

# Primary Attendance Policy

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**NB: Please ensure that you read Appendix A in conjunction with the main body of the policy to see specific times of the school day and registration periods**

## 1 Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos. Good attendance and punctuality are vital for any child to succeed at school and regular school attendance from an early age creates a culture about the importance of education and learning so that all can benefit equally. Every day missed has an impact on their learning and persistent absenteeism means they fall behind significantly and are at risk of achieving their full potential.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school on time and regularly.

Being on time at the start of the school day is important as it enables teaching to begin on time. Having a good routine and being punctual helps children understand the significance of being organised and arriving promptly every day as they grow up and are ready for a life beyond school.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning from the early years and remains across the whole of their education.

## 2 Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to the working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department of Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn 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 \(Pupil Registration\)\(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3 Recording attendance

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil 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 C for DfE attendance codes

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by opening time (please see Appendix A) on each school day. The register for the first session will be conducted as per the timeframe shown in Appendix A (this is not longer than 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the registration period or first lesson in which registration takes place). The register for the second session will be taken in accordance with the information shown in Appendix A.

**At Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, we use the term 'registration' to mean the period of time from a register opening to a register closing.**

### 3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by the school's opening time (Appendix A) or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Unacceptable reasons for being absent are for example, uniform not being ready or clean, headlice, transport issues, home appointments and other reasons deemed to be unacceptable by the school.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil'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 school 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.

#### Reporting an unplanned absence

We do understand that there may be times, when a child is ill and the best place to be is at home with an adult. A sick child may be unhappy at school and unable to cope with schoolwork. If the illness is infectious, other children and teachers may also become ill, so the child must be kept at home.

Should your child have a highly infectious illness, tell us as soon as the doctor has confirmed this.

#### Procedures

Parents must notify the school by telephone if a child is absent or late.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning **before the school's opening time (Appendix A)** if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. There is an answering machine in the main office so a message can be left at any time. **A verbal message from a child is not acceptable.**

We will follow up any unexplained absence or lateness with a phone call and/or a letter and a possible home visit will take place after school have notified the Local Authority of a child's absence. The school will be notified of the outcomes following the home visit.

If your child needs to leave school during the day, please let us know in advance. Unless we have contact from the parent, the child will not be allowed to leave the school premises.

Punctuality and absences are regularly monitored by both the school and the school's Attendance Officer. Attendance is a legal requirement which is enforced by our schools, our Trust and our home Local Authority - further details can be found on their website.

As a Trust we have a system in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing addition services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness.

Some examples of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- There are frequent, odd days of absence due to reported illness.
- Attendance is less than 90%.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.
- Where there is a particular medical problem and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support.

Information is transferred to other schools in the event of a transfer/midyear admission, in line with GDPR by way of electronic data systems, common transfer form, national curriculum assessment records.

### 3.3 Medical or dental appointments

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary; an appointment at the start or end of the day would help minimise the amount of time out of class.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence **if** this has been agreed; **advance notice is required for authorising these absences.**

**Parents must phone or give written notice at least 48 hours before the appointment and provide evidence of the appointment to office staff.**

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### 3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

We track punctuality of all learners across the Trust and will ask to meet with families in the event that punctuality becomes a recurring issue. We have high expectations for punctuality and will follow up if the punctuality of any child falls below an acceptable level. Anything below 92% attendance or where a child is persistently being late for school/being collected early from school, will be referred to the Local Authority.

### 3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason; ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary; identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

- Those children whose attendance falls below national average will be closely monitored and further action considered. School will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance
- All registers will be checked, and absences monitored on a daily basis.
- Schools will analyse individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence (and punctuality) which cause concern and parents will be informed by the school where their child's attendance causes concern.
- School has a clear and escalating approach to intervention where there are concerns regarding school attendance. (See Section 4.2 for legal sanctions)

- After the school has attempted to address attendance issues with parents, and if there is no improvement the case will be escalated to the Standards and performance Committee and then the Local Authority.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Make contact with the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit or complete referrals to appropriate agencies including the appropriate Safeguarding Board or West Midlands police if they have reason to believe that the child is at risk.

### **3.6 Leaving school early during the day**

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the site during the school day, unless accompanied by a member of staff or their known parent/carer; or to attend a school visit, an off-site scheduled lesson.
- If a pupil has to leave the school during the day for illness or a parent is required to collect them for a medical appointment, their Parent is required to sign out at the School Office and speak to a senior member of staff. Where there are known medical appointments, parents should notify the school in advance and show evidence of the appointment.

### **3.7 Reporting to parents**

We report on attendance and punctuality three times a year. Ahead of Parents' Evening an interim or full end of year report will include these figures and will be benchmarked against National Expectations.

