

THOMAS ESTLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Attendance Policy

Approved/reviewed by	
TECC LGC V1 27/02/2023	
Date of next review	September 2023

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Version	Date	Updated by	Summary of changes
V1	Feb 23	Cathy Cornelius	New Polcy which incorporates DfE changes from September 2022. Strengthening and clarifying expectation.

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) and draws from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)

Whilst every student has a right to a full-time education and we have high attendance expectations for all students, we will ensure that the policy is applied fairly and consistently whilst considering the individual needs of students and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In implementing this policy, we will take into consideration our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Anti-bullying
- Safeguarding

Section 1: Statement of Intent

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We want every child to:

- Attend regularly
- Attend punctually
- Attend ready and prepared to learn including wearing the right uniform and bringing the correct equipment

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents and students play a part in making our college successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent college attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that they are in college, on time, every day the college is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at the college are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

Good attendance is essential for students to get the most out of their college experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. **The students with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.** At KS2, students not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the

expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of students not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4 students not achieving Grade 9 to 4 in GCSE English and Maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving Grade 4. The overall absence rate of students not achieving Grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving Grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

For the most vulnerable students, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole college on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

Responsibilities of the college's attendance leader

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the college's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the college. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

School Attendance Lead: Cathy Cornelius

Attendance Officer: Natalie Johnston

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the college.

Responsibilities of the Pastoral team

- Weekly meetings with the Attendance officer (AO).
- Monitor the students below 93% attendance.
- Liaise with tutors on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Produce certificates and letters in line with the policy.
- Conduct safeguarding home visits.
- Conduct informal and attendance meetings with parents and AO where required.

Responsibilities of classroom staff/group tutor

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in the college.

Responsibilities of students

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorized absence.
- Arrive in the college on time.

- Go to all their lessons and tutor time on time.
- Take responsibility for signing in at the student reception desk if they are late or are leaving the college site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at the college is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from the college that is not authorised by the college creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the college on the first day of absence.
- discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences well in advance.
- support the college with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter/email if a phone is unavailable.
- avoid taking their child out of the college for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Section 3: Recording Attendance

We will keep an attendance register, and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each college day and once during the second session.

Students must arrive in the college by 8.25am on each college day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session (period 5) will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.35pm

The register will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of college/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The college day begins with tutor time registration at 8.30am and all students are expected to be in tutor time at this time.
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded *U*. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded *M*. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist's appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action. Lateness after the close of register will be coded *U*.

Parents, guardians or carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.

If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the college and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the college may issue parents with a Penalty Notice.

Student will be required to attend a break time detention if they fail to have a valid reason for their lateness to tutor time.

Section 4: Reporting

First day absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and communicated in writing (e-mail or letter) on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence. You must do this even if you have already telephoned us or you can call into school and report to reception. If your child is absent we will:

- telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety, as well as ensuring their regular school attendance
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our pastoral team if absences persist

Where a child is on a child in need plan or looked after, contact will be made with the relevant social worker on day 1.

Third day absence

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family. At this point we may carry out a home visit to ensure the well-being of the child.

Tenth day absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carers then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. It would be helpful if you could ensure that we always have an up-to-date contact number.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence, for whatever reason, disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. Any student who is persistently absent will be monitored and put on an action plan, if required. A member of the pastoral team or our attendance officer will meet with students, and their families whose attendance cause concern. Where necessary, home visits are made to discuss ways attendance could be improved and the barriers that may need removing:

This could include:

- Agreeing attendance targets
- Signing a home/college contract
- Signposting to outside agencies
- Attending attendance matters clinics

In situations of persistent truancy, a parent/carers may be fined.

A welcome back

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all students are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the student is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other students and include details of how catch-up work will be organised.

Section 5: Requesting a Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers (in Thomas Estley's case Principal) may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that the Principal can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the College's main office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the college, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds, the parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

Taking holidays in term time (totaling 5 or more days over the academic year) will result in a penalty notice being issued.

Section 6: Understanding Types of Absence

Students are expected to attend the College every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. See Appendix 2 for examples of authorised absences other than illness or medical/dental appointments.
- unauthorised absence: is when the college has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from the college after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained.

