

MILTON KEYNES EDUCATION TRUST



New Chapter Primary School

Attendance Policy

Headteacher	Mrs J Mickleburgh MBA
Chair of Governors	Mr S Haddy

Date approved by Board of Governors	September 2014
Committee	LTW
Review date	March 2017
Responsible officer	Headteacher

Revision	Date	Author	Comments
5.4	28.1.2017	JM	Removed 'allowed Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year'.
6.1.c	28.1.2017	JM	Point added
6.2	28.1.2017	JM	Changed HT to Pastoral Lead and Trust's Welfare Officer
6.2	28.1.2017	JM	Persistent Absence changed to 90%
8.1	28.1.2017	JM	10% from 15%
8.5	28.1.2017	JM	Removed 'and the Local Authority YOT team.'
6.2	2.09.2017	ES	Changed Pastoral team to lead and added MKET family support worker lii added parent contracts where targets are set added due to changes in LA practice Identifying the underlying issues and if appropriate, promptly engaging additional support (such as Strengthening Families, CFP, CAMHS, Inclusion and Intervention Service or SEN Service). Where there are additional concerns about a child or family a referral will be made to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Appendix 1	2.09.2017	ES	Changed first line added: by law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education and removed 97% Second warning letter – revamped in line with LA advice.
1.0	30.01.18	ES	At NC, we actively promote and encourage 100% attendance
1.4	30.01.18	ES	Removed: or the Youth and Offending Team will be contacted, and this may result in court action for the parents/carers Added: or legal action may also be considered
6.2	30.01.18	ES	Removed: attendance below 90% Added: persistent absences and/or lateness
8.1	30.01.18	ES	Remove: 10% or more schooling across the year Added: the equivalent to ½ a day or more a week
9.0	30.01.18	ES	Added: significantly lower than 100% attendance Amended letters

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Policy

This policy is based on the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance.

These requirements are contained in:

- **The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6),458(4)&(5) and (7);**
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006;**
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010; and**
- **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.**
- Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments come into force on 1 September 2013.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Good attendance and punctuality are skills for life. Full attendance is a critical factor in ensuring positive educational outcomes for our pupils. Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community at New Chapter.

1.2 A high priority is given to emphasising to parents and pupils, the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents play a vital role and that there needs to be strong home–school links and robust communication systems that can be utilised, whenever there is concern about attendance.

1.3 Attendance is monitored daily and if there are problems which affect a pupil’s attendance we will strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach, aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

1.4 If poor attendance continues then fixed notice penalty fines will be imposed or legal action may also be considered. Schools have a duty in law, to refer any absence of 10 days or more when they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about absence to the Local Authority/Trust.

2.0 Aims:

2.1 New Chapter Primary School seeks to ensure that all pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential.

2.2 The school will provide a stimulating curriculum in which to achieve this. We will also strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment in which each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

2.3 All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

2.4 The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

2.5 New Chapter Primary School will establish effective communication with pupils, parents and appropriate external agencies to ensure advice and support is provided.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Parents have a duty to educate their children “suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and any special educational needs which they may have” either by regular attendance at school or otherwise under Section 7 of The Education Act 1996.

3.2 Parents whose children are registered at school are then responsible for ensuring that they attend punctually, regularly and stay at school.

3.3 It is recognised at New Chapter that any child can sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents 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 often makes things worse. Permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by the parent.

3.4 Schools are required:

- a. To call the attendance register twice per day – at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day. This shows whether a child is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. Only the school can authorise an absence, not the parents. This is why we at New Chapter, ask for information about the cause of each absence from school, either in writing or by telephone.
- b. To ensure that attendance registers are kept, in accordance with legal requirements and the policy of the school.
- c. To inform the Local Authority/Trust about pupils who do not attend school regularly or who have been continuously absent for two weeks or more (unless the absence is covered by a medical certificate).
- d. To include data on authorised and unauthorised absences in the school prospectus and the governors’ annual report to parents, in accordance with Department for Education and Skills (DfE) requirements.

Practice:

4.0 Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a legitimate reason such as illness or other unavoidable cause.

5.0 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'consent' has been given. This includes:

- a. Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- b. Truancy before or during the school day.
- c. Absences which are not properly explained.
- d. Children who arrive at school too late to get a 'U' mark – at New Chapter this means arriving after 9.20am.
- a. Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays/anniversaries.
- b. Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- c. Oversleeping.
- d. Absent to look after an unwell sibling/parent
- e. Inadequate uniform / lunch arrangements.
- f. Confusion over terms dates.

5.1 New Chapter Primary School will not authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, haircuts, etc.

5.2 Leave of absence may be given in an emergency, e.g. bereavement. For medical appointments that are unavoidably during school time, an appointment card/letter is required to be shown. If a child has a medical appointment, it is better for the child to attend school for registration at the beginning of the morning or afternoon and then be collected for their appointment.

5.3 Any unauthorised absences will be monitored and may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

5.4 Exceptional Leave of Absence: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Amendments to the 2006 regulations have removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

5.4a The school may authorise, in advance, a request for a period determined by the Headteacher for the purpose of exceptional leave. All application letters for exceptional leave must be made at least two weeks in advance. It is at the discretion of the Headteacher that a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorised. In making a decision, the Headteacher will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave during term time.

5.4b Parents/carers are asked to give the school as much notice as possible when applying for a leave of absence. They should complete a Leave of Absence Request Form (available from the Office). In making the decision whether to authorise the absence request, the school will consider:

- i. The child's current attendance record;
- ii. Any previous term time absences;
- iii. The length of leave requested;
- iv. Whether the absence coincides with a key assessment period (e.g. SATs test);
- v. The reasons given for the request;
- vi. Whether the parents/carers are restricted in terms of leave from their employer (written confirmation may be sought on this).

5.4c Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the Headteacher, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice.

6.0 Procedures for dealing with absences

6.1 At New Chapter we ask that parents/carers inform the school by telephone on the first morning of a child's absence, giving the reason for their absence. It is helpful if this can be followed up by a letter on the child's return to school.

- i. Registers are taken at New Chapter at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions (8.50am and 12.30 pm EYFS/KS1 and 1.30 pm KS2). The registers are then monitored daily by office staff.
- ii. All absences will be followed up in the following ways:
 - a. Checking the list of absences reported by telephone calls
 - b. First Day Contact – a phone call to parents/carers during the morning (if parents have not already notified school of their child's absence) asking for the reason for their child's absence from school
 - c. For a few children being monitored by the Pastoral team they might receive a home visit.
- iii. Reasons for absences will be entered in the child's attendance record. (A copy of this will be sent home to parents/carers with their child's annual report)
- iv. Children who arrive late (between 9.00am and 9.20am) will be recorded as late, receiving 'L' on their attendance record.
- v. Children who arrive exceptionally late (after 9.20am when the register officially closes) will require an explanation for their lateness (from their parents/carers) and will be marked as 'U' on their attendance record (meaning unauthorised absence).
- vi. The office staff collates attendance figures on a weekly basis. Any unexplained absences will be followed up at this point. A letter may be sent, or a Pastoral team member may speak to a parent/carer in the playground at the start or end of the day.
- vii. Any absences which remain unexplained will be recorded as unauthorised.

6.2 Attendance is monitored daily and reported weekly in a meeting with the Pastoral Leader and MKET Family Support Worker. Any child with persistent absences and/or lateness will be discussed at that meeting and appropriate action will be taken. This may include:

- i. Further monitoring of attendance by the Pastoral Lead and MKET Family Support Worker.
- ii. Home Visits.
- iii. A meeting between the parent/carer and the Pastoral Lead and MKET Family Support Worker to explore ways of improving attendance, (including parent contracts where attendance targets are set) with a follow-up meeting arranged to monitor progress.
- iv. Identifying the underlying issues and if appropriate, promptly engaging additional support (such as Strengthening Families, CFP, CAMHS, Inclusion and Intervention Service or SEN Service). Where there are additional concerns about a child or family a referral will be made to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- v. A further meeting, also involving the Head or Deputy Head may be necessary, if there is no improvement in attendance.

6.3 In extreme circumstances, a parent/carer can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, where they are considered capable but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. Such parents/carers may also find themselves prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. In every case, a pupil will have had a minimum of 10 school sessions (i.e. 5 school days) lost to unauthorised absences over a 12 week period before a Fixed Penalty Notice is considered. Further details on this are available in the Education Welfare leaflet '*Fixed Penalty Notices to Address Poor Attendance at School*'. (£60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days).

7.0 Contact with the school

It is vital that parents/carers keep the school fully informed of the reasons for any absences their child has.

7.1 It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to provide the school with up-to-date contact information, in particular telephone numbers, so that they can be reached throughout the day.

7.2 It is also important that parents respond promptly to any voice mail or answer phone messages they receive from the school.

8.0 Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

8.1 A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss the equivalent to ½ a day or more a week for any reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects.

8.2 New Chapter school expects parents'/carers' fullest support and cooperation to tackle such absenteeism.

8.3 All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority. Parents/carers will be informed of the concern immediately.

8.4 PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. This is combined with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. Parents will be invited into an Attendance Panel meeting to discuss ways of supporting the child and family to attend school more frequently.

8.5 All PA cases are automatically made known to the MKET's Family Worker.

9.0 Procedures to promote high attendance at New Chapter

- 100% Attendance Certificates awarded termly;
- 100% Attendance Certificates and prizes awarded annually;
- Individual incentives aimed at specific problems;
- Letters to parents/carers of pupils with significantly lower than 100% attendance.
- Weekly trophy awarded to the class with the highest attendance during the previous week

10.0 Extended Leave of Absence

At New Chapter, we recognise that there may be circumstances where parents/carers request a longer leave of absence, and in exceptional circumstances these may be authorised.

10.1 These may include returning to the family's country of origin, or a fixed short-term period of work for a parent/carer. Where such leave is authorised, the school will provide a study pack of work for the child, which parents/carers are encouraged to help their child complete and return to school.

10.2 It is important that a return date is set for the child to return to the school. If a child fails to return after an agreed date, their place at New Chapter Primary School may be rescinded.

11.0 Leave of absence work - During agreed extended leaves of absences, the school will provide work for the children to complete. However, it may be appropriate for the child to complete additional work as homework on their return and the school would ask that parental support is given in this instance.

12.0 Extended Absence through Medical Circumstances

If a child has an extended absence due to a severe medical issue or accident, then the school will maintain regular contact with the family to monitor the situation and decide on a date for returning to school.

12.1 Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate for the school to provide work for the child to complete.

Appendix 1: First Letter

<name>
<house number><street>
<district>
<town>
<postcode>

<Date>

Dear <parental salutation>

FIRST ATTENDANCE LETTER

Name: **<Child's Name>** Class:

It has come to my attention that <forename>'s attendance is currently at < >%. This is significantly below the government's expectation, by law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education.

We appreciate that some absences will be due to illness but the above attendance is significantly lower than expected. We will continue to monitor your child's attendance over the next few weeks and we hope to see a significant improvement. However, if their attendance does not improve, all future absences for illness will need to be supported by medical evidence i.e. doctor's stamp / appointment card. Failure to provide such evidence will mean that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which could result in you receiving a fine or being taken to court. Please note that holidays taken during term time are automatically unauthorised.

Should you wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Gabriel (MKET Family Support Officer - Attendance) on 01908 677954 (ext. 3029), mobile number 07730 320484 or e-mail: lgabriel@mket.org.uk.

Please make every effort to bring [name] into school, unless they are extremely unwell.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Mickleburgh MBA

Headteacher Appendix 2: Second Letter

<name>
<house number><street>
<district>
<town>
<postcode>

<Date>

Dear

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE WARNING LETTER

NAME:

DOB:

YEAR:

Section 7 of The 1996 Education Act states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Further to my previous attendance letter on <date> there has been no improvement in your child's attendance. During the period <date range>, the school was open for <number> sessions. <Name> attended on only <number> occasions and/or was late after the register closed on <number> occasions. <Name>'s overall attendance is now **X** %. I am writing to advise you that you could face a legal sanction if you fail to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

If <name>'s attendance does not improve over the next four weeks, I will write to invite you to an Attendance Interview with Miss Sweet (Pastoral Lead) and Ms Gabriel (MKET Family Support Worker) to discuss how to move matters forward.

If there is no improvement after the attendance meeting, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. Under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued and a fine of £60, which is payable within 21 days or £120 will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. Alternatively, legal sanctions may commence and the Local Authority will invite you to a PACE interview. You will receive a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act* which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates' court under Section 444 (1) or Section 444 (1a) Education Act, 1996: if convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an "aggravated" offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) school weeks as set out in the Milton Keynes Code of Conduct for their issue.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Mickleburgh MBA
Headteacher

*Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984

Appendix 3: GP stamp

To the GP surgery,

I am supporting _____ and her/his family with school attendance matters. I would appreciate if you could confirm, by surgery stamp, when _____ attends the surgery to see a GP/nurse.

Thank you,

Date:

Surgery stamp

I _____ parent/guardian give my permission for the surgery to confirm that I visited the surgery with _____ on the above date(s).

Appendix 4: Letter when attendance has improved

<name>
<house number><street>
<district>
<town>
<postcode>

<Date>

Dear <Parent salutation>

Attendance Update

Name: **<Child's Name>** Class:

When I first wrote to you on <date>, <Forename>'s attendance was only <previous attendance>%. At this time, I made you aware of the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on learning and asked you to support your child by ensuring they came to school regularly and on time.

I am very pleased to inform you that since my last letter, <forename>'s attendance has improved and is now currently <% attendance>%. Although, this is still below the national expected level that all children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education. I feel that <Name> should be congratulated on this improvement and I would like to thank you for your support.

We look forward to <name's> attendance continuing to improve and if there are any other issues in the future please contact Miss Sweet (Pastoral Lead) or Miss Gabriel (MKET Family Support Officer – Attendance).

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Mickleburgh MBA
Headteacher

Appendix 5: Panel Meeting Letter

<name>
<house number><street>
<district>
<town>
<postcode>

<Date>

Dear <Name>

ATTENDANCE PANEL MEETING LETTER

Name: **<Child's Name>** Class:

I am writing to invite you to an Attendance Panel meeting at New Chapter Primary School on <Date & Time> with Miss Sweet (Pastoral Lead) and Miss Gabriel (MKET Family Support Officer – Attendance).

This meeting will provide an opportunity for us to discuss how we can improve <Name's> attendance and for you to raise any issues that you may have. We want to support you, so that <Name> can attend school and fulfil their potential.

Please can you contact the school office on 01908-679809 to confirm your attendance or to rearrange the meeting.