Where attendance is a cause for concern or below 95%, parents and carers will be informed and invited to a meeting where an action plan to improve attendance is put in place. This information will be shared with the Local Authority and may result in a penalty notice where attendance does not improve.

## 4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Our Principal may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an instance where absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a child's rehabilitation from a medical or social emotional mental health, immediate leave due to family bereavement or consideration to a request for children of service personnel. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

#### **Procedure for requesting a planned absence**

DFE guidelines make clear that leave of absence during term-time should be regarded as exceptional.

All leave of absence requests will be unauthorised unless the circumstances are deemed to be exceptional.

- If a parent/carer considers they require their child to have a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, they should complete an absence request form (available from the school office) and submit this to the school at least six weeks prior to the date required. School will respond to the request within two weeks.
- Parent/carers **MUST** provide evidence of the exceptional circumstance and will be required to meet with a senior member of staff.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a written reply confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.
- If the Principal deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a written reply informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent.



- If once notified in writing of the decision to unauthorise the leave of absence, the absence is taken **it will** be marked as an unauthorised absence on the pupils register.
- In the event of attendance being below 90% then the absences will be referred immediately to the Local Authority for consideration and could result in the issue of a penalty notice.

All children on role have the right to access a full education regardless of a child's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, parentage, sexual orientation or other status and we are committed to ensuring that all of our children attend school as fully as possible.

## 4.2 Legal sanctions

The Education Act 1996 states that:

“If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence (1A) and If in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (1) the parent knows that his child is failing to attend regularly at the school and fails to cause him to do so, he is guilty of an offence.”

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

All schools will abide by the Local Authority's Code of Conduct when deciding on penalty notices for term time absence. The decision on whether or not to fine a parent ultimately rests with the Principal. This may take into account:

- The 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 pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

As per the local authority rules, if the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 5. Strategies for promoting attendance

As a School we understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality, this is promoted with all children. Half termly/termly/yearly rewards are provided for pupils who have exemplary attendance and are regularly punctual. Those pupils who have improved attendance and punctuality are also recognised. (Eg;Certificates, assemblies etc)

## 6. Attendance monitoring

### 6.1 How attendance is monitored

Attendance is monitored daily with appropriate action taken which includes making contact with parents/carers of those pupils who are not present in school without prior notification.

We review and analyse attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level to identify whether there are trends or particular groups of children whose absence may be a cause of concern. This information is then used to consider the appropriate strategy and support required to address any identified patterns.

Any interventions are monitored and reviewed to evaluate the impact allowing opportunities to adapt where strategies are not effective.

Attendance data sheets are completed weekly tracking the attendance of those pupils who are risk of becoming persistent absentees. This information is shared with the Principal and identified cases discussed within the SSP meetings where actions and strategies are discussed to support the pupil based on their individual needs.

Where children are identified as vulnerable or where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided for absence, relevant agencies will be informed and a home visit will be conducted.

Schools have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils and they should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have the same safeguarding duty under section 157 of the Education Act.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning before the school's opening time (Appendix A) if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 10 days in one academic year, we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual attendance is 90% or below the pupil will be classified as a **persistent absentee**.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term, stored securely and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this at our Standards and Performance Committee and Trust Board. We also look at, compare and monitor particular cohorts of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and those children identified as being in need of intervention and support. In the event of children being absent for 10 consecutive school days, the school will make contact with the relevant Local Authority. In addition to this contact may be made to the appropriate Safeguarding Board.

## 6.1 Reducing persistent absence and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Ensure the attendance strategy is followed including warning letters and providing attendance improvement advice
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance including Early Help Assessments
- Complete an attendance improvement plan with parents/carers
- Involve Trust Inclusion Team for additional support where needed

## 7. Roles and responsibilities

### 7.1 The Standards and Performance Committee (SPC)

The SPC is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance and punctuality across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the principal to account for the implementation of this policy

### 7.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Authorising the issuing of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Ensuring that specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance are identified through data

### 7.3 School Office/ Admin Lead for Attendance

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff/SPC and reporting concerns about attendance to the Principal
- Working with education welfare officers at the Local Authority to tackle persistent absence
- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording the outcome on the school system
- Referring complex cases to the principal where additional information and support are required
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advising the principal authorised by the Trust Attendance Lead when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Helping prepare reports that include attendance and punctuality figures for SPC meetings.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### 7.3 The Trust Lead for Attendance

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data half termly
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Supporting the identification of appropriate strategies to effectively improve attendance

### 7.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately and timely daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office through our school information management system.

They are also responsible for promoting good attendance and punctuality with their class and families, having initial conversation where necessary.

