, if absences persist;
- Consider using parenting contracts or panel meetings, in order to identify barriers to regular attendance and agree targets for improvement;

- Refer the matter to the local authority school attendance team, where appropriate;
- Consider requesting that the local authority issue penalty notices in accordance with LCC's Code of Conduct, or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate, in order to improve attendance.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times.

Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality (see Appendix 2):

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and work with us in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School, however, may consider using the following strategies to help support parents/carers in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality:

- Meetings between school parents/carers, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;
- Use of parenting contracts;
- Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and/or referral to outside agencies (including the local authority school attendance team);
- Use of attendance panels;
- Use of penalty notices;
- Referrals for legal action.

The Local Authority School Attendance Service:

If difficulties cannot be resolved using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). PAST will also support school in trying to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents/carers in achieving improved levels of attendance.

Use of Legal Measures:

Red Marsh School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil fail, and we consider attendance to be irregular and where absences are unauthorised, the case may be referred to the School Attendance Legal Team (SALT), who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority.

Lateness which is not the result of health issues, medical appointments or LCC transport issues:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable unless there is a valid reason, such as an agreed late start due to health issues or LCC transport issues. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. If your child misses the start of the day, their routines are disrupted and this can lead to difficulties settling into classes. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

At **9.45am/1.20pm** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulation, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, 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.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the pastoral/welfare team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Leave in Term Time:

It is important that parents/carers understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time, unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents/carers, to be exceptional.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent/carer of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form', available from the school office

Exceptional circumstances are 'one off' events that would not occur on an annual basis' – e.g. a wedding, a funeral and a graduation.

If you are granted an exception holiday wish provided by a charity, it is important that you have evidence that you have requested the holiday is taken during school holiday time. If you are granted a wish outside of this time, you will need to provide evidence of this to share with the school.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise **one day** of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent/carer is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents/carers must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Participation in sporting events:

Parents/carers can request leave of absence for their child to take part in regional, national and international sporting events. However, as always, granting leave is at the Headteachers discretion and he/she will need to discuss with you the length and frequency of the absence(s) requested and how learning will continue if absence occurs, eg the sports club or association providing an approved education tutor.

Leave for a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school can be marked in the register as code P.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late in order to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is unlikely to be approved if it would occur regularly.

Alternative provision and use of directions:

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

- When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons;
- When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:

A key element of the work of our school is reducing the amount of time missed by pupils who are unwell; whether their condition is short or long-term. The school will continue to work with parents/carers and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents/carers:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually;
- Contact school on the 1st day of absence;
- Avoid any leave in term time, but if unavoidable/exceptional, apply in advance in writing, clearly stating the reason why the leave is unavoidable/exceptional;
- Attendance at meetings in school
- Participation and cooperation in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies.

Pupils:

- Attend school when you are in good health.

Headteacher/(School Attendance Lead):

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school;
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters;
- Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities;
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance;
- Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria and decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents/carers of this decision;
- Where there is ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence, to support the decision making process.

Designated Staff:

- First day response: The school office;
- Contact parents/carers if a reason for absence has not been provided and log this information accordingly;
- Input and update the attendance registers;
- Regularly identify and monitor pupil attendance for every pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups;
- Communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents/carers;
- Family welfare team will co-ordinate work with children and parents/carers to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

All School Staff:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment;
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns;
- To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance;
- To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff;
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended;
- Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly;
- Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy;
- Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures;
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests;
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is

important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

Expectations regarding regular attendance:

As a school, we aim whenever possible to have all of our pupils in school every day. We recognise that pupils may have absences at times due to illness and other unavoidable causes, such as hospital appointments. We, however, aim to reduce unauthorised absence and to work with parents/carers and pupils to minimise absence where possible. Through the school year, we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. As stated previously, school defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the Local Authorities Code of Conduct. Good attendance is considered to be above 96%.

Children missing from school - Red Marsh Procedures (see Appendix 1):

It is the Teacher/Teaching Assistant's (TA) responsibility to take the register each morning and afternoon. If they know the reason for a child being absent, they will inform the school office and this will be recorded in the absence folder.

