



# School Attendance Policy

Status:	<b>STATUTORY</b>
Responsible Person:	Headteacher
Responsible Governor:	Full Governing Body
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Regular School attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Penkford believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Penkford values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and to try and resolve any difficulties.

Penkford recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

## **2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable for their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **3. CATEGORISING ABSENCE**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though

verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows in accordance with the guidance from Government and the Local Authority.

## ILLNESS

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

## MEDICAL/DENTAL APPOINTMENTS

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents/carers should show the appointment card to the school.

## OTHER AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstance, for example a family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or a part time timetable as part of a reintegration package.

## COVID RELATED ABSENCES

School attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term 2020. There are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, the Government have made changes to the regulations<sup>2</sup> governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – ‘not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)’.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- Contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)<sup>3</sup>
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State’s expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), Penkford will offer them access to remote education. Penkford will keep a record of and monitor engagement with this activity. This will not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

## EXCLUDED (NO ALTERNATIVE PROVISION MADE)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

## FAMILY HOLIDAYS AND EXTENDED LEAVE

Since September 2013, Headteachers are not permitted to authorise absence for any family holiday. The current law does not give parents any entitlement to take their children out of school for a holiday in term time. Any absence that a child has due to a holiday will be unauthorised and will contribute to a potential legal sanction.

Parents can still ask permission to take their child out of school due to an 'exceptional circumstance' that is not deemed to be a 'holiday'. However, this will only be granted at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school for an exceptional circumstance must send a written request to the head teacher before any arrangements are made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SAT's and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up on the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing. Where a request has been granted the letter should state:

- The expected date of return
- That parents should contact the school should any delays occur
- That the child's place may be withdrawn after a period of 10 school days if the family does not return as expected.

If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parent has not been made or received, and if it cannot be ascertained where the child is and/or why they do not have good reason for returning, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that the child will lose their place at school.

If permission to take leave for an 'exceptional circumstance' is not granted, or not requested, and the pupil still leaves anyway, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In such cases the school may issue a Penalty Notice.

Only in exceptional circumstances will absence of more than 10 school days be agreed. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases, granting leave for longer periods than normal may be

considered justified. In all cases though, parents will be required to justify why the leave needs to be taken during term time.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Penkford acknowledges the multi faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside the school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their child not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to provide advanced notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total for the academic year. Any further absences will be categorised as unauthorised.

## STUDY LEAVE

Study leave will be recorded as authorised absence and may be granted sparingly only to for Year 11 pupils during public examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels and provision will be made for those pupils wishing to come into school to revise.

## TRAVELLER ABSENCE

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around St Helens, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Penkford will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at Penkford will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Penkford can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Penkford will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

#### LATE ARRIVAL

Registration begins at 9.00am, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 9.30am, pupils arriving after this point will be classes as 'very late' and lost learning minutes will be recorded. For the afternoon session registration will be from 2.35pm-2.45pm.

On arrival after the close of registers, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

#### UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

## 4. DELETIONS FROM THE REGISTER

*In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:*

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside of the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after the school and Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with the Youth Justice Service )
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil
- The school will inform the Local Authority when a pupil is deleted from the register
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Penkford will follow St Helens Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Penkford believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

AS SUCH, THE GOVERNING BODY WILL:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the Governing Body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale annually and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear and precise systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those that are educated off site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM WILL:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues

- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems in place to record, report and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those educated off site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to the standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated

#### TEACHERS, PASTORAL STAFF, FORM TUTORS AND ATTENDANCE OFFICERS WILL:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and their parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation at all times
- Implement systems to accurately record, report and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to the standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceeding be instigated

#### REQUEST THAT PARENTS WILL:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance with the home environment
- Encourage their child to look into the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible
- Try to avoid any unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentist etc outside the school day
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstance that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school. Take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with the school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bags and uniform the evening before

- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after any other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term time. Where this is unavoidable – i.e., it may be considered an ‘exceptional circumstance’, send a written leave request to the Headteacher in advance of booking the holiday

## 6. USING ATTENDANCE DATA

Pupil’s attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil’s attendance is cause for concern.

The Attendance Officer and the Deputy Head meet regularly to review individual student attendance data following weekly visit by EWO Service. They will provide class tutors/teachers with attendance data for their respective groups to ensure attendance is a high priority for the school.

The Attendance Officer and the Deputy Head will determine where each student fits on the attendance hierarchy of need/support/reward/action and instigate the appropriate action.

## 7. SUPPORT SYSTEMS

School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child’s life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child’s attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Penkford also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical and/or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Early warning letters
- Home visits
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, parents/legal guardians will be warned of the legal consequences of escalating attendance issues. Penkford will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **8. LEGAL SANCTIONS**

### **PROSECUTION**

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in a Magistrates Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months. Alternatives to section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

### **PARENTING CONTRACTS (ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003)**

A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target.

The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with St Helens Parenting Contract Protocol.

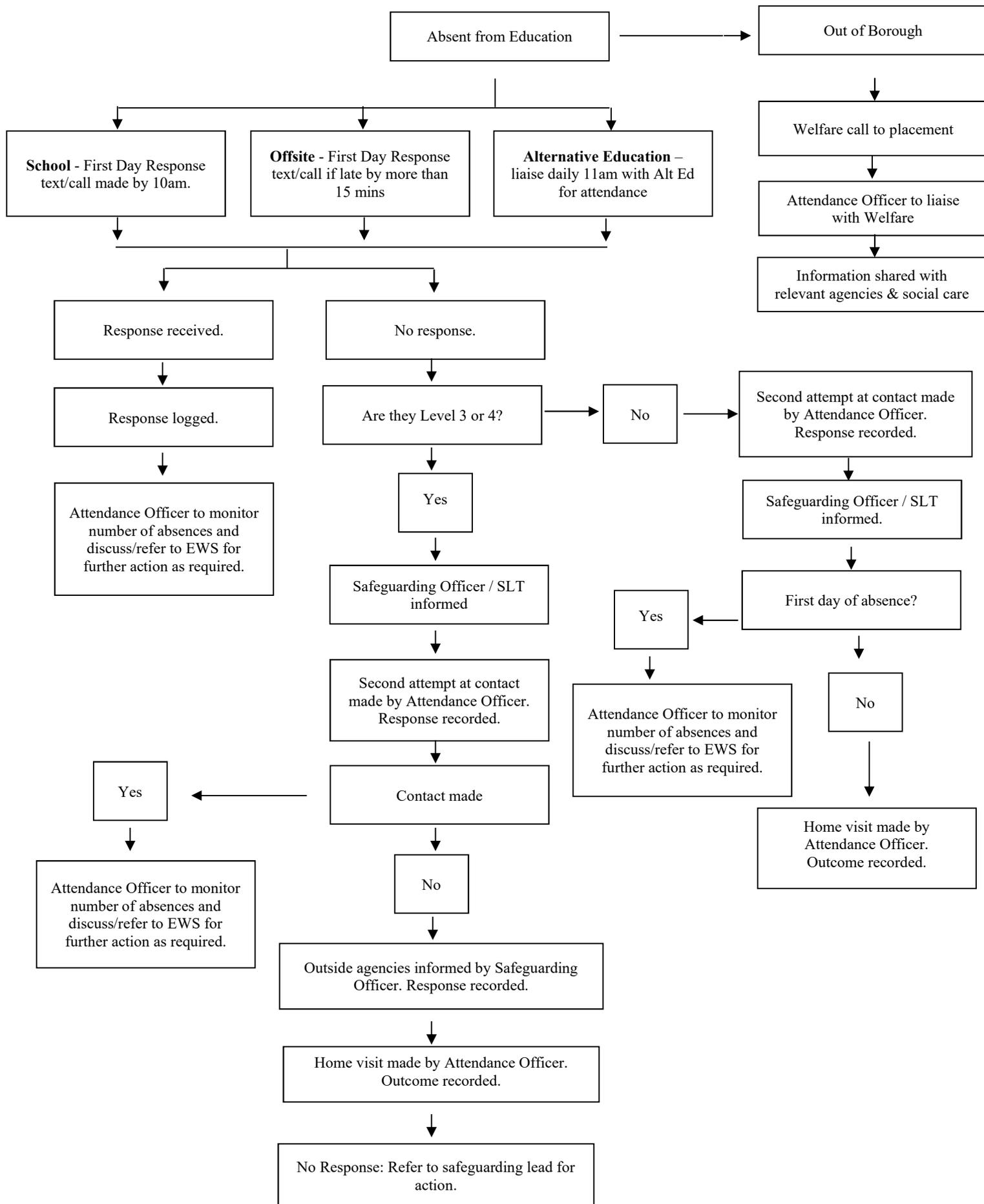
### **PENALTY NOTICES (ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:**

A pupil who has at least 70% attendance on their register, is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time, and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A pupil who has at least 70% attendance on their register, has accumulated at least 10 school sessions of unauthorised absence within an 8-school week period.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of the date the notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with St Helens Penalty Notice Protocol.



## **Connecting Policies for Safeguarding purpose**

Penkford School believes it is very important that policies relating to Safeguarding issues, across the school, are read in conjunction between one another. The Policies in question have been listed below.

Safeguarding Policy

Child Protection Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

Health & safety Policy

Drug Policy

First Aid Policy

Anti-bullying & harassment Policy

Behaviour Policy

Positive Handling and Guidance Policy

Attendance Policy

E-safety Policy

Lone Worker Policy