

Palace Wood Primary School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Written by	Serpin Childs
Date Written	Autumn 2026
Date for Review	Autumn 2027

This policy has been impact assessed by Clare Cairns in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability equality.

Statement of Intent

Palace Wood Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. Attendance is reported regularly in the school newsletter. The Governors, Head Teacher and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Palace Wood.

Our whole school attendance target is 96%.

Why attend Palace Wood Primary School?

At Palace Wood Primary School, our main aim is to offer our children a safe, joyous and purposeful experience. Our carefully considered curriculum aims to ignite curiosity in our children; teach them life skills and support them in becoming compassionate individuals who will, in their future, contribute positively and successfully to society.

We offer all our children the following enrichment opportunities throughout their time at Palace Wood so they happily skip into school each day and leave smiling!

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk of educational under-achievement, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent, before the registers are closed at 9.10. (1.30pm for the afternoon session) This can be done by either, calling the school office or using Studybugs. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe. Parent should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8:30. Classroom doors will be open between 8:30 and 8:40am. At 8:40am, the register is taken. Any pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late. They must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. If the child arrives after 9.10, then this is known as an unauthorised late (U code) and will be counted towards the child's unauthorised absences.

The Department for Education have produced a guide for parents to help them understand how to work with the school and local authority effectively in relation to their child's attendance at school and getting the right support:

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-onschool-attendance.pdf>

The Role of School Staff

Clare Cairns (Headteacher) has overall responsibility for attendance.

Teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark in those pupils who are present, and the school office deals with any missing marks. The class teacher notifies Serpin Childs (Attendance Champion) of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the office to ensure:

- attendance and lateness records are up to date;
- if no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence;
- where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence within a seven day reply deadline before the absence is unauthorised;
- the appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (National Attendance Codes);
- parents informed regularly of child's attendance figure, with their end of year report, at parent's evenings and at the end of each term.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- any child with attendance at 90% (classed by the Government as a persistent absentee) or less will be closely monitored and discussed with the School Liaison Officer(SLO) where necessary.
- any child with attendance at 50% (classed by the Government as a severe absentee) or less will be closely monitored and discussed with the School Liaison Officer (SLO) where necessary.
- appropriate strategies are put into place to support pupils and families whose attendance is causing concern.
- that relevant information for parents is present on the school website to refer to. This will include information regarding infectious diseases, how to report and absence and our policy.

Timeline of School Action for Low Attendance

- 95 – 100% attendance – class teachers monitor attendance. If a teacher has concerns, they must be reported to FLO or Attendance Officer.
- 90 - 95% attendance – class teacher to monitor and report those whose attendance is declining to Attendance Officer.
- Below 90% - monitored by Attendance Officer on a fortnightly basis. Consider Attendance Service referral where absences have not been authorised and referral criteria-are met.

Meetings will be held between SLO and Attendance Officer to monitor and agree actions for children with attendance below 90%.

Please refer to Appendix 10 for actions to be taken by the Attendance Officer for those children whose attendance is consistently below 90%.

Children Missing Education

No child may be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed and the digital front door used.

Lateness

At Palace Wood Primary School, the register is taken at 8:40am and 1:15pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.10am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents and may be referred to the SLO and can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016, as revised in June 2020, when:

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions (50 days) leads to a referral to the Attendance Service (AS) for Penalty Notice Warning Letter;
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded;
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child);
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue, the Attendance Service may instigate court proceedings.

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from 19th August 2024 KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct ([kelsi.org.uk](https://www.kelsi.org.uk))

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. Where there is doubt, the Headteacher, on behalf of the governing body, should take a consistent approach. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation; a letter or telephone message from a parent, as this does not, in itself authorise an absence. Absence during term time can only be approved in exceptional circumstances. If the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified in writing.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness, e.g. poorly/unwell

- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason
- Child's or family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Holidays during term time.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

School Liaison Officer

Any pupil with attendance at 90% or less may be referred to or discussed with the SLO.

Penalty Notices will be issued in the following circumstances:

- Truancy
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed
- Being present in a public place without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of any fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in June 2020.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Or where the school has evidence that there are other pressing personal issues for a family that would warrant a short break from school.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28-day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Holidays in Term Time

The school discourages any holiday during term time and would encourage all children to attend school regularly.

The Head Teacher has discretion to authorise absence only in exceptional circumstances, such as:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the Attendance Service who will issue a Penalty Notice for £120 (or £60 if paid within 28 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Attendance and Lateness

If a new pupil has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held. The school has a 'five-step' approach to monitoring absence and lateness. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Responsible staff will use discretion and discuss each case carefully.

'Five Steps'

1. Where there has been no contact from parents, first day calling for all pupils is made by the FLO.
2. Discussion with Headteacher, SLO or Attendance Officer to identify pupils with attendance below 90%, monitoring trends in pupil attendance and lateness. School Action Plan in place and letters expressing concern to parents.
3. Invitation to meet with school staff.
4. Initiate an Early Help form with support of SENCo.
5. Referral to Attendance Service.

Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school. When a referral to the Attendance Service is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action

Where there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance and/or there is at least 20 sessions (10 days) absence the school will consider the following:

School Liaison Officer Actions

This may include:

- Attendance improvement meeting
- Home visits
- Sign posting to supportive agencies e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Social Services and Family Group Conference Service.
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Appendix 1 Leave of absence refusal letter

Appendix 2 Leave of Absence refusal letter submitted retrospectively

Appendix 3 Excessive late letter 'L'

Appendix 4 Excessive late letter 'U'

Appendix 5 Excessive absence letter

Appendix 6 Meeting letter

Appendix 7 Penalty Notice information

Appendix 7a Pre-Penalty Notice Letter

Appendix 8 Penalty Notice Warning Letter

Appendix 8a Overseas dialling tone letter

Appendix 9 Traveller Absence Letter

Appendix 10 Traveller Absence due to travelling

Appendix 11 School Based Intervention Flow Chart

Appendix 12 Kent School Referral Pathway

Appendix 13 Leave of Absence Request Form

Appendix 1

Application for Leave of Absence of School Child to Accompany Parents on Holiday

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Request for leave during Term-Time For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»

I have received your request to take «forename» out of school for a family holiday between ??date and ??date, a total of ??Number of school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. If you decide to take «forename» out of school I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 2

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Request for leave during Term-Time

For the attention of the parents of «forename» «surname»

You failed to apply in advance for permission for «forename» to be absent from school.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

As stated above, I am unable to authorise leave retrospectively and I will be making a request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 3

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code L):

«dates_of_lates_before»

Total lates before registration closed: «total_lates_before» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at ?? am and at ?? pm.

A pupil's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 4

«addressee»
«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

«dates_of_lates_after»

Total lates after registration closed: «total_lates_after» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at 9.00am and is closed at 9.20am for the morning session and taken again at **1.15pm** and closed at **1.30pm** for the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked 'U' which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child's learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to a referral for a Penalty Notice or a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 5

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A pupil's absence can seriously disrupt their learning, not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»'s attendance. If we can help in any way, perhaps via our School Nurse or Family Liaison Officer, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 6

Dear (Name)

Re: (Pupil's Name)

Despite previous attempts to advise you, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. (Pupil's name)'s attendance at school is currently (%). This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in (pupil's name)'s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness will require medical evidence. If medical evidence is not provided, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am inviting you to attend a School Attendance Meeting. The time and date have been set for at It is imperative that you and attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by

.....

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me on 01622 750084 so that a mutually convenient time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and 's absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Attendance Service.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 7

Dear Parent/Carer

Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

From February 2005, **Kent Local Authority (LA)** introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) in a current term.

As you can see from the above we take this opportunity to remind parents (in a non-threatening way) the expectations placed upon schools from now on. Please therefore continue to read the letter and we appreciate your support in this initiative.

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing Penalty Notices:

- Truancy including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays in term time
- Delayed return from extended holidays
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120 reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the LA.

At Palace Wood Primary School we consider attendance and these new legal powers very important, this is why we are bringing this to your attention.

Please ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 7a

Dear << NAME>>,

Request for leave during Term-Time For the attention of the parent of <<NAME>>

I have received your request to take <<NAME>> out of school for a holiday on <<DATES>> a total of ___ school sessions.

From September 2013 the Department for Education has amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removing the Head Teacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a family holiday. Requests for holidays in term-time will not be authorised as the Regulations only allow me to authorise absence (leave) in "exceptional circumstances".

The School's Attendance Policy confirms that:

- agreement to each request is at my discretion, acting on behalf of the Governing Body
- each case will be judged on its merits
- my decision is final
- leave cannot be authorised retrospectively

I have considered your request but I am writing to confirm that on this occasion the leave will not be authorised. However, I will not be requesting a Penalty Notice but if any further leave of absence is taken then this may lead to a Penalty Notice being issued.

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Appendix 8

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Re «forename» «surname»

At Palace Wood Primary School we consider attendance of utmost importance and I am therefore bringing this information to your attention.

Our monitoring process has shown that «forename» has been absent from school for a total of «total_unauthorised_absences» unauthorised half day sessions. I refer you to legislation regarding Penalty Notices.

'As from 2005, Kent Local Authority (LA) introduced Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school of at least 10 sessions (5 days) during any 100 possible school sessions.(50 days)' A separate Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent and for each child.

On receipt of the Notice, the penalty will be £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the LA.

Please note this is a warning letter that a Penalty Notice could be requested if a total of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) are reached.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

If further unauthorised absence occurs you will be contacted and invited in for a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 8a

Dear <<NAME>>,

Re: <<NAME>>

Mrs Bryer, our Family Liaison Officer, tried to contact you on <<DATE>> and your mobile phone had an overseas dial tone. We therefore believe that <<NAME>> has been taken on holiday during term time, between <<DATES>>. This absence will be recorded as Code G, which is an unauthorised mark, unless you are able to provide us evidence within 10 days. Should <<NAME>> have any further unauthorised absence, this may result in a Penalty notice being issued.

I do not want to alarm you but feel it is important to point out that Penalty Notices are issued to **each parent** of **each child** and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service.

If you wish to receive further advice, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Ball at the school.

I do hope that we can rectify this unfortunate situation with receipt of the right paperwork. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer
Assistant Headteacher

Appendix 9

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Traveller Absence

«forename» «surname»

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «forename» has been absent from school. This academic year «forename» has missed «total_authorised_absences» authorised half day sessions and «total_unauthorised_absences» unauthorised half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «percentage_attendance»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer if «forename»'s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances or if you will be travelling for occupational purposes and agree this with the school in advance.

If you would like to speak to me about «forename»'s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 10

«addressee»

«address_block»

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Traveller Absence

«forename» «surname»

Thank you for contacting me to say that «forename» will be absent from school from ??**Date** as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «forename»'s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «forename» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «forename» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

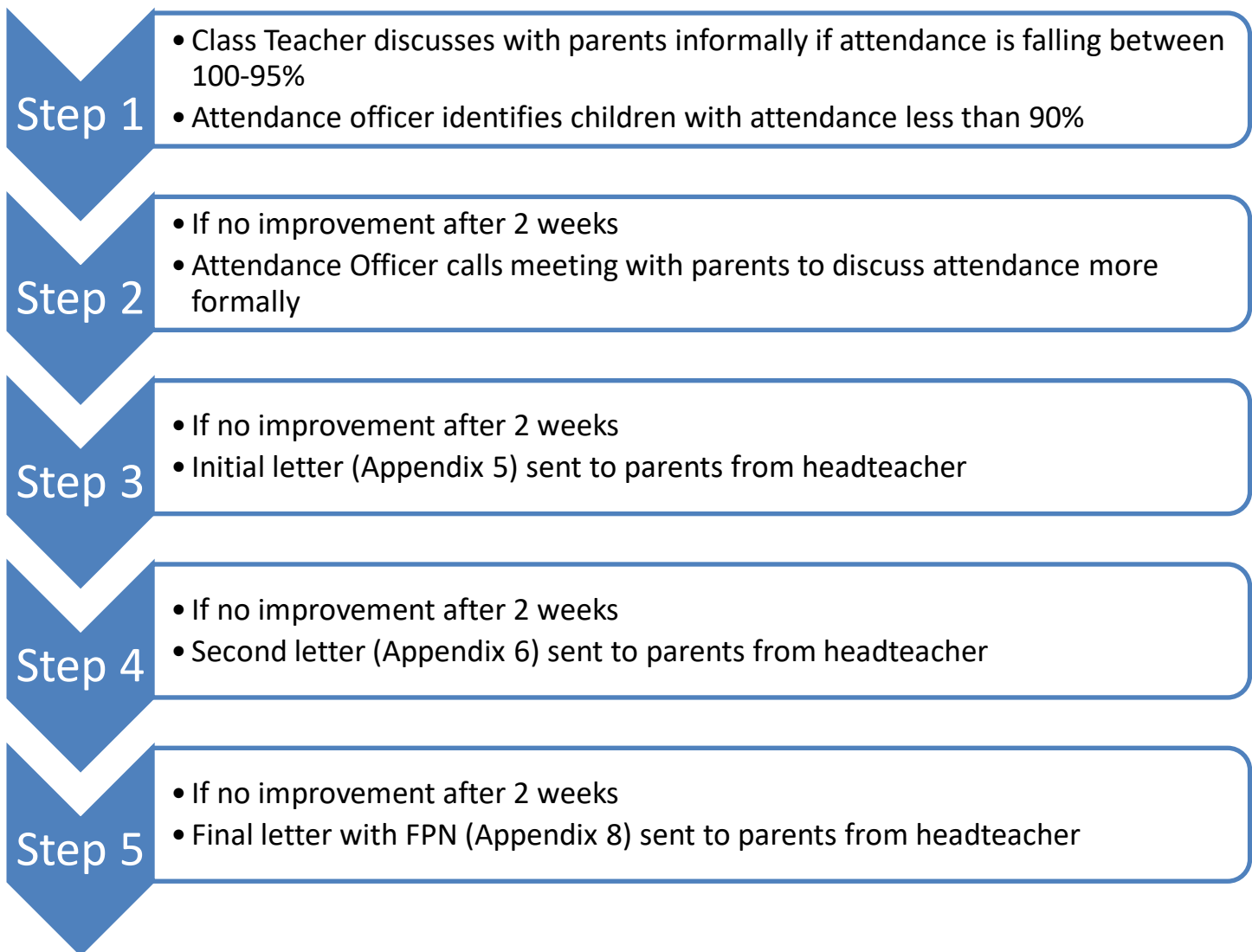
After 20 days absence, there may be grounds to take «forename»'s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 11

School Based Intervention Flow Chart



Appendix 13

Date: _____

Leave of Absence Request

Dear Mrs Cairns,

I/we would like to request a leave of absence for:

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Period of absence requested:

From: _____

To: _____

Reason for absence:

As explained in the school's Attendance and Punctuality policy, I/we understand that holidays during term time are not authorised. I/we understand that the Headteacher shall respond to the above request in due course.

Kind regards,
