

Westhead Lathom St James' CE Primary School



Attendance Policy

Last Reviewed Date: Summer 2023
Next Review Date: Summer 2026

Issue	Date	Author/Editor	Revision Notes
7	Nov 18	Alison Albion Lynda Tither	Updated in line with current practice.
8	Summer 2020	Helen Clark	Vision and values updated.
9	Summer 2023	Helen Clark	Reviewed.

Vision Statement: Our Vision for the Future

'A curriculum that is challenging, inspiring and engaging; in which all pupils flourish spiritually, creatively and academically to become confident young people.'

'With God's power working in us, God can do much, much more than anything we can ask or imagine.'

Ephesians 3:20 New Century Version (NCV)

Introduction:

At St. James, the children's high level of attendance plays a part in their success. For the children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive on time unless absence is unavoidable.

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. If a child were to miss the first ten minutes every morning then they've lost nearly an hour a week, approximately 6 days of school and 50% of Phonics teaching!

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child has regular and punctual attendance. Permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

We are grateful for the excellent support of the parents of our pupils.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

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

To help us all to focus on this we will:

1. Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
2. Promote regular attendance in our weekly newsletter;
3. Report to you termly via a letter if there is a specific problem with attendance, on how your child is performing in school and their attendance and punctuality rate linked to their attainments; Attendance is graded as being below, above and with in a danger zone in between.
4. Carry out transition work with pupils leaving for high school;
5. Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
6. Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
7. Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.
8. