



Attendance Policy

Date approved by the governing body	28 th February 2025
Date for full implementation	28 th February 2025
Date for Review	28 th February 2026
Status	Recommended

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils and families on role at Rusper Primary School. It directly follows Guidance laid out in the DfE document – [‘Working Together to Improve Attendance, 2024’](#)

Context

“Going to school regularly is important to your child’s future. For example, children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams. Good attendance shows potential employers that your child is reliable. Research suggests that children who attend school regularly could also be at less risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime.” **Direct.gov website**

Since the time of the COVID epidemic and the subsequent disruption to school attendance for many pupils, it has become ever more clear that consistent school attendance is fundamentally important to the academic and social development of children, and to their wellbeing. However, national data has also shown that since COVID, school attendance figures have dropped, especially in more vulnerable groups, eg in pupils from the poorest backgrounds, and for pupils with SEN.

It is likely that pupils with persistent absence will lose confidence in their own ability due to gaps in their access to teaching sequences, and consequently gaps in their overall embedded understanding. Low self-esteem can have far reaching negative consequences for individual pupils in the classroom and on the playground.

In addition, one pupil’s absence can be disruptive to the overall teaching and learning for all pupils in a class, and to the workload and effectiveness of teachers.

From a 2017 Supreme Court ruling regarding unauthorised pupil absence...

"It is not just that there is a clear statistical link between school attendance and educational achievement. It is more the disruptive effect of unauthorised absences. These disrupt the education of the individual child. Work missed has to be made up, requiring extra work by the teacher who has already covered and marked this subject matter with the other pupils. Having to make up for one pupil’s absence may also disrupt the work of other pupils. Group learning will be diminished by the absence of individual members of the group. Most of all, if one pupil can be taken out whenever it suits the parent, then so can others. Different pupils may be taken out at different times, thus increasing the disruptive effect exponentially..."

Rusper Primary provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which offers many varied benefits related to effective pupil development. For pupils to truly make the most of potential benefits, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually.

The Law on School Attendance

From ‘Working Together To Improve School Attendance, DfE, 2024

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The following policy sets out the school's aims and systems to ensure that attendance and punctuality is high and all stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Aims

- **To uphold the rights of every child to consistent education.**
- **To raise standards and ensure every child maximises their access to learning opportunities through effective attendance management.**
- **To ensure all stakeholders, governors, parents and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.**
- **To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of children and address them.**
- **To work with parents and external agencies in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.**

Responsibilities

Headteacher - *Nick Avey*

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the Attendance policy.
- To meet with the school designated attendance staff member regularly to monitor pupil attendance.
- To communicate with and meet with parents of pupils whose attendance is a concern, providing/facilitating support as required.
- To liaise with local authority agencies such as the Early Help and Pupil Entitlement, making referrals where necessary.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with National guidance and Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To meet with the school designated attendance staff member regularly to monitor the school systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- Report attendance data, trends and subsequent actions to governors
- Review and amend the attendance policy as required.

Designated Staff Member for Attendance - *Kim Wickens*

- To check the school answer phone and taking messages from parents/carers about child's absence.
- To record reasons for absence and updating class registers.
- To record the names and the reasons of children arriving late.
- To implement the daily checking of school registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To carry out and record the outcome of first day calls when a child doesn't arrive at school and when no reason has been received.
- Submit attendance data to the local authority and DfE as required
- To meet with the headteacher regularly to monitor the school systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.

Teachers

- Complete the morning register by 9:05am, and complete the afternoon register by 12:50 (KS1) and 1:20pm (KS2).
- Communicate known reasons for pupil absence to the designated staff member
- Raise queries if reasons for absence are unknown

Parents

- To fulfil their legal responsibility ensuring their children receive a suitable full-time education from the age of 5.
- To fulfil their legal responsibility for making sure their children attend school regularly.

- To ensure that their children arrive on time for school every day.
- To contact the school by agreed timescales if their child is unable to attend (see appendix 1).
- To ensure that the school has up-to-date contact details.
- To work in partnership with the school and external agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Governors

- To review termly attendance reports and ensure the school fulfils all of its responsibilities satisfactorily.

School Expectations for Attendance

All schools are expected to achieve an overall rate of **95%** attendance. In the COVID context, the current National average for attendance is **92%**.

Rusper Primary School sets its aspiration high and therefore targets each pupil as having at least **≥96%** attendance.