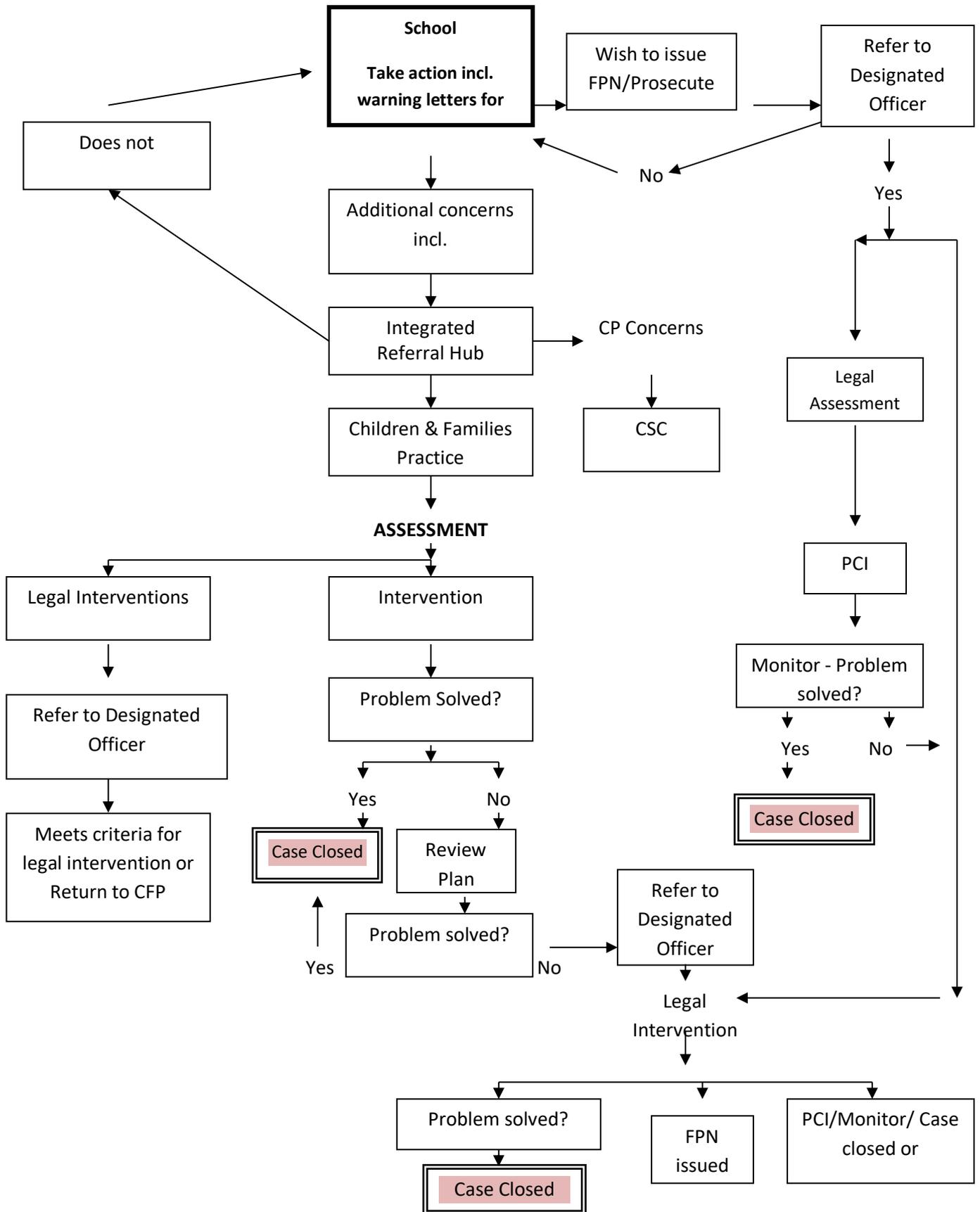
We look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Mickleburgh MBA
Headteacher

Appendix 6: Pathways for nonattendance

Designated Officer = School Attendance Officer (Legal Interventions)



Appendix 7: School checklist for issue of FPNs for unauthorised absences in term time.

	YES/NO
Does the school have the FPN process in their attendance policy for term time holiday?	
Name of Student:	
Date of Birth:	
Year:	
Attendance:	
Attendance last year (if beginning of year i.e. prior to half term):	
Is attendance over 95% after holiday taken?	
Parent 1: Full Name (including first name) of parent or carer:	
Parent 2: Full Name (including first name) of parent or carer:	
Address of Parent(s) or carers:	
What reason did the parent give for requesting a term-time holiday? (Copy of request form to be enclosed) #	
Was a letter sent informing the parent that the holiday was unauthorised and that a FPN might follow? (If so, the letter sent to the parent MUST be attached). #	
Were there any verbal communications with the parent?	
Dates of Absence (Attendance Certificate to be attached) #	
Has the parent requested a holiday previously?	
If so, was the holiday authorised?	
Are there other attendance concerns?	

Name of school referrer Date.....

If information is not provided by schools to support the FPN application then the FPN will NOT be processed.