Teachers will be made aware of the reason for a child's absence, if known by the school office. If they are not made aware of the reason for absence, the teacher/TAs should continue to ask.

Identified office staff will look at the registers each morning and identify children with an absent mark. Office staff look in the pupil absent folder to see if there is a reason for the absence and if there is no recorded reason, the identified staff will call the home number, to speak to a parent/carers to identify a reason for absence.

If office staff cannot contact home after two attempts by 10am, the absence will be passed onto the family welfare team to follow up. The family welfare team will attempt to call all contacts on the system, send an absence text and an absence email by midday on the day of absence.

Where a child is absent from school without contact and school have tried and failed to locate the child's whereabouts, school will follow safeguarding procedures - e.g. go out to visit the house, contact a social worker, social care or the police.

If the above procedures have not been successful by the end of the school day, school will report the child as missing in education and make contact with the CME Officer for their locality, who will attempt to locate the child using their links and networks. A PAST referral and/or a CME1 form will be completed within 6-10 days.

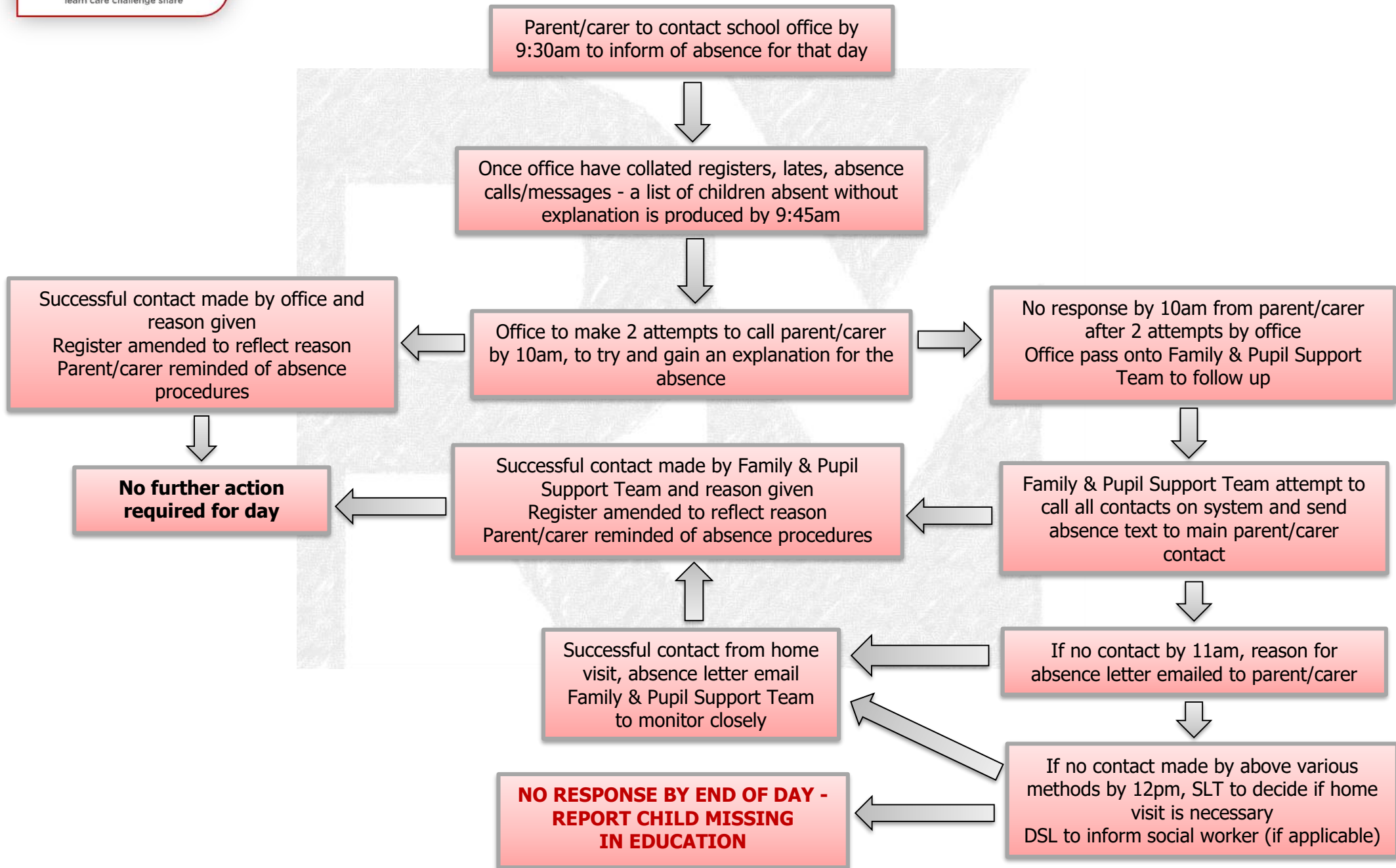
Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