### 7.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before school's opening time (Appendix A) on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with at least **2** emergency contact numbers for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Supporting and encouraging their child by attending parents' evenings and other school events.
- Contacting the school to discuss any concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- Working partnership with the school to resolve any issues that are impacting on their child's attendance.

## **8. Links with other policies**

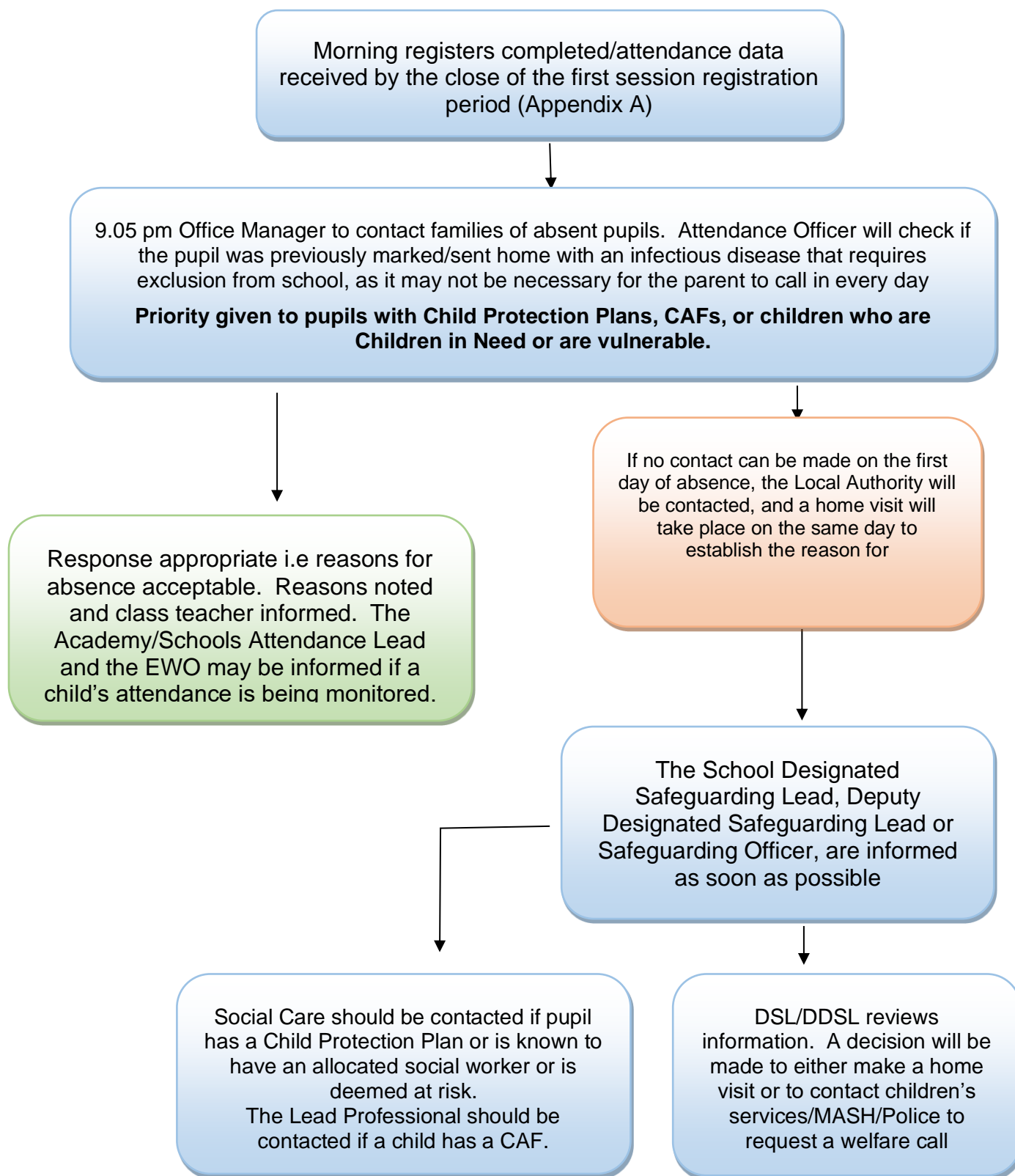
This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## Appendix A: Localised Academy Information

School opening time	<i>8.45am</i>
First session registration period	<i>8.55am</i>
Second session registration period	Takes place after pupils have taken their lunch. Times vary as lunchtime is staggered.

## Appendix B: First Day Calling Flowchart

First Day Calling is important because school absence and safeguarding are closely linked. This practice not only encourages good attendance it also helps to monitor a pupil's wellbeing and is an alert to their safety.



## Appendix C: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>/</b>	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
<b>\</b>	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
<b>L</b>	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
<b>B</b>	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
<b>D</b>	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
<b>J</b>	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
<b>P</b>	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
<b>V</b>	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement