



## Attendance Policy

Date Policy Drafted: September 2018

Member of staff Reviewing Policy: Wellbeing Manager and Assistant Principal (PDBW and Post 16)

Approved by Governing Body: October 2018

Reviewed by the Principal September 2018

Next Review Date: September 2021

## **The legal framework**

Under The Education Act 1999, parents are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under this Act.

The DFE advice on school attendance November 2016 has been consulted before reviewing this policy. This school believes that good attendance is vital for all students if they are to gain the most from the education we provide. There are clearly documented links between regular attendance and attainment. Every form tutor will regularly check the attendance of their class and will follow up a student's absences with appropriate personnel in school and where necessary the school will follow up with the child's parents. We hope that parents will assist us in our work of raising attendance levels throughout the school by:

- Ensuring the regular attendance of their child
- Informing the school when their child is absent from school
- Providing a reason for the absence
- Attending any meetings about their child's attendance, where necessary.

## **Aims**

At Lighthouse School we firmly believe that all students benefit from regular school attendance. The aim of this guidance is to minimise the amount of time lost due to absence in order to maximise the educational potential of every student. This can be achieved with the support of parents by ensuring absence, including holidays, is not taken during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'\*

At Lighthouse School, in order for an attendance record to be deemed good, it must be 96% or above:

- 100% Excellent Attendance
- 98% Very Good Attendance
- 96% Good Attendance

Each year, a number of students from every year group achieve 100% attendance, emphasising that it is an achievable target. Some achieve this level of attendance year upon year. Absence during term time, for any reason, interrupts a student's education and risks disrupting their educational progress.

- Students should aim for 100% attendance, The Department for Education state good attendance is 95% or better.
- 85% attendance means a student is missing 11/2 days of education every fortnight.
- Students with 85% and below are classified as Persistent Absentees
- 80% attendance all the way through secondary school is the equivalent of missing a whole year of education.

**Government figures show:**

- Below 90% attendance will give students only a 27% chance of achieving 5+A\*-C GCSEs, whatever their ability
- 90% attendance sounds quite good but..... 1 day off in 10 over 5 years equals 95 days which is 19 weeks and equates to half a school year

Only the Principal may authorise such absences. Absences without permission from school will be registered as unauthorised (equivalent to truancy).

\* 'Exceptional Circumstances' include:

- illness of student
- representative event (for example sport, music or school)
- religious observance
- family bereavement (immediate family)
- family crisis
- employer/further education/school interview

Any other 'exceptional circumstances' will be at the discretion of the Principal and a student's attendance record will be taken into account when deciding whether or not to grant permission for absence.

'Exceptional Circumstances' DO NOT include:

- looking after siblings
- birthday or other celebrations
- shopping
- attendance at local events e.g. The Great Yorkshire Show

**SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The school will:

- Contact parents on the first day if there is unexplained absence
- Consult parents if it is felt that absence is affecting progress
- Encourage punctuality and good attendance
- Discuss with parents any problems with attendance and punctuality
- Liaise with the LA over specific attendance issues where necessary
- Develop clear procedures to enable students to come to school.
- Support families to improve their child's attendance where necessary.
- Refer students with poor attendance to the Local Authority for additional support.
- Use the 'Fast track' prosecution process and 'Fixed penalty notices' where attendance does not improve.
- Ensure that all students and parents understand the issues and procedures for attendance.
- Ensure that all staff including administrative, support and non-teaching staff as well as Governors understand the issues and procedures for registration and attendance.
- Determine the correct absence code following Department for Education guidelines.

In cases where a student's attendance is consistently poor despite the above, the school may decide to initiate 'fast track' proceedings which may result in parent prosecution.

Please note that attendance records will be taken into account when considering a student's participation in extra-curricular activities, including school trips. Attendance records are also used when writing references for future employers, colleges or universities.

### **PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

By law parents have a duty to educate their children by ensuring regular attendance at school or otherwise. In order to facilitate this process, parents with children at Lighthouse School are expected to:

- Inform school by telephone (0113 4570605) on the first morning of any absence before 8:00am and leave a message
- Provide a note to cover the absence on the child's return to school
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time
- Ensure that their child completes missed work to avoid 'gaps' in their knowledge.
- Not take family holidays during term time (see further guidance below)
- To notify the relevant transport provider that the child is absent from school

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Principal is a key person in our school who motivates and leads the whole staff by demonstrating a commitment to promoting good attendance by:

- Ensuring regular celebrations of good attendance take place.
- Providing regular reports to the Governing Body about attendance.
- Ensuring the monitoring and implementation of the agreed policy and procedures.
- Being available, if appropriate, for parents who may wish to discuss specific problems or in-school difficulties which their child is experiencing.
- Ensuring that appropriate training is provided as required on attendance.

### **The Governors**

The Governing Body of the school is actively engaged in promoting good attendance by supporting and encouraging students and teachers in their work. The Governing Body will ensure that a governor is available to attend Fast Track Panel meetings and meet with parents where appropriate.

### **The Role of Form Tutors/Key Workers**

Form Tutors/Key Workers are ideally placed because of their regular contact with students to assess whether the explanations received for a child's absence are reasonable, or if the child is at an early stage in developing a pattern of absence.

In our school we recognise that building a good relationship with students is vital in promoting good attendance by:

- Ensuring that an accurate and timely register is taken using Scholarpack.
- Publicly praising those students who attend well or make an effort to improve their attendance.
- Using the school registration system accurately to record authorised absences.
- Referring unexplained absences or patterns to absence to the Wellbeing Manager or an Assistant Principal.
- Identifying students who are beginning to develop or have developed a pattern of absence (95% - 80%) and complete a referral to Attendance Panel, comprising the Wellbeing Manager, SENCo, Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Principal.
- Welcoming children back after they have been absent because of illness.
- Taking specific steps to assist children returning to school when they have been absent.
- Providing a positive role model through their own attendance and punctuality.

### **The Role of Clerical and Administrative Staff**

- Passing information received from some parents at the school to the form tutors/key workers regularly and consistently.
- Keeping an accurate register on Scholarpack.
- Analysing attendance data for trends and to identify students at risk.
- Making routine phone calls to parents and sending out standard letters to parents about their child's attendance.

### **The Role of Parents**

**This school believes that its students are able to achieve success when:**

- School and family work in partnership.
- Parents/carers take an active interest in their child's work.
- Parents/carers ensure that their child attends school regularly and do not allow time off from school for trivial or unnecessary reasons.
- Parents/carers contact the school on the first day of absence by 8:00am and provide the reason for absence and intended return date.
- Parents/carers avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. If this is unavoidable and an exceptional circumstance, an absence request form must be completed and authorised by the school *prior* to the holiday.
- Parents/carers ensure that any work that has been missed because of absence is completed, checking with the staff at school if necessary.

- Parents/carers attend any necessary meetings and respond as quickly as possible to any letters and information regarding concerns about their child's attendance.

### **The Role of Students**

This school believes that all students should attend regularly if they are to succeed and reach their full potential.

Students should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness.
- Arrive in school in time for registration by 9:15am (subject to Local Authority transport).
- If they arrive late (after 9:15 am), they will be awarded a late mark (subject to Local Authority transport).

### **ABSENCE IN TERM TIME**

#### **Regulations and Guidance**

The Department for Education has issued new advice regarding absence from school and prosecution; in force from 1 September 2013; make it clear that Principals may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If leave is granted the Principal can also determine the number of school days a child can be away from school.

The school will therefore consider requests for absence during term time if there are exceptional circumstances. Each request will be judged on a case by case basis taking into account individual circumstances, such as a particular family situation, the child's attainment, previous attendance, ability to catch up on missed schooling and proximity of key dates for tests and examinations.

Requests for absence in term time must be made 6 weeks prior to the event and in writing on the request form which is available from the school. It is strongly advised that holidays are not booked until authorisation has been received. 'Unauthorised absence' is the equivalent of truancy.

Parents may be required to attend an interview to discuss their request for term time absence. A student's progress and attendance will be considered as part of this process. Parents will be notified of the decision for an absence in term time within 10 school days of the date of the application.

With respect to any leave of absence taken in term time:

- If this is authorised it will be recorded as such on the school attendance registers.
- If the Principal does not authorise leave of absence and the parents take their child on holiday this will be recorded as unauthorised absence i.e. truancy.
- Should a student fail to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date and there is no communication from parents, an emergency EHCP may be triggered which could result in a change of placement.

**Communication of Student Absence**

Student absence should be reported to school via the main school phone number before 8.00am, giving the reason for absence. If a student has not arrived in school by 9:15 and no communication has been received, the school will attempt to contact parents/carers using the contact numbers for the student held on our school system. If there is no reply, a home visit will be made that day to ensure that both the child and the parents/carers are safe and well. If there is no answer at the child's home, school will contact Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Front Door service (Duty and Advice) for advice and will speak to the Duty Social Worker.

**Student not picked up by parent/carers or transport**

If a student has not been picked up by transport, has refused to leave via transport, or has not been picked up by parents or carers, parents/carers will be contacted using the contact numbers for that student held on our school system. If there is no reply, school will contact Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Front Door service (Duty and Advice) for advice and will speak to the Duty Social Worker.

**Internal absence from lessons**

The lead member of staff will take a register at the start of each lesson. If a student is absent from the lesson, but marked present in school, the Wellbeing Team will be alerted and the absence investigated to ensure that the student is safe and well. If absences develop a pattern or become persistent, this will be investigated and interventions put in place to support the student to return to the classroom.

**References for documents and guidelines**

The following documents have provided the guidelines for this policy:

Department for Education – School Attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities. November 2016

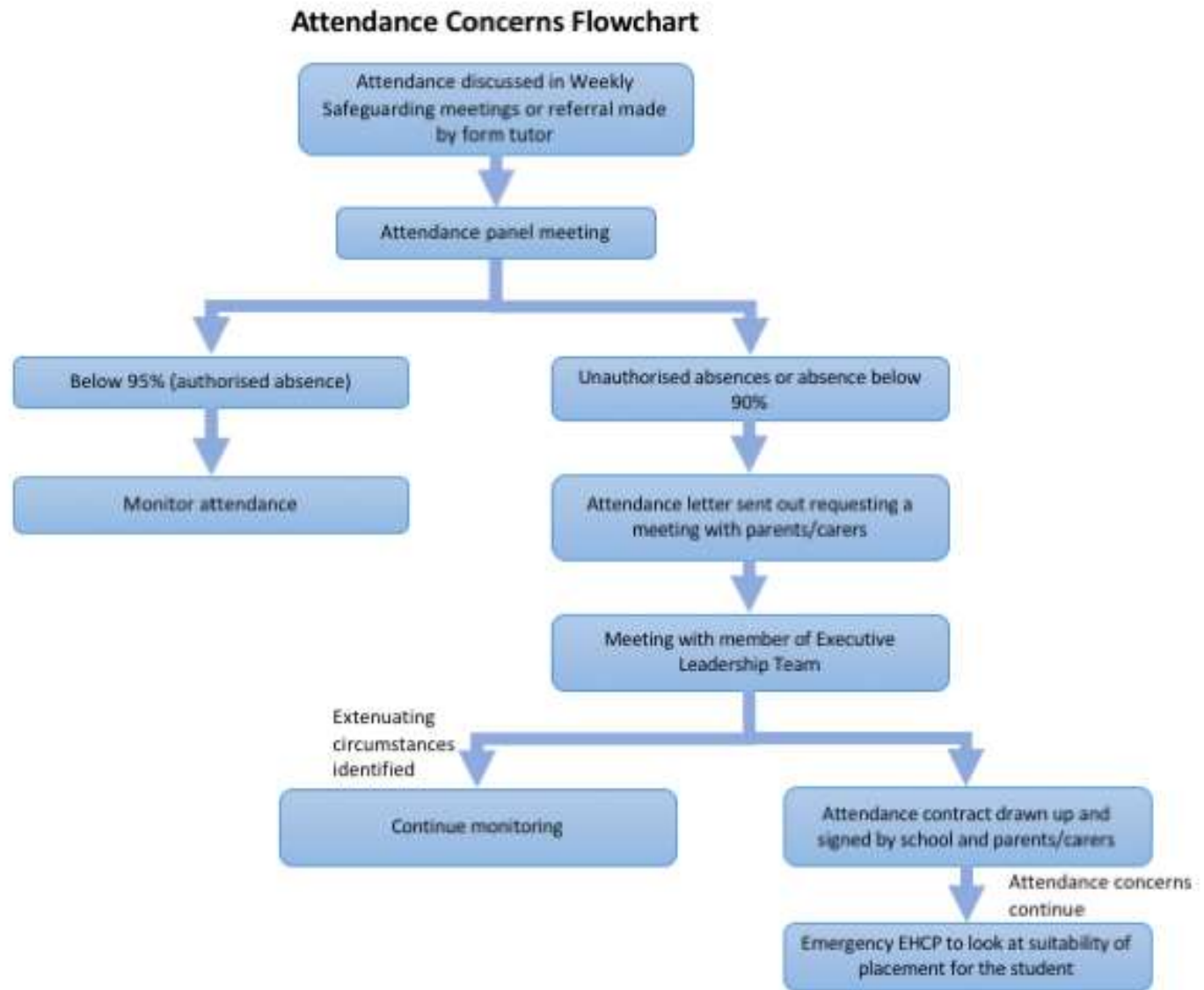
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Department for Education - Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, local authorities and the police. November 2015

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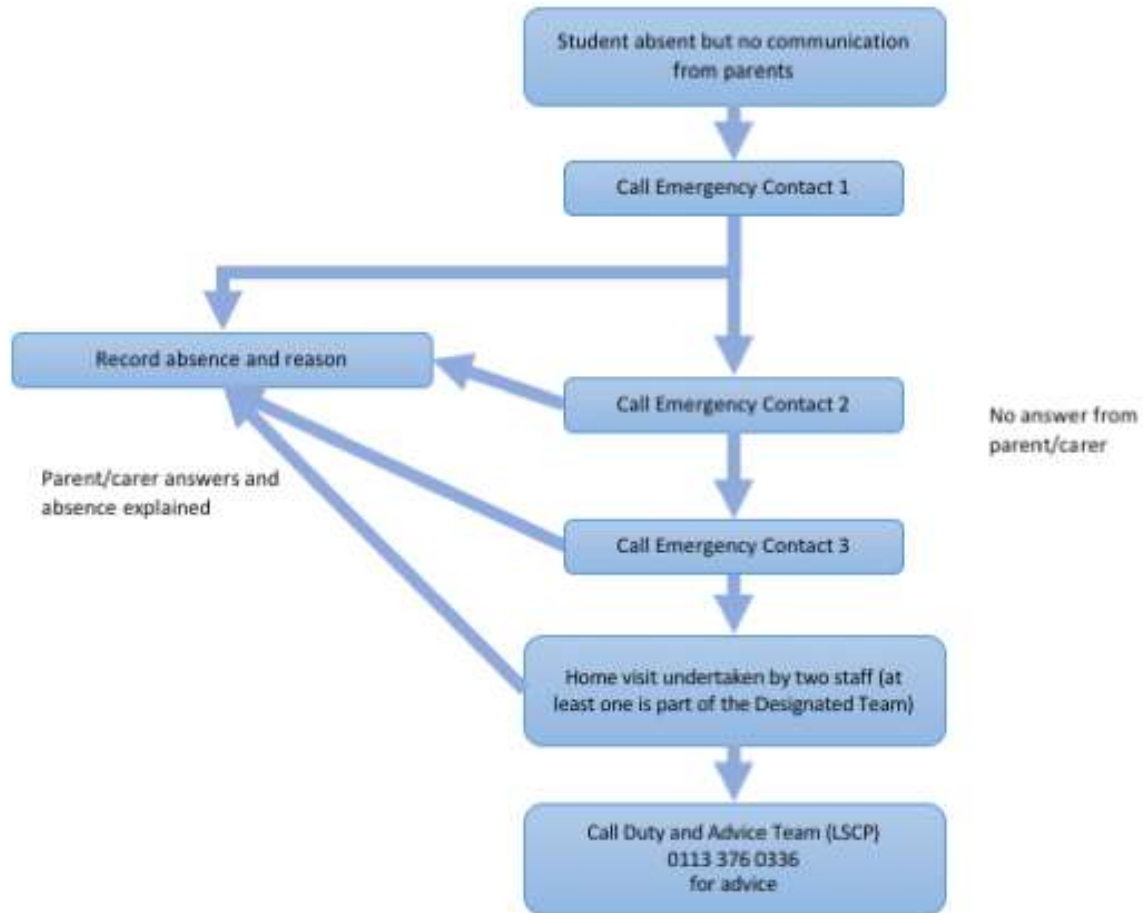


### Appendix 1: Attendance Concerns Flowchart

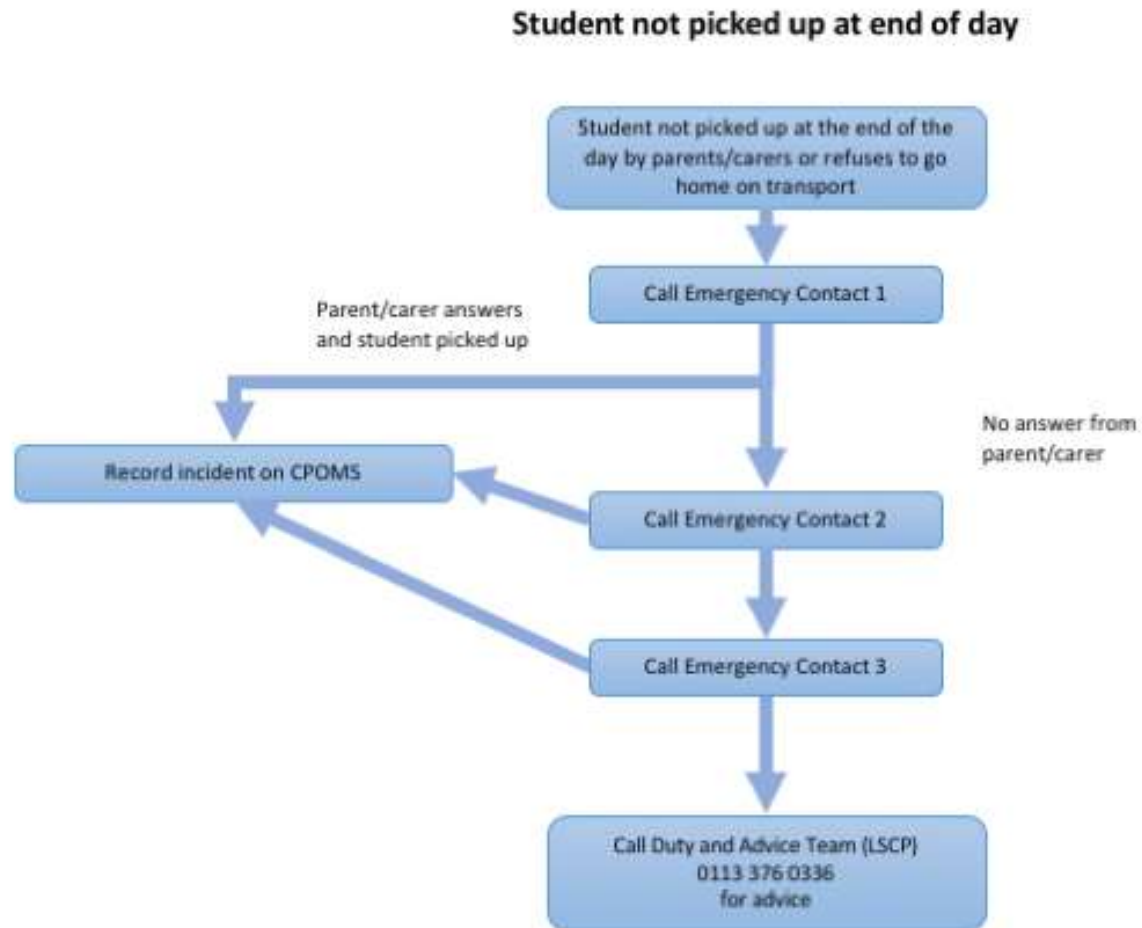


## Appendix 2: Absence without communication from parents/carers

### Absence without communication from parents/carers



### Appendix 3: Student not picked up at end of day flowchart



## Appendix 4: Letter regarding student with a high level of absence



{Date}

Dear

### Absences from school

I am writing to express my concern at [your child's or name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

Our school acknowledges that each family's circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our students' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

I therefore request that you contact the school as a matter of urgency to arrange a meeting with us to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

Principal



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## Appendix 5: Letter regarding student with unexplained absence



{Date}

Dear

### Unexplained absences from school

I am writing to express my concern at [your child's or name's] recent unexplained absence(s) from school.

Our school acknowledges that each family's circumstances are different and works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our students' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

I therefore request that you contact the school as a matter of urgency to arrange a meeting with us to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

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## Appendix 6: Letter regarding unauthorised holiday



{Date}

Dear

### **Holiday absence concern**

I am writing about your action in taking [your child/children or name/s] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date].

Our school works in partnership with parents to provide the best education for each child and believes that regular attendance through the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment. We expect you to consult the school before booking holidays that mean your child will be absent.

I am concerned, as I believe this absence will have a detrimental effect on [your child/children's or name/s] education.

I therefore request that you contact the school as a matter of urgency to arrange a meeting with us to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

Principal



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## Appendix 7: Attendance Contract



### Attendance Contract Template

<b>Date/time of meeting:</b>	
<b>Venue:</b>	

<b>Student name:</b>	
<b>Date of birth:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>School:</b>	

<b>Present at meeting:</b>	
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<b>Action agreed</b>
<p><b>EXAMPLES OF ACTION AGREED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student will arrive at school by 8.30 a.m. every day.</li> <li>• Parent will inform the school on the first day of a sickness absence and provide a note upon student's return.</li> <li>• Parent will provide medical evidence for every sickness absence student may incur.</li> <li>• Are any issues preventing student from attending regularly, school staff will be informed?</li> </ul>

<b>Attendance target:</b>	100%
<b>Timescale for improvement:</b>	

<b>Date for review meeting:</b>	
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I confirm that this Attendance Action Plan was agreed by all present.

Signed:

- ..... Parent/carer
- ..... Student
- ..... School Representative
- ..... Other Agency

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## Appendix 8: Letter approving absence in term time



{Date}

Dear

### **Your request for absence in term time**

Thank you for your request to take [your child/children or name/s] out of school between [date] and [date].

In this case, I am prepared to agree to your request.

I have not made this decision lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our students and believes regular attendance through the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Each request for a absence in term time is considered on its merits at the time. Please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not mean I will agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

Principal



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## Appendix 9: Letter approving absence (religious observance) in term time



{Date}

Dear

### Your request for absence for religious observance

Thank you for your request to take [your child/children or name/s] out of school on [date] because of [insert religious occasion].

In this case, I am prepared to agree to your request and it will be considered an authorised absence.

Each request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time. We recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity. However, please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent, and does not necessarily mean I will agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

Principal



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## Appendix 10: Letter declining request for absence in term time



{Date}

Dear

### Your request for absence in term time

Thank you for your request to take [your child/children or name/s] out of school between [date] and [date].

In this case I regret I cannot consent to your request.

Our school, while acknowledging that each family's circumstances are different, is dedicated to the education of all our students and believes regular attendance through the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time and many variables are taken into consideration.

Because each request is unique, my decision in this instance cannot be directly compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and nor does it set a precedent. It does not mean I will not agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

I am sorry to have to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Sullivan

Principal



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