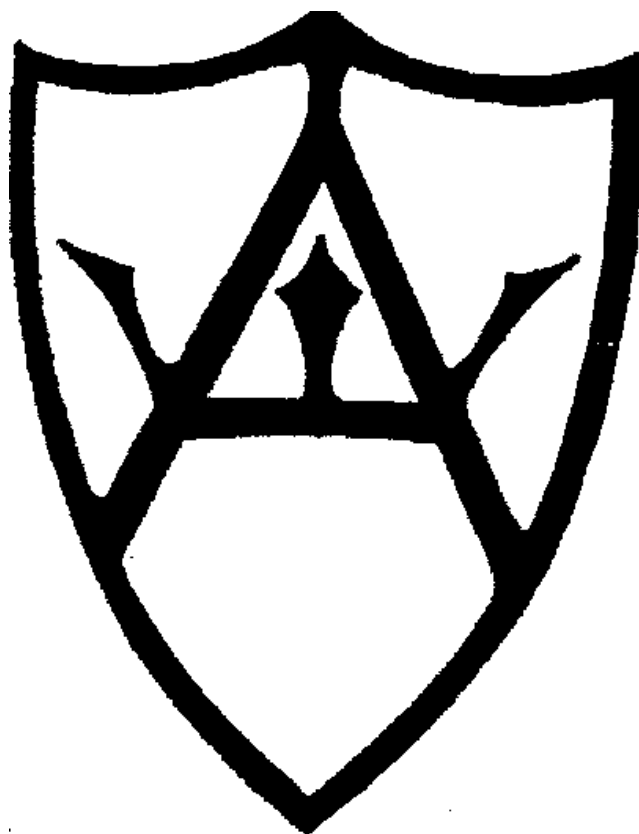


Alfriston School



Attendance Policy

Approved by Governors: November 2023

This policy reflects the vision and aims of Alfriston Primary School by

- ❖ Encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- ❖ Providing clear procedures for involving parents relating to school attendance.

Principles

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all children have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when children are absent or late.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school and you are covering up their absence, this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. It may also be viewed as unlawful.

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required in writing.

What are my rights?

Government legislation means that schools are not allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school for a holiday during term time.

Therefore, the DfE only allows a headteacher the discretion to authorise an absence if there are **exceptional circumstances**.

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time and any absence from school will disrupt your child's learning.

Time away from school due to unavoidable illness is already taken into account and so to choose to withdraw your child for a reason that is not an exceptional circumstance on top of this means that your child has even less education. The school year is only 39 weeks which leaves 13 weeks in which holidays can be taken without your child missing school.

Children returning from a term time holiday are also unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement of other children in the class. This is something we *all* have a responsibility to avoid.

If we suspect a child has been absent from school due to a holiday that we have not been informed about, the absence will be unauthorised and it is the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide evidence to the contrary ie. a doctor's certificate.

We hope you will support our efforts to raise attendance and attainment at our school.

How do I request an absence?

The school will provide you with a 'Withdrawal from Learning Application' which you should complete and return **at least 14 days before the proposed absence**.

What are exceptional circumstances?

The guidelines used to determine these are:-

- ❖ Bereavement of an immediate family member.
- ❖ To attend the funeral service of a close family member.
- ❖ To visit a seriously ill relative, in particular if they are not local.
- ❖ Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.
- ❖ Traveller groups – 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 Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school.
Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.
- ❖ Active Service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time. (We are unable to authorise holiday for any other job or business).

The circumstances detailed above are not exhaustive.

When absences are requested for exceptional circumstances we would expect them to be for no more than one or two days. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. This might mean that only part of the absence may be authorised. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time (eg. During school holiday time).

Examples of what is not exceptional circumstances?

- ❖ Taking additional days at the beginning or end of a scheduled school holiday.
- ❖ A birthday.

- ❖ Availability of cheaper holidays.
- ❖ Tickets to sports/culture events.

What if my request is not authorised?

If you feel you have exceptional circumstances, have you ensured that the school are fully aware of these?

Have you supplied all required information and any supporting documentation?

If you have any queries in relation to why your absence was unauthorised you must refer these to either Mrs Hudson or Mrs Fitzgerald.

What if the unauthorised absence is taken?

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice. This is a fine of £120 per parent for each child. If the fine is unpaid court action can follow.

Medical and dental appointments

We ask that unless it is an emergency appointment, medical and dental appointments are arranged outside of school hours. Where emergency appointments are necessary in school hours, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary (for example if an appointment is in the afternoon we would expect the child to be in school for the morning). Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence but it is still an absence and advance notice is required for authorising these absences. If emergency medical or dental appointments are frequently being taken during school hours, we will request written evidence of these.

