



Castle View Primary School

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Castle View Primary School

Whole School Attendance Policy – September 2020

DRAFT

Introduction:

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - families, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;

Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;

Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;

The pastoral team will work with families to help improve children's attendance;

Celebrate good and improving individual and class attendance through, for example, whole school assemblies, certificates and rewards;

Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school as well as between classes and other schools;

Run promotional events when families, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school;

Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;

Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including families, pupils, staff and governors;

Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance;

Liaise with other professionals and schools to share information to promote good attendance.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. However, we encourage families to try to get appointments out of school hours and, if this is not possible, to bring children to school before and after appointment. Appointment cards/letters for medical appointments may be requested in order to authorize an absence or when withdrawing a pupil before the end of the school day.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- families keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed;
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Head teacher.

Families should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from families before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the families and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need families' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and families will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their families are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

Penalty Notices:

A penalty notice can be issued if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in one term or 14 or more unauthorised absences in 2 consecutive terms. A session is a morning or an afternoon and a whole day is 2 sessions. The penalty notice will result in a fine of £120.00 being issued by the Local Authority to each parent or carer of the pupil. A fine would be issued for each pupil if there was more than one.

For example, 2 parents or carers with 1 child will incur a total fine of £240.00, 2 parents or carers with 2 children will incur a fine of £480.00.

Fines are halved if paid within 21 days. If they are not paid, then parents and carers receive a summons to attend a court hearing.

Education Supervision Orders:

School can apply to the Local Authority for an Education Supervision Order to be issued by the family court when a child does not attend school regularly and all other interventions have failed to result in an improvement in attendance.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone (absence messages can be left on the school answerphone) or you can call into school and report absence to the office;

Keep school informed if the absence is more than one day.

If your child is absent we will:

Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;

Telephone on subsequent days if we have not been informed that the absence is for more than one day;

May visit the home address if unable to contact the family by telephone;
Invite you in to discuss the situation with our pastoral team and/or headteacher if absences persist;
If a reason for absence is not provided within 2 weeks, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised;
Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol;
Speak directly to the child about their absence.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact families about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.
School requires at least two contact numbers for your child. When telephoning about an absence and there is no response from the first contact then school will telephone the other contacts listed.

In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality (see appendix):

Families are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support families in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality.

This includes:

Meetings in school between families, pupils, pastoral staff and the Head teacher;
Parenting contracts;
Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team);
Attendance panels;
Penalty notices;
Education supervision orders.

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If attendance does not improve, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court or Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at **8.50am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. The school gates are opened at **8:30a.m.** and children are asked to go straight to their classrooms. The gates are

closed at 8:50a.m. Any children who arrive after 8:50a.m. will need to sign in at the school office and will be then taken to class by a member of school staff. A late mark will be recorded on the register.

At **9.20am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulations, if your child arrives after 9:20a.m they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If you are having problems getting your child to school on time, you can speak to a member of staff for help. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the pastoral team and / or Head teacher to resolve the problem.

Leave in Term Time:

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect families to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office. Requests will only be authorised if the circumstances surrounding the request are considered to be exceptional by the Head teacher.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by families, to be exceptional.

In considering the request, we will also look at various factors such as:

The timing of the request;

When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible;

Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs;

When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence;

Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

In certain circumstances, families risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013).

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Families must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance in this school:

Families:

Support children in developing regular routines in relation to bedtime, healthy eating and getting regular exercise;

Ensure children attend regularly and punctually;

Contact school on 1st day of absence;

Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using the appropriate form;

Participating in school life such as families' evenings and special events;

Showing an interest in and supporting your children's work at school;

Cooperate with support and interventions offered by school or other agencies such as Parenting Contracts and the Common Assessment Framework.

Pupils:

Work with your family to develop regular routines in relation to bedtime, healthy eating and getting regular exercise;

Get to school on time and every day;

Speak to a grown up at home or in school if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance;

Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies.

Headteacher, as School Attendance Lead:

Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school;

Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters as well as supporting children and families;

Identify the most appropriate adult to liaise with and support vulnerable families and children;

Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities;

Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance;

Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify families of this decision;

Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process;

Decide when to refer concerns about a child's attendance to the Local Authority Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST);

Decide when to apply to court officers for issuing penalty notices.

Designated Staff:

Participate in liaison between staff to ensure good communication about attendances;
First day response: Contact families if a reason for absence has not been provided;
Input and update the attendance registers;
Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups;
Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to families;
Work with children and families to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1, 2 and 3 (see appendix), and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate.

All School Staff:

Participate in liaison between staff to ensure good communication about attendances;
Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment;
Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum;
Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns;
To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance;
To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff;
Participate in relevant training.

Governors

Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly;
Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy;
Receive regular attendance reports from the head teacher;
Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures;
Work with the headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered.
This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

School targets, projects and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance we aim for as a school is **96%** and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we all know that good attendance is important for education in school.

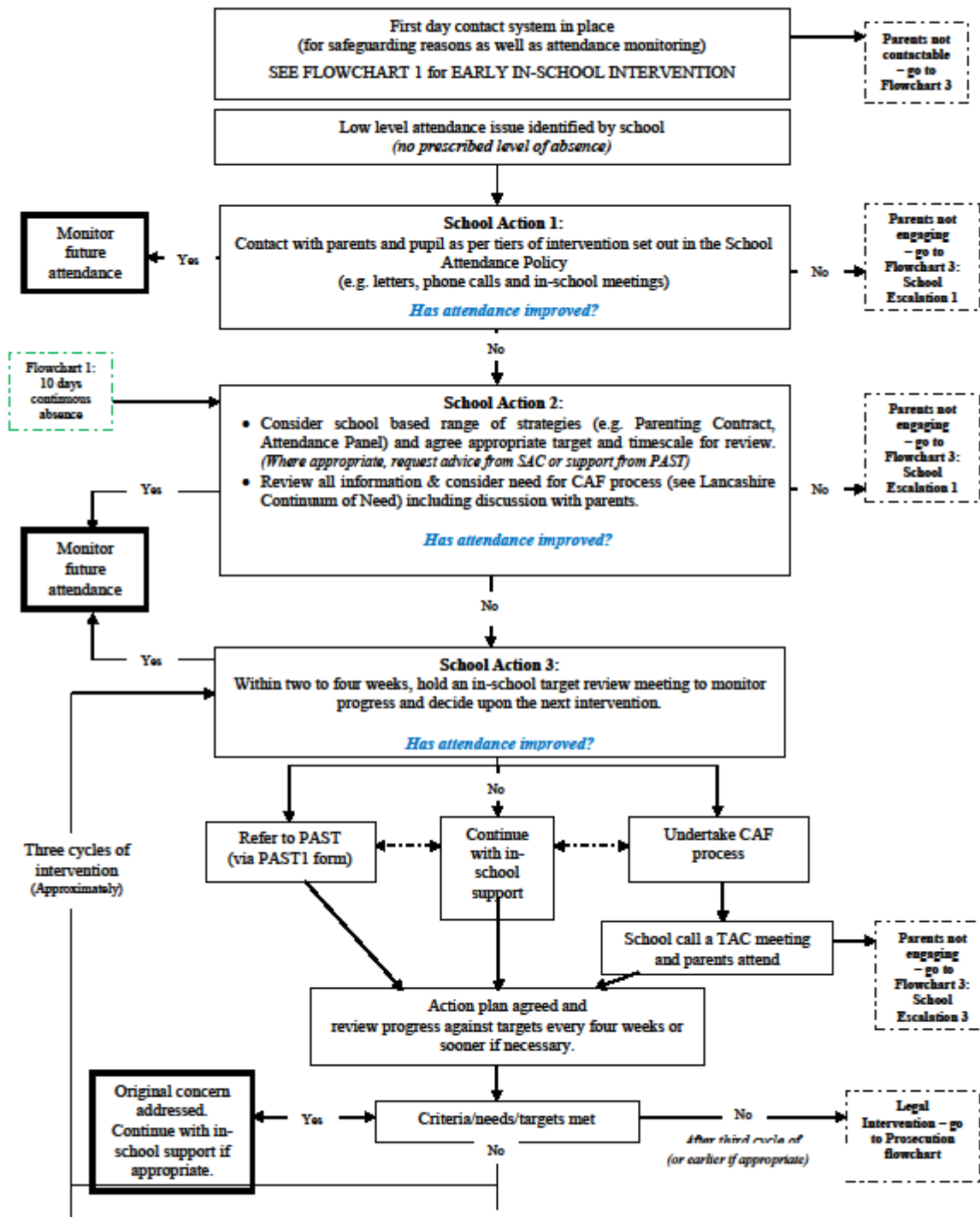
Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletters and we ask for your full support.

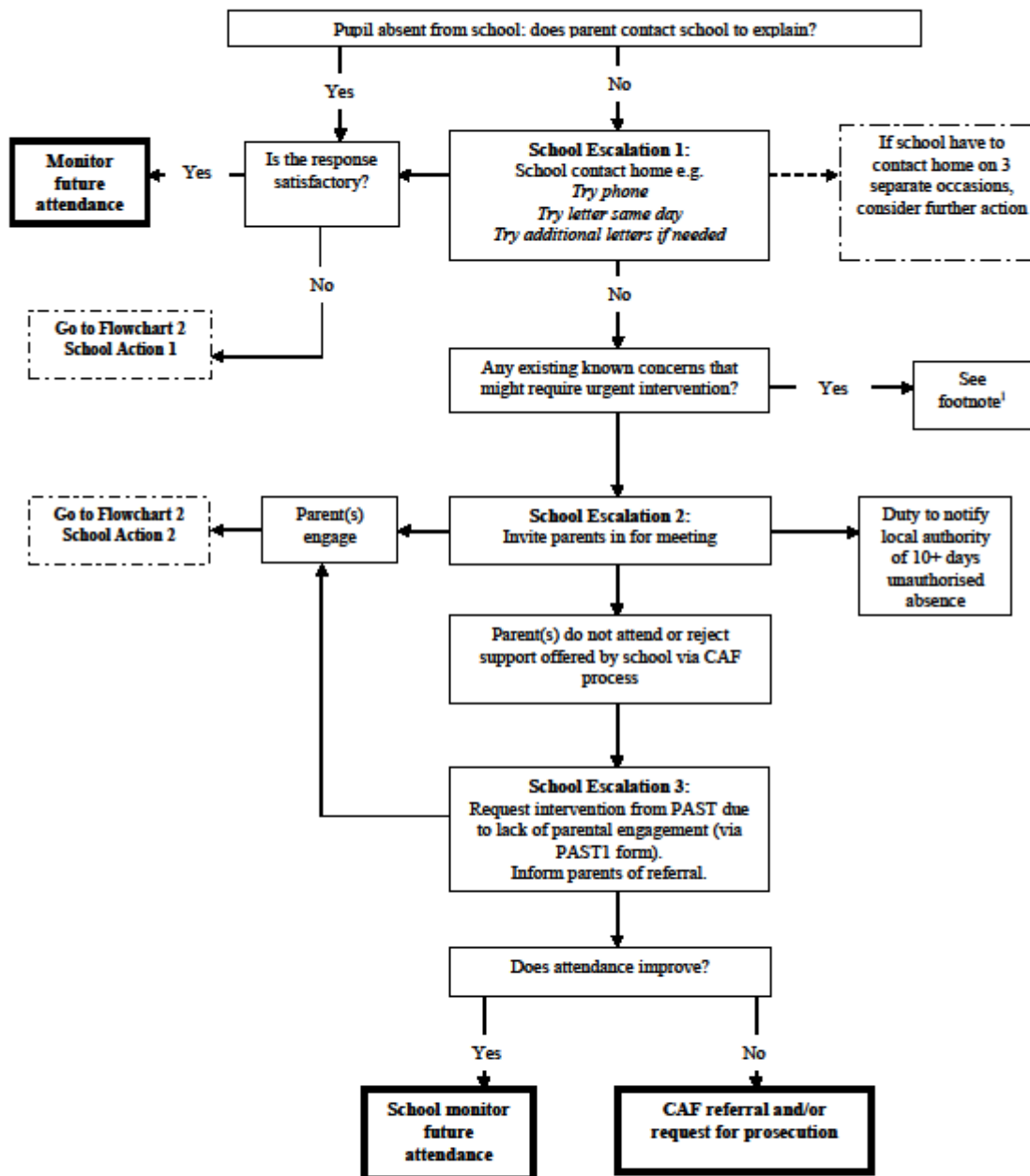
Summary:

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to families and to promote attendance. Equally, families have a duty to make sure that their children attend.
All school staff are committed to working with families and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

FLOWCHART 2: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES



FLOWCHART 3: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES HARD TO ENGAGE PARENTS



¹In some instances, more urgent notification to the local authority may be appropriate if contact with parents/carers is problematic e.g.

- Children Looked After – schools should notify the CLA Service Manager
- Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
- Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.