90% attendance or lower for an individual pupil is considered 'Persistent Absence'.

Promoting Good Attendance

Rusper Primary School seeks to communicate its expectations for attendance at every opportunity via the following approaches.

- Published and accessible Attendance Policy
- Links to DfE attendance guidance on school website
- Specified attendance expectations in the School Prospectus
- Clear statements of commitment re attendance in the Home School Agreement
- Regular references to attendance in school communications eg Newsletter, posters on school entrance
- Reporting attendance to parents via annual reports

We will provide incentives for our pupils by

- issuing Rusper points for attendance
- acknowledging and celebrating attendance in assemblies
- providing a special treat day at the end of each term for those pupils **≥98%** attendance

Where attendance becomes a concern, the Headteacher will utilise a series of strategies to engage with and support families; and seek support from external agencies. See 'Responses To Absence'.

Absence Types

Medical Appointments

If a pupil needs to leave school for a medical appointment during school hours s/he must be signed out, and in again on return, at the office. Parents/carers are asked to make every possible effort to make appointments out of school hours.

Illness

Genuine illness will be authorised, although the school reserves the right to ask for medical clarification if a pupil's medical absences are above the amount expected for a usually healthy child. If it has been necessary for a pupil to have extended absence due to illness, the school will work with the pupil, parent/s/carer/s and any other involved agencies to instigate a re-integration programme for that pupil.

Exceptional Circumstances

Parents can request absence for their children under exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances would be

- Funeral of an immediate relative
- Religious observation
- Compassionate leave
- Close family wedding
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside the school day
- Music/Ballet Exam
- Educational visit to another school

If planning a school absence, please see the page **Requesting Absence** page in the **Parent Zone** on our school website. There are two approaches, described in the section below on informing and requesting absence.

The Headteacher carries the responsibility to authorise exceptional absences. If the absence is authorised, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school.

Unauthorised Absence

Any absence that doesn't meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances will be unauthorised.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is now no legal entitlement to **holidays during term time** and this should be avoided. Absence for term time holiday will automatically be classed as **unauthorised absence**.

Lateness

It is important that all pupils arrive at school punctually; and at Rusper pupils should be by **9:00am**. Formal lesson schedules begin at 9:00am. If a pupil is late, s/he should report to the school office to be signed in and ensure that in case of emergency the school has an accurate head count. Where possible, the child should be signed in by the parent.

Rusper Primary understands that there may be many reasons why a pupil may arrive to school after registration. Pupils arriving between 9:00 and 9:30am will be marked as late.

The local authority recommends that, unless there is prior agreement or good reason, if a pupil arrives after 9:30am, this should be recorded as an **unauthorised** absence for the morning session.

Informing the School and Requesting Absence

If a pupil is absent for the day, the school expects parents/carers to make contact as early as possible, and no later than 9:30am, giving the reason for the absence and the expected day of return. If the reason for pupil absence is provided after 9:30am, the school will record the morning session as **unauthorised** absence.

If the reasons for a pupil absence remains unspecified after 9:30am, the absence will be classed as **unauthorised** for both the morning and afternoon session.

If parents/carers wish to notify the school of an absence for **a term time appointment**, they should complete the online form accessible through the Parent Zone on the school website, and via this [link](#)

If parents/carers wish to notify the school of an absence for **any reason other than a term time appointment**, they should complete the online form accessible through the Parent Zone on the school website, and via this [link](#)

Parents who feel the requested absence should be considered for exceptional circumstances, and therefore authorised, should call the school office to request an appointment with the Headteacher.

If the requested absence is authorised by the school, parents/carers will receive a letter informing them of the school decision. **See Appendix 3 – Letter A2**

If the request for absence to be authorised under exceptional circumstances is received less than 48hrs before the actual absence, it will not be authorised on the grounds of insufficient time for the Headteacher to discharge their duty and give due consideration to the request. Parents will be informed of this decision via a letter **See Appendix 4 – Letter A5**

Please note, that term time holiday requests can't be authorised, and that the school will not provide work for the children to do while they are away.

Monitoring Attendance

The school day is divided into two sessions: Morning and afternoon. Attendance is formally measured in sessions. Rusper Primary fulfils its legal responsibility with class teachers completing registers twice daily, recording individual pupil attendance at each session. Rusper Primary School records all pupil attendance according to national statutory codes.

Individual pupil attendance is reviewed daily by the designated staff member.