Private or alternative health care appointments will not be allowed (authorised) in school hours unless supported by a GP letter and evidence that the practitioner only provides services in school hours.

A copy of the school letter in appendix 1 to clinics and health services outlining our policy and requesting appointments at certain times can be obtained from the school office to help parents in making a suitable appointment.

Lateness and punctuality

In the morning children in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2 should arrive at 8.40am. Any child arriving after 8.45am will be marked as late.

Children in Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 should arrive at 8.45am. Any child arriving after 8.50am will be marked as late.

The registers close at 9.15am. If a child arrives after the registers close, they will be coded appropriately. Click on this link for the DfE Attendance Codes:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739764/Guidance_on_school_attendance_Sept_2018.pdf

If a child arrives late to school they must enter the building via the main entrance.

Lateness is monitored weekly and if a pattern of lateness is identified then parents will be contacted by the School Business Manager/Attendance Officer and support put in place to ensure it is addressed. If parents fail to engage or lateness does not improve a more formal procedure will be put in place setting targets and consequences for the parents, which may result in a penalty fine being issued.

Following up absences

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code. If we have concerns about a child's attendance we will request evidence confirming the reason for an absence such as a doctor's certificate.

If the school has not heard from a parent we will follow these steps:

1. Call the primary contact we have on the school system
2. Call the secondary contact we have on the school system
3. Call any further contacts we have on the school system
4. We carry out a front door knock

If we have not received notification of an absence and we have any concerns about a child's safety we will contact the police.

We will continue number 1 and 2 for 10 days before following the East Sussex County Council procedures for lost child/absent no parental communication (see appendix 2).

If there are issues with your child attending school

If parents are having problems getting their child to attend school they are expected to contact us at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school will contact the parent and ask for a meeting where the absences will be discussed and a target for attendance will be set. If this does not resolve the problem, the school will refer the child to TASS (Team Around the School & Setting) from the Local Education Authority. TASS will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Attendance monitoring and Procedures when there are attendance concerns

The School Business Manager/Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis. Parent are expected to call the school in the morning before 9.30am if their child is going to be absent and every subsequent day until the child returns to school.

- Where a child's attendance falls below 95%, this is likely to affect progress and parents will be informed of this and offered support.
- Where attendance falls below 90%, parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher and/or School Business Manager and an attendance target will be set.

- Where attendance falls below 85%, TASS will be involved.
- Unauthorised absence may result in a fine administered by the County.
- If a pupil arrives late 10 or more times, parents may be liable for a fine or it may result in the involvement of the attendance support service or social services.

Children uncollected at the end of the day

Children must be collected from school on time every day. If a parent/carer is late collecting their child they should ring the school office in advance. Any parent/carer who regularly collects their child late will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher and School Business Manager/Attendance Officer. In the very serious case that a child has not been collected from school after 30 minutes and no contact has been made with the school by the parent/carer and the school is unable to make contact with one of the emergency contacts, the school will phone the police and Social Care Single Point of Advice.

School attendance targets, projects and special initiatives

The school's target for attendance is +96%.

- The school uses the HERO (Here every day ready and on time) attendance initiative.
- The school has adopted Power Pig and Ready Rabbit as incentives for good attendance. Each week in celebration assembly these are presented to the class with the best attendance (Power Pig) and the least amount of lates (Ready Rabbit).
- Attendance and punctuality figures will be published regularly for each class.

Before starting our school:

- Parents are made aware at prospective parents' events and in welcome packs that the school take attendance seriously and what the expectations are.
- Parents will also be made aware that by choosing to send their child to school before they are 5, they are expected to follow the school's attendance policy and not take children on holiday in term time.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are

Governing Board

- Ensuring a governor is appointed with responsibility for attendance
- Requesting information from the Headteacher/Attendance Officer any aspect of the school, including attendance
- Meeting with parents where there are attendance concerns.

Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

- Positively promoting good attendance within the school
- Overseeing the implementation of attendance policy and procedures
- Ensuring the collection of accurate statistical data
- Developing efficient monitoring and evaluation systems
- Reporting to Governing Board