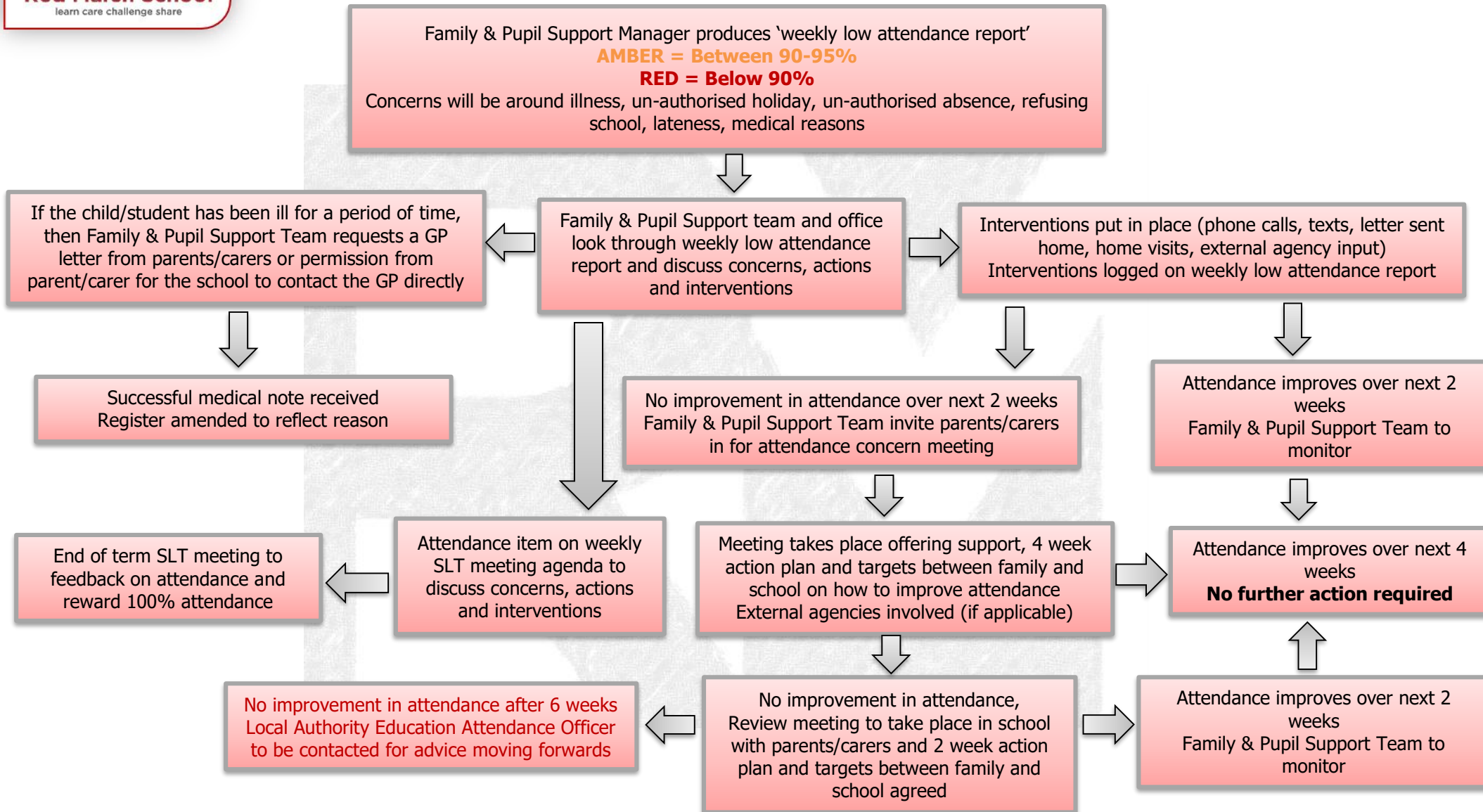
Date of Policy: Autumn 2023

Date Review Due: Autumn 2024

Appendix 1: Daily absence procedure flowchart



Appendix 2: Weekly low attendance concern procedure flowchart



Appendix 3: School attendance and the law

There are many pieces of legislation and government regulations and guidance that are relevant to school attendance and to children and their parents/carers. The list below relates to this policy but is not exhaustive.

Parents and carers

Government expectations

The Department for Education's School attendance guidance states that the government expects:

- Parent/carers to perform their legal duty, by ensuring their children of compulsory school age are registered at school attend regularly;
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Duty to ensure children receive education

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 covers the duty of parents/carers to secure the education of children in their care who are of compulsory school age and states:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude;
- (b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Offence if a child does not attend regularly

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, their parent/carer is guilty of an offence.

The offence is absolute as the only defences available to the parent/carer are those statutory defences listed within that section of the Act, ie:

- the child was absent with leave granted by the school;
- the child was prevented from attending by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
- absence was on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which their parent/carer belongs;
- that the school is not within statutory walking distance and that the local education authority has made no suitable transport arrangements or enabled the pupil to become registered at an alternative nearer school.

Compulsory school age

Section 8 of the Education Act 1996 establishes that a child becomes of compulsory school age on the start date of the term following her/his fifth birthday, or that day if her/his fifth birthday falls on the day term starts.

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which he/she reaches the age of 16 or if he/she reaches 16 after the last Friday in June but before the start of the new school year.

Legal definition of "parent" in relation to attendance

The law requires that all 'parents' are held responsible for their child's attendance. This definition can include any person who has care of the child. [Section 576 of the Education Act 1996](#) states:

Meaning of "parent".

- (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person:
- (a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or
 - (b) who has care of him.

Thus, the definition of 'parent' means all natural parents, whether they are married or not, and includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility and/or care for a child or young person.

Schools

Attendance and absence registration codes

[School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#), DfE, regularly updated

This guidance also states that the government expects *schools and local authorities to:*

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Data protection

Schools must ensure that personal data is handled in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#). See Red Marsh Schools Privacy Notice for information about how personal data will be used.

Duty for schools to include attendance information in reports for parents/carers

[The Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2005](#)

Duty for schools to notify the local authority when pupils join or leave school

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for maintained schools to publish attendance data

[What maintained schools must publish online](#), DfE guidance

Duty for schools to report attendance concerns about individual pupils to the local authority

[Regulation 12 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Duty for schools to report attendance data to Government

[Section 537A of the Education Act 1996](#) and

[Complete the school census](#), DfE guidance for schools and local authorities on what data government requires

Duty for schools to safeguard and promote welfare of children

[Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#), DfE, regularly updated

Leave in term time *

[September 2013 amendment to The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

* This regulation does not apply to academies, though many adopt this as good practice.

Legal interventions

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child who is on a school roll fails to attend regularly and those absences are recorded by the school as unauthorised.

Legal interventions are available under the following Acts, Guidance and Regulations:

- [Section 444 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- [Section 36 of the Children Act 1989](#)
- [Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015](#)

Pupils with health needs who cannot attend school

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: Statutory guidance](#), DfE, 2015

Regulations regarding participation in performances

[The Children \(Performances and Activities\) \(England\) Regulations 2014](#)

Regulations regarding removal from roll

[Regulation 8 of The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

Regulations regarding the school day and number of sessions.

[The Education \(School Day and School Year\) \(England\) Regulations 1999](#)

Evaluation of this policy.

This policy is evaluated annually as part of the school's review procedures.

| Policy | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Reviewed | Autumn 2023 |
| To be reviewed | Autumn 2024 |