

Attendance Policy

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1. Rationale

Wrotham School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. This policy represents our commitment to expect 100% attendance from all of our students, which is achieved by many children. It sets out the responsibilities of all members of the school community in ensuring excellent attendance, establish the legal framework and to lay out the school's response to poor attendance.

In accordance with the Department for Education (DfE) advice to schools, Wrotham School will:

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

The Governors, Headteacher and school staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to achieve excellent attendance at Wrotham School.

The term 'parent' includes all natural parents (whether they are married or not), any person who has parental responsibility and any person who has day to day care of the child (lives with and looks after the child).

1.1 Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement - it is a parent's/carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children while they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is irregular will be considered vulnerable.

1.2 Aims

- To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually to maximise their educational achievement and social development. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%.
- To safeguard pupils to the best of the school's ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff, and Governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence. Any pupil with attendance below 90% is classed by the DfE as a Persistent Absentee (PA)). Any pupil with attendance below 50% is classed by the DfE as a Severley Persistent Absentee (SPA). Schools are required to identify all PA pupils and report to the DfE at regular intervals during the academic year.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending school and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

2. Promoting Good Attendance

Wrotham School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the Home-School agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and children.

Wrotham School will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other forms of communications with parents making attendance a high priority.
- Employ a key member of staff with responsibility for monitoring, improving and evaluating school attendance. At Wrotham School this role is fulfilled by the Mrs Abbott (Deputy Headteacher) and their contact details are available on the school website.
- Follow a structured process for managing poor attendance. This may include writing to parents, inviting them to attend meetings and making arrangements in school to support their child to attend school more regularly.
- Encourage our children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing rewards, certificates and other incentives.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored using our electronic registration system and that absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (GPs, Kent County Council Integrated Children's Services, School Health etc.) to support children with any issues there might be.
- Meet the legal requirements for recording pupil absence using the correct registration procedures and codes with reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the pupil is supported to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.
- Make arrangements to meet the requirements of pupils with additional educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan.

2.1 School Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- Review the attendance policy annually;
- Monitor its implementation;
- Monitor progress against school targets;
- Monitor for issues of Equal Opportunity.

The Headteacher will:

- Set attendance targets as part of the development plan and target-setting process
- Monitor progress

The Deputy Headteacher will:

- Oversee the attendance arrangements
- Work with the pastoral team to ensure the efficient running of the system

- Make periodic checks of the registers to monitor absence
- Support the attendance officer with issues of inadequate registering
- Arrange and/or oversee appropriate training for all staff
- Inform the Headteacher of the progress of the attendance targets
- Advise the Headteacher of any strategies that could be initiated or improved
- Determine (with the attendance officer) whether to authorise any proposed absences requested by letter or email, or absences for which the school have not been notified
- Work with the attendance officer and Heads of Year to ensure Pupil Premium attendance targets are met across all year groups
- Notify that if a student of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly their parents commit an offence. Parents will be notified through the policy and by directing parents to the policy when a letter is sent.
- Initiate, with appropriate staff, strategies to improve attendance
- Receive regular updates from the attendance officer on intervention requested from outside agencies
- Liaise with local In-Year Fair Access (IYFA) Panels, outside agencies and the police when they wish to exercise their powers to enforce truanting students to return to school.
- Make a termly report with statistics to the governing body.

Heads of Year and Heads of School will:

- Have responsibility for meeting attendance targets for their allocated year group(s).
- Hold regular meetings with progress tutors in which attendance is a standing agenda item
- Ensure that all student absences are tracked by their progress tutors through conversations and checking SIMS for entries by the attendance officer
- Hold to account any tutors who are not registering in line with policy and arrange training where appropriate
- Ensure that all suspected truancy is followed up with the attendance officer
- Contact parents over student absences when there is a cause for concern
- Liaise with the Deputy Headteacher to review patterns of attendance/punctuality and agree appropriate strategies.
- Promote excellent attendance through a range of strategies agreed with the Deputy Headteacher.

Progress Tutors will:

- Ensure that students are registered accurately by 8.45am
- Ensure that they know the reason for student absence
- Follow up cases of unauthorised absence
- Keep the Head of Year and Attendance Officer informed of any signs of suspected truancy
- Inform the Head of Year and Attendance Officer of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences and lateness.
- Check attendance data weekly and make students aware of their attendance percentages during Progress Time on a Friday.

Teaching staff will:

- Inform the Attendance Officer of the names of students who are absent without notification

- Be responsible for the accurate official registration of students at the beginning of each lesson using SIMS
- Welcome any student with long term absence back into the classroom without question – with any questions being addressed to the attendance officer.

The Attendance Officer is required to:

- Enter attendance/absence data into SIMS
- Prepare attendance reports for the Deputy Headteacher
- Prepare reports for Heads of Year and Heads of School
- Contact parent/guardian on the first day of absence and each day of absence unless pre-notified or long-term medical absence has been provided
- Call parents/guardians of Pupil Premium students on every day of absence
- Support targeted students
- Keep parents informed of attendance concerns through regular letters and/or phone calls
- Hold meetings with parents when attendance is not improving
- Hold meetings with Pastoral team to develop strategies for Persistent Absentees
- Escalate attendance to Leadership Team when required
- Seek the support of the School Liaison Officer when interventions have not succeeded.

The School Liaison Officer (Kent County Council) will:

- liaise with the Attendance Officer regarding concerns over student absence
- support the school in improving the attendance of its students
- work with parents of children with poor attendance where a referral has been made
- Advise the school as to its legal obligations and complete appropriate paperwork for any legal proceedings.

The SENCO will:

- Support students on the SEN register who have regular patterns of non-attendance
- Be involved in any reintegration programmes where necessary.

2.2 Parental Responsibilities

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular 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 in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know your child is safe and their whereabouts are known. Parents should regularly update the school during any period of absence from school and inform the school when their child is returning.

We expect parents to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Keep absences to a minimum.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.

- Telephone or email Wrotham School when their child is unable to attend on the first day of the absence and each day thereafter with the reason for this. Parents should also let Wrotham School know if their child is going to be late e.g. if a car breaks down or an urgent appointment has been made.
- Provide a written explanation for the absence when their child returns to school.
- Parents should provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician, if asked to do so. Whenever possible all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours unless an emergency has arisen. This can include medical appointment cards, photographs of prescribed medication etc.
- Contact the school at the earliest opportunity if their child is experiencing any difficulties and the school will do everything possible to resolve the issues.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility under **Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act** and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school may create an offence in law.

2.3 Student Responsibilities

We expect students to:

- Attend every day unless they are too ill, or the absence has been authorised by the school.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Go to registration and all lessons on time.

3. Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.25am. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late in the register (registration code L).

The register will close at 8.50am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration and this will count as an unauthorised absence (registration code U). Students who arrive after 8.50am must sign in at reception.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for further action (see appendix 1).

4. Absence

A child's absence will be authorised if approval has been given by the school in advance or an acceptable reason has been given afterwards.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

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

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. 'poorly' or '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 reasons
- Child/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (see appendix 6.1.2)

The Headteacher may authorise other absences 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. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. The principles for defining 'exceptional' are: rare, significant, unavoidable and short. An absence might be considered unavoidable if the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. Once a child has been absent without permission, the absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in statutory referral to the Local Authority. The school will follow the appropriate procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing (see appendix 3).

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

4.1 Absence for Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Pupils

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils are expected to attend school in the same way as all other pupils and parents should aim for their child to achieve 100% attendance.

If a child has no fixed abode and the family are required to travel for the purposes of the parents' trade or business, adjustments can be made.

Requests for absence must be made in advance and a return date provided. If not, a pupil may be referred to the local authority as a Child Missing Education and could be removed from the school roll.

5. Children Missing Education

Parents must inform Wrotham School in writing if they are planning to remove their child from the school roll. This must include the details of the arrangements that will be put in place for the child's education.

The school will follow the Department for Education guidance relating to Children Missing Education (CME). If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will make a referral to the Local Authority.

5.1 Penalty Notices

Wrotham School may make use of Penalty Notices to address poor school attendance in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

A penalty notice can be issued as a result of the following:

- Parentally condoned absence

- Unauthorised leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

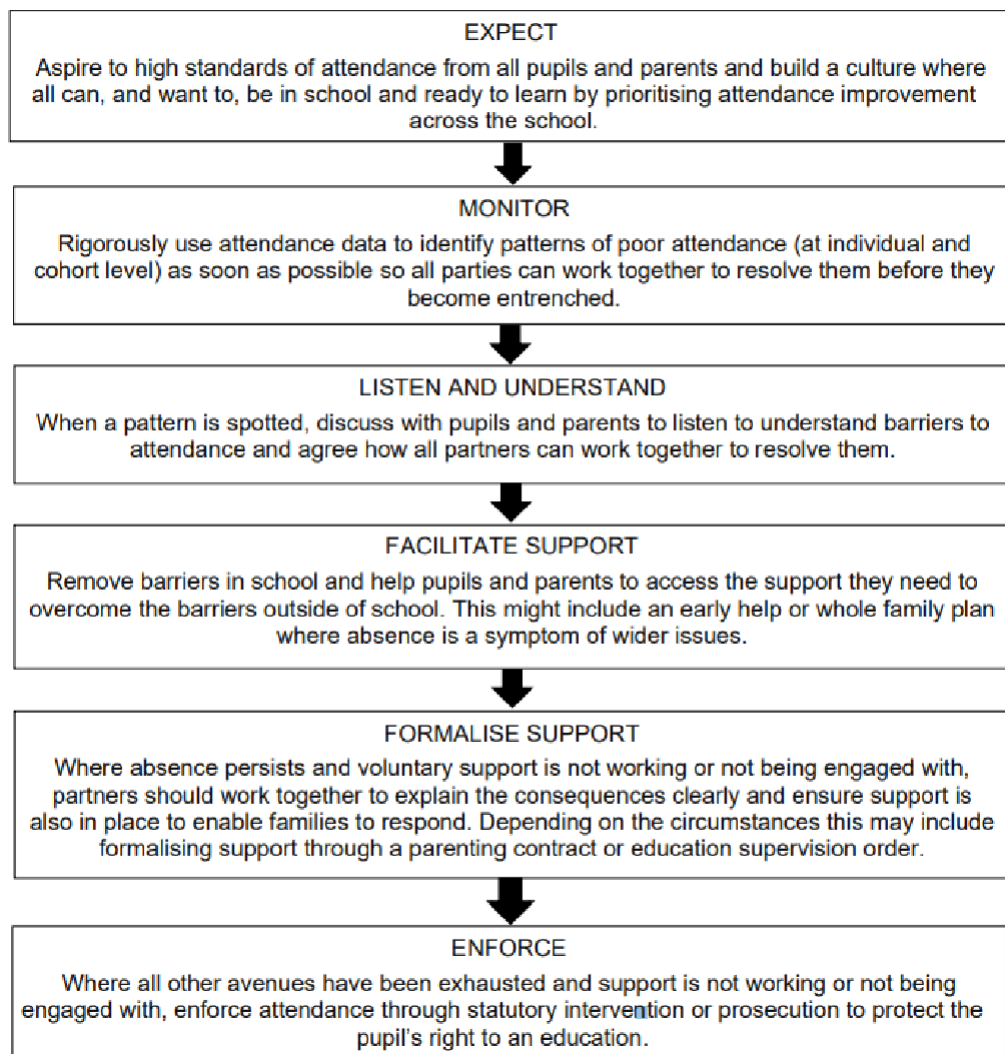
A Penalty Notice may be issued when a pupil has been absent for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 school days – these absences do not need to be consecutive.

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 local authority.

Wrotham School asks that parents fully support this policy as a vital contribution towards their child’s education.

Working Together to improve attendance:

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



This policy will be reviewed annually.

6. Appendices

6.1 Leave of Absence

Wrotham School can grant leave of absence in very exceptional circumstances. Should you wish to apply for leave of absence, a letter should be written to the Attendance Officer who will liaise with the Headteacher. Parents/carers will be advised of the outcome by email and/or letter. Should parents/carers wish to appeal this decision, this should be addressed in writing to the Headteacher.

6.1.1 Long Term Medical Absence

When a student is absent because of long term illness a Health Care Plan/Risk Assessment will need to be initiated by the Head of Year and, where necessary, the School Nurse. This will provide structure for the student to be reintegrated back into the classroom. A Health Care Plan can only be completed once a diagnosis is confirmed and prognosis given by the medical team supporting the student. Where the student needs the support of the Home Education and Reintegration Service (HERS) this will be sought/referred to by the medical professional responsible for the student's case. The school will take the lead role in planning and reviewing the student's provision in conjunction with HERS.

6.1.2 Holidays in Term Time

- From September 2013, the Government has legislated that no holidays will be authorised in term time
- Holidays not agreed by the school, but taken, are unauthorised absences and shown in the register by code 'G'
- If parents take their children on holiday during term time, we will request that the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

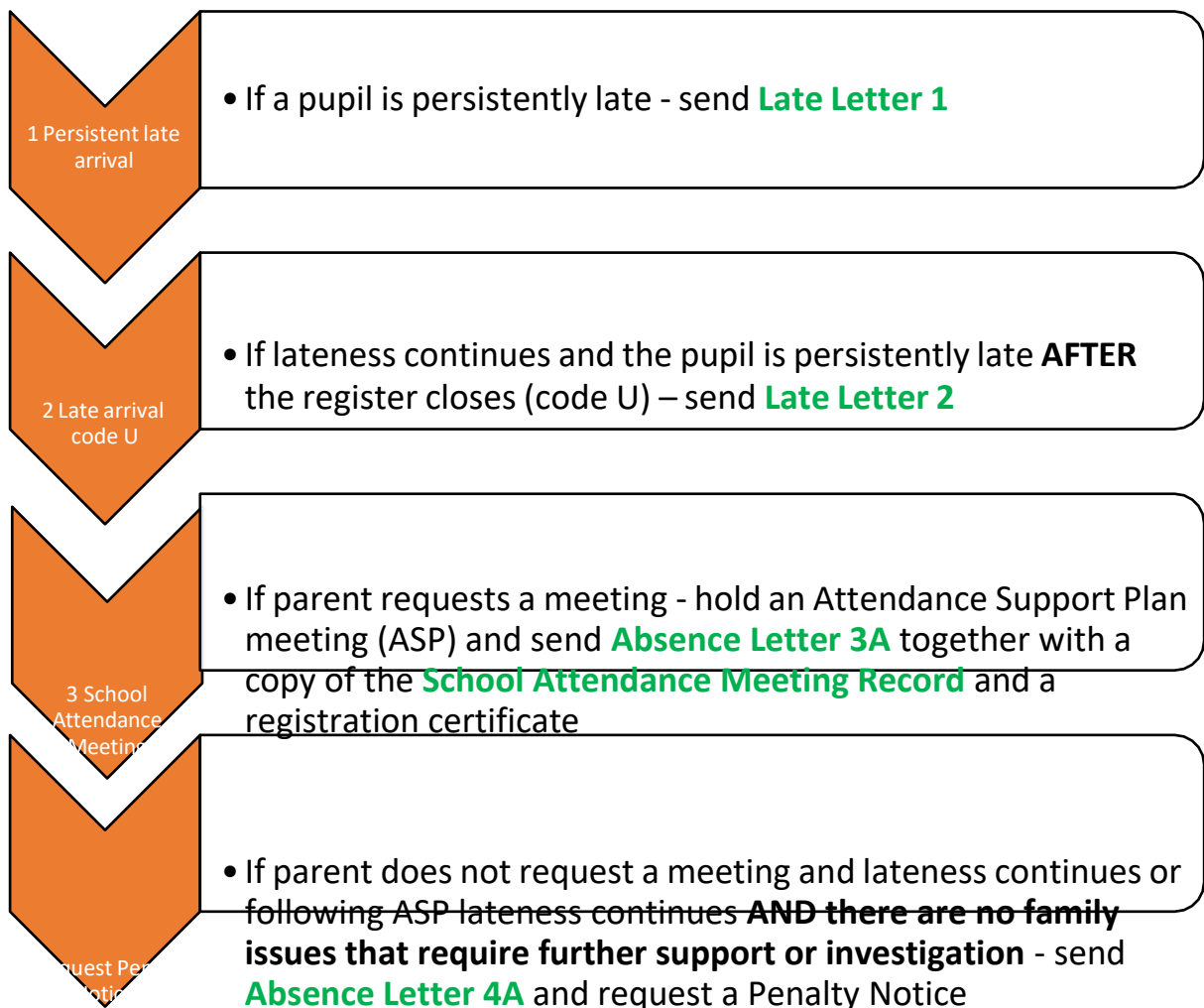
6.1.3 Fixed Penalty Notices

The school will issue and administer penalty notices in collaboration with the Local Authority Enforcement Officer, providing that such requests are made using Penalty Notice Request form.

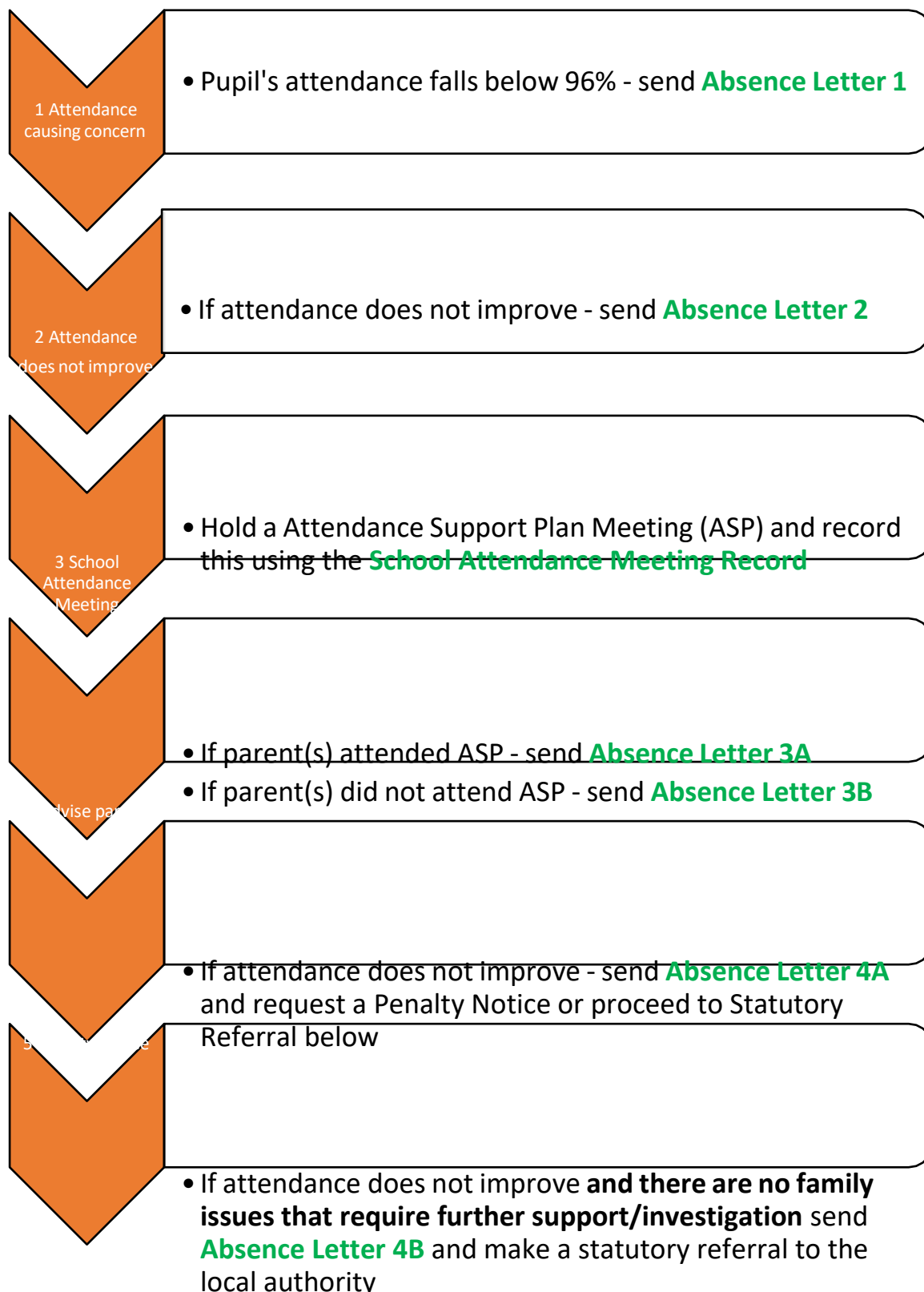
The penalty is £120 and reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. This is per parent, per child. Failure to pay may result in prosecution where on conviction you would be liable to a fine of up to £1000. A penalty notice can be issued for 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 school days) during any 100 possible school sessions (50 days). These do not need to be consecutive days.

- Penalty notices may be issued where it is determined that to do so would be an effective and appropriate addition to ongoing casework with a student and their parent. The Headteacher will be informed if this action is taken
- Where feasible, parents should be warned of the possibility of a penalty notice being issued
- Where holiday is taken in term time, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.

6.2 Punctuality Process



6.3 Absence Process



6.3 COVID-19 Addendum

Following the prolonged disruption to education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Education has stated that attendance is mandatory and that the usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

If a student has tested positive for COVID-19, then they must isolate as per the Government guidance. This will be considered when reviewing attendance.

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