Class Teachers

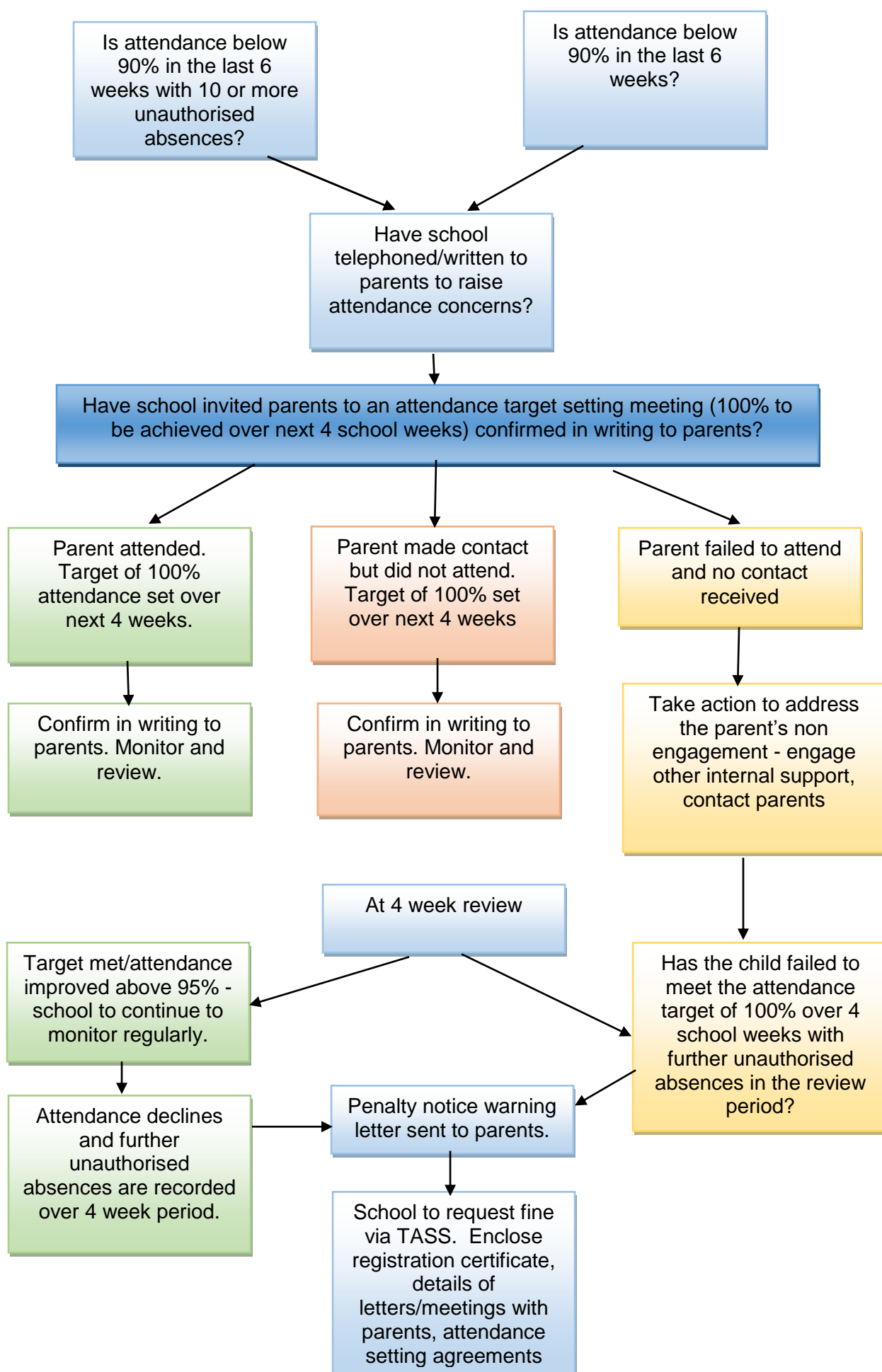
- Accurate recording of children attendance in the register
- Communicating concerns to the Headteacher or Attendance Officer
- Promoting good attendance and punctuality within the class
- Ensuring all notes and messages received are sent to the school office

Office Staff

- Maintain attendance information on SIMS
- Record absence messages from parents
- Ensure absence notes are received from parents
- Assist in the collection of data

Summary

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

Attendance Flow Chart

Appendix 1 – Letter to clinics and health services

To be put onto headed paper

Date: XXXXXX

Dear Practitioner

Re: Absence from School for Medical Appointments

At Alfriston Primary School we are committed to inclusion and equal opportunities for all.

Our children's wellbeing is extremely important to us and safeguarding our children is vital.

We are dedicated to high standards of attendance and punctuality as there are clear links between a child's attendance and their attainment, we always aim to provide children with access to a broad and balanced education.

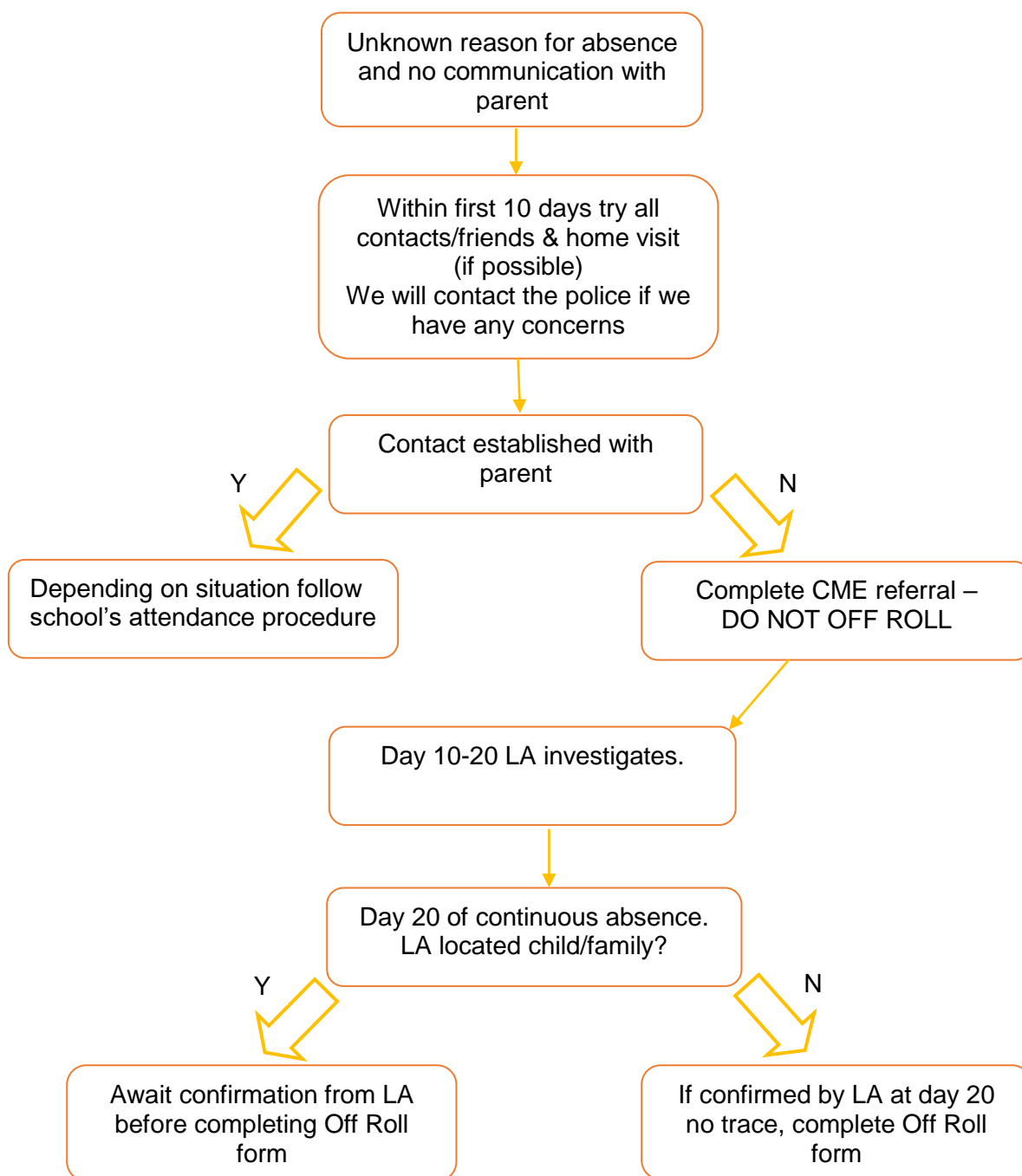
We are therefore asking all parents and carers to make medical appointments out of school hours to minimise the disruption to learning in general and accessing core maths and literacy skills.

Please support our pupils by giving them appointments after school or in school holidays.

We greatly appreciate your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Lindsey Hudson
Headteacher

Appendix 2 - Lost child/absent no parental communication

Appendix 3 – Letter to parents/carers re. unauthorised absence

To be put onto headed paper

Date: XXXXXX

Dear parent/carers

Re: Unauthorised Absence from School

Thank you for your recent request for an absence in term time. I will not be authorising your request as I do not consider the reason provided for the requested absence to be exceptional circumstances.

I realise that you will be disappointed by my decision, but Government guidance means that we are no longer able to authorise any requests for children to be taken out of school unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The consequence for your child taking an absence during this period is that it will be recorded as unauthorised and that we may request a Penalty Notice to be issued by the local authority to each parent/carers for each child should the child be absent during the requested period.

Should you wish to present further evidence of exceptional circumstances, please contact me **before** the absence is taken.

Please note that once a Penalty Notice has been issued there is no right of appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Lindsey Hudson
Headteacher