The College can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to the college there is evidence they have been on holiday.

If the authenticity of an illness is in doubt, the college may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the college is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Section 7: Supporting Attendance

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the college, parents and the child.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance on our website
- report to you regularly on how your child is performing in the college, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- to share current attendance through the Satchel app/portal
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and tutor group achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through postcards and certificates

My child is trying to avoid coming to the college. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the college, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's *form tutor* immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding the college for a number of reasons – difficulties with college work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend the college and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend the college?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

College strategies for supporting attendance

As a college we encourage good attendance through a range of strategies including:

- Letters to parents to stress the importance of good attendance.
- Individual certificates presented termly where full attendance (100%) has been gained.
- End of termly celebration events where attendance is 96% or above.
- Attendance clinics at parents' evenings.
- Ensuring that good attendance is high profile in school through sharing weekly data in celebration assemblies and with staff.
- Regular assemblies reminding students on the importance of good attendance.

When attendance falls below expected levels for the college the following early interventions will take place:

- Courtesy letter to inform that attendance has fallen below the schools target of 96%
- Medical Letter (if absence is due to consistent illness)
- Tutor discussion
- Tutor, pastoral year lead phone call home

Section 8: Legal Measures for Tackling Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the college at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the college.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Thomas Estley Community College will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

- the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
- the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures may be used for students of compulsory school age who are registered at Thomas Estley Community College:

- Parenting contracts set at Attendance Meetings
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- a number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Section 9: Use of Data

Students' attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a learner's attendance is a cause for concern in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018. On a regular basis the Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance, in conjunction with the Attendance Officer and Trust Data Team will provide the following data:

Data	Regularity	Provided to
Daily registers	Daily	Tutors
Weekly registers	Weekly	Tutors
Individual learner % attendance data	Weekly	Tutors / Pastoral team
3+ day absence	Weekly	Pastoral team
Less than 95% attendance lists	Weekly	Attendance Officer / Pastoral team / Lead Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Tutor Group % attendance	Weekly	Tutors/Pastoral team
Persistent Absence/Severe Absence learners identified from 'sessions missed' data	Weekly	Pastoral Leaders / SENDCo / SLT / Academic Mentor / Lead DSL
Attendance data broken down into key groups i/c PA and SA	Monthly	SLT / Attendance officer

The College registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups. Student's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if their attendance is a cause for concern.

Section 10: Key Contacts

Senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in the College is: Cathy Cornelius – Vice Principal

If you have any queries in relation to your child's attendance, please email our attendance Officer: Natalie Johnston –njohnston@thomasestley.org.uk

- Year 7 Lead: Mr Munton
- Year 8 Lead: Miss Outridge
- Year 9 Lead: Mr Munton
- Year 10 Lead: Mrs Masters
- Year 11 Lead: Mrs Mozley

Appendix 1: Absence Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance

S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Appendix 2: Other Types of Absence

Religious observance

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the college will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Removal of a Child from the College

If your child is leaving the college (other than when transferring to another secondary school or leaving at the end of Year 11) parents are asked to:

- Give the attendance team comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to the college in writing
- Arrange a meeting to discuss home education. We strongly discourage parents from this option and would aim to work with you to keep your child in the college.

If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the colleges for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Principal to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from the college for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Principal and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

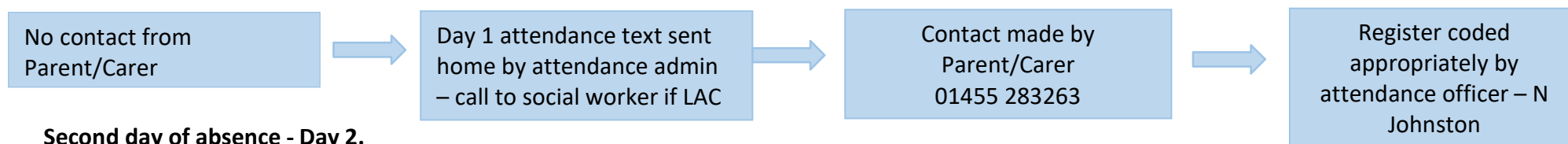
Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and, wherever possible, her return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

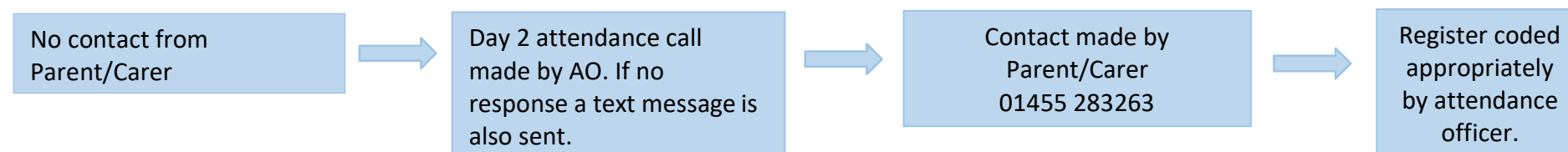
Appendix 3: Attendance Protocols

Protocol for monitoring and tracking student attendance

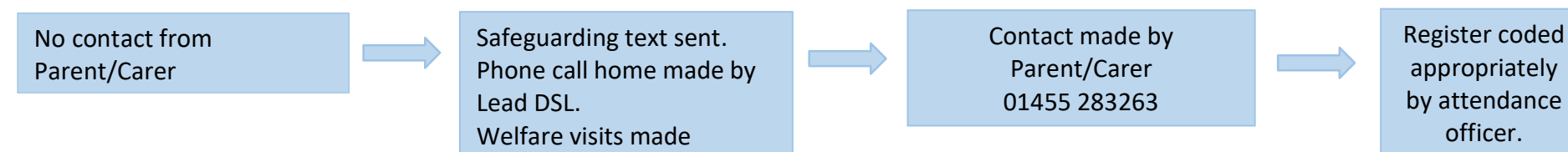
First day of absence - Day 1.



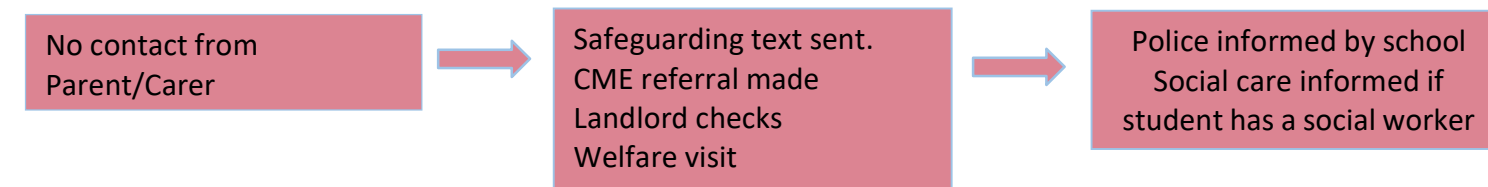
Second day of absence - Day 2.



Third day of absence- Day 3.



Child missing education



Appendix 4: Attendance thresholds

The following percentages of attendance will act as trigger points for intervention strategies to raise attendance.

<u>% Attendance</u>	<u>Action to be taken*</u>
100%-96%	Student praised Student shout outs in assembly Student success celebrated in newsletter Certificates/positive praise letters home Invitation to termly reward events Entered for half termly prize draw
Below 96 %	Tutor discussion Tutor phone call home Log initiative on SIMs to show action Letter home
93 %	Added to Year lead caseload discussion with student around barriers to attending school Letter home Year lead phone call home Parent clinic invitation
91-92 %	Fortnightly meeting Informal meeting with AO parents/carers/students Parent clinic invitation
90 % and below	Attendance panel meeting Fortnightly meeting between pastoral leader and AO to ensure swift action is taken to improve attendance Final warning letter Court pack Fines

Additional actions taken throughout the year to promote positive attendance:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance matters tutor time activity • Attendance matters posters • Newsletter edits • Student of the week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutor group of the week • In it to win it prize draw • Random act of kindness- PP/SEND • Post cards for improved attendance
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