Overall pupil attendance is reviewed at least fortnightly by the designated staff member and the Headteacher. In these reviews, the following elements are scrutinised

- Overall percentages for attendance, authorised absence, unauthorised absence and lateness
- Individual percentages for attendance, authorised absence, unauthorised absence and lateness
- Patterns of absence for pupils whose attendance may be causing concern

Responses to Absence

It is the school's legal responsibility to manage and promote good attendance; and ultimately uphold the safeguarding of all its pupils. Rusper Primary School will carry out its responsibilities in all respects with consideration of individual families and with diligence, firmness and consistency.

In general, RPS seeks to work with parents to achieve good attendance. We do this by our school and staff are welcoming to pupils and their parents; and by creating an atmosphere where all parties feel able to raise concerns and share any information that could affect the pupil's attendance.

We follow the principles laid out in **'Working Together To Improve School Attendance, DfE, 2024**

Expect: Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor: Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand: When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support: Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support: Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place

to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce: Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

First Day Absence Response

The school follows up absences where no reasons are given. If no contact is received from the parents/carers the school will contact the parents/carers on that day to establish a reason for absence. See **Appendix 1: First Day Absence Response Protocols**

Persistent Absence

Rusper Primary School will ensure that it responds to all absence on an individual family and case basis.

In all cases of longer term absence, the school will seek to maintain daily contact with the family and child via Teams message and/or phone call.

If attendance falls below 90%, the school will send a note specifying this. **See Appendix 5 – Letter A3.** This letter will request a meeting to discuss there are mitigating circumstances to consider, and also to establish if there may be forms of support that the school may offer.

Authorised persistent absence

In the event of longer term authorised absence ie on medical grounds, Rusper primary will work closely with family to provide access to learning at home. This will be either online via Teams and Doodle Learning or (if the parent requests it) via school produced paper exercises.

Unauthorised persistent absence

In the event of the absence being unauthorised eg for term time holiday or persistent lateness, the school will consider the extent of unauthorised sessions. If the unauthorised absence equals 10 or more sessions missed, the Headteacher will make a referral to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation for the application of a Fixed Penalty fine.

For term-time holiday requests, upon receiving notification of intended holiday plans, parents will be notified by the school that the planned absence will not be authorised; and of the potential consequences the absence for holiday is equal to exceeding 10 sessions. **See Appendix 2 – Letter A1**

Once the holiday has taken place and the absence is recorded, and if the absence is equal to or greater than 10 sessions, parents/carers will be notified by the school that a referral has been made to Pupil Entitlement for a Fixed Penalty fine. In this situation, a letter informing parents of the referral to Pupil Entitlement will be sent. **See Appendix 6 – Letter A4**

If, (in the absence of mitigating circumstances and not related to term-time holiday) following a two week period, the pupil's attendance has not improved, the school will request to meet with the parents/carers to discuss again the child's circumstances and to formalise the support offered.

School Based Anxiety and Avoidance

RPS recognises that some children experience intense anxiety in relation to school; and that this can become a barrier to attendance. We take this seriously and have staff trained in supporting pupils with Emotional Based School Avoidance.

We understand that EBSA has four main functions.

- To avoid something that elicits high levels of stress ie crowded areas, fear of toilets, classroom noise
- To escape difficult situations ie feeling left out at playtime, reading out loud in class
- To get attention from or spend more time with others at home
- To spend more time out of school as it is more fun

In all cases where school based anxiety is identified intervention is required.

In the first instance, Rusper Primary seeks to gather the voice of the child and the parents in order to build a specific profile about the child. The voice of the child will be gained using profiling activities ie EBSA cards where a child selects example behaviours that are most/least like them.

Additionally, we may seek to gain an assessment of the child by an external specialist professional consultant. RPS consults with both the 'Learning and Behaviour Advisory team' and with Educational/Child psychologists.

Once a profile is established, the school response can be personalised to the child. Interventions might include

- 'Soft Starts' or 'Welcome Club' interventions
- Adapted curriculum expectations
- Adapted timetable
- A personalised attendance 'contract' (plan) with targets for attendance

Once agreed, it essential that school and parents adhere to all elements of the agreed 'attendance contract' for its planned duration in order to allow for pupil resilience to build and for attendance to improve.

Part Time Timetables

Where necessary, Rusper Primary supports the use of part time timetables and upholds the guidance stipulated in **'Working Together to Improve Attendance' DfE, 2024...**

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable should:

- *Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.*
- *Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.*
- *Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.*
- *Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a part-time timetable for a prolonged period.*

Whole Family Support

In some cases, the voice of pupils and parents will identify needs across the family as a whole. Where appropriate and with parental agreement, Rusper Primary School will process referrals to external West Sussex Local Authority agencies such as 'Early Help' to seek broader professional support such as parenting support.

More about the broad range of support services offered by **Early Help** can be found [here](#)

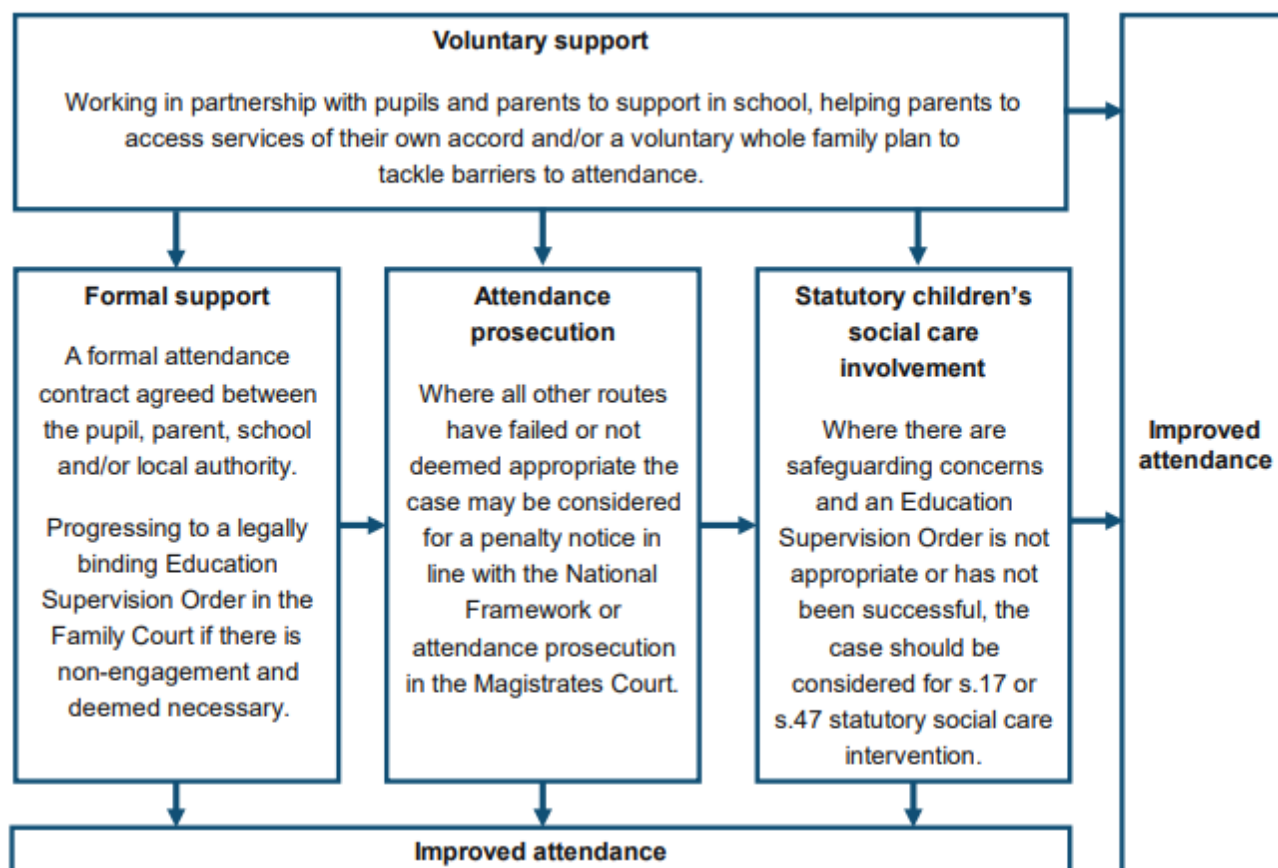
Enforcing School Attendance

In circumstances where all avenues of school support have been exhausted and there is evidence that family engagement with school support opportunities has stopped, then the school must act to enforce attendance.

'Working together to Improve Attendance, DfE, 2024' states the following

Where school intervention is not successful, or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age and decisions should be made on an individual case by case basis.

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



When enforcing attendance, the school will establish a formal attendance. An example contract can be found in Appendix 7

If attendance doesn't improve across the designated time period within the contract, the school will make a referral to '**Pupil Entitlement**' (formerly Educational Welfare Service).

'Pupil Entitlement' works with Schools and Families to ensure children and young people have access to their entitlement to a suitable education. It consists of the teams listed below:

- Admissions
- Children Missing In Education
- Fair Access
- Investigation

The referral will request an investigation to be conducted by the PE team. The investigation could lead to the application of a Fixed Penalty fine, or for the family to be prosecuted under the 1996 Education Act. Alternatively an Education Supervision Order could be sought in the family proceedings court under the 1989 Children Act.

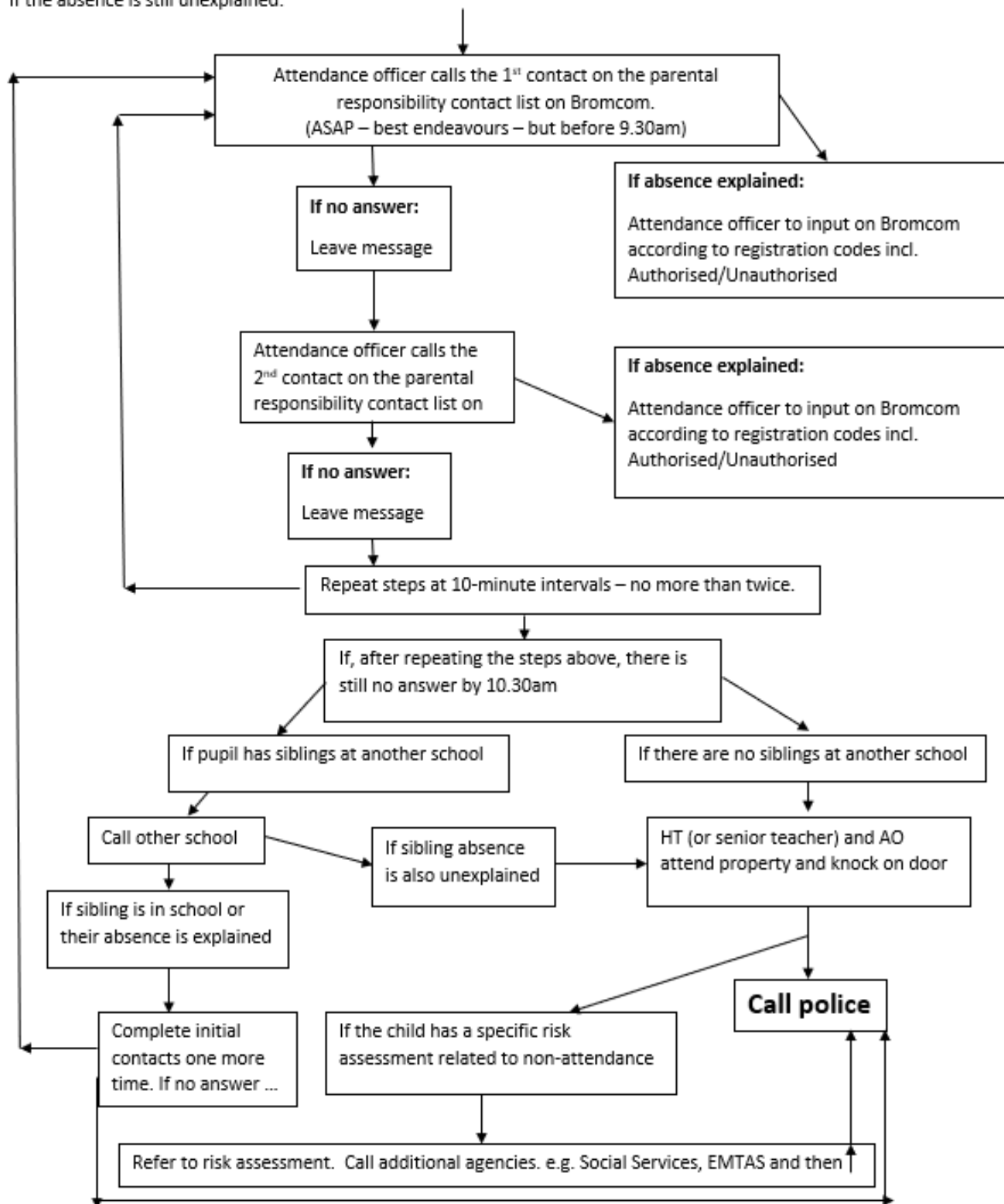
In this situation, a letter informing parents of the referral to Pupil Entitlement will be sent. **See Appendix 6 – Letter A4**

When a child is not present on receipt of the registers (by 9.05am)

School attendance officer runs initial checks:

1. Check answerphone absence messages
2. Check absence request forms (holiday and medical)
3. Check with other staff members if the absence reason is known

If the absence is still unexplained:



Dear

Re: Absence Request for (Name) from (Dates from and to)

We have received your request for term-time absence. You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request a leave of absence in term time, which the Local Authority and School Governors also support. Those changes made it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Missing even a single day of school can have a significant impact on a child's learning, as it may cause them to miss key curriculum content such as phonics sounds, math strategies, and important topic information. This can lead to delays when they return, affecting both their progress and confidence as a learner.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve an absence from learning in this instance. As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are generally issued where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence from school within a recorded 10 school week period.

Our main goal is to help students succeed and get the most out of their education and this is done best with complete parental support. Thus, we kindly ask that leave be taken during the 13 weeks of school holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 3

Letter A2

Dear

We have received your request for term-time holiday. As you have requested it will be authorised under the following grounds _____.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 4

Letter A5

Dear

Absence Request

We have received your request for term-time absence.

Where requests require special consideration e.g. religious observance or family events such as weddings, the head teacher's responsibility is to give consideration to requests and to use discretion in determining whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

In this case, the formal request was received less than 48 hours before the planned absence thus allowing insufficient time for the head teacher to perform their duty. Consequently, the absence request is unauthorised.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 5

Letter A3

Dear

It is my duty to bring to your attention that school attendance for _____ has dropped below 90%. Your child's current attendance for this academic year is _____. In addition to authorised absences, there are currently ___ sessions recorded as unauthorised absence (1 day = 2 sessions).

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 6

Letter A4

Dear

Unauthorised Absence – Name

It is my duty to bring to your attention that the number of unauthorised absences within the last ten weeks for _____ is now _____. In accordance with the policy below, I notify you that this case will now be referred to Pupil Entitlement for investigation.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

In line with the law and the West Sussex authority policy, a referral of this case has been made to Pupil Entitlement. This organisation will be in touch with you in due course to notify of the outcome of their investigation.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 7

Attendance Contract

Name of pupil		
Year group/class		
Staff supporting with attendance plan and roles		
Date plan was agreed		
Attendance history		
Include details of attendance percentages (broken down by attendance code where appropriate), details of trends or patterns over time and any historical factors that might be relevant.		
Current risk factors/current barriers to attendance		
To help with this, it might be useful to carry out an individual attendance audit . We have provided an editable template that can be used in conjunction with this plan.		
Academic targets	Milestones	Date each milestone achieved
Target 1 - add specific target here	For each target provide a number of measurable milestones •	
Target 2 - add specific target here	•	
Target 2 - add specific target here	•	

Strategies to be implemented by the school		
Details of strategy (including date commenced)	Purpose of implementing strategy	Member of staff responsible
E.g. daily wake-up calls for two weeks, starting from 16 th October	E.g. to establish an effective morning routine	E.g. parent support worker to carry out calls

Expectations of the pupil		
Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)
E.g. set an alarm for 7 a.m. every day	E.g. discussion with attendance officer and ongoing reminders	E.g. attendance officer will monitor this daily

Expectations of the family		
Details of expectations	How this has been communicated to the pupil's family?	Monitoring arrangements (who by and when?)
E.g. for parents to phone school before 9 a.m. to report the reason for any absence	E.g. expectations explained during face-to-face attendance meeting and agreed by parents	E.g. attendance officer will monitor this daily

External support		
Details of agency/partner	Support being offered	Date support commenced
E.g. social care	E.g. Early Help referral has been made as mother is reporting that she feels overwhelmed	E.g. referral made 2 nd November - currently awaiting first contact

Record of attendance reviewing meeting	
Date of review	
Individuals present	

Situation since last review	
Milestones achieved since last review	
Areas discussed	
Outcome of meeting (tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Continue with initial plan <input type="checkbox"/> Continue plan with new or supplementary strategies added <input type="checkbox"/> Escalate attendance plan to next stage
Date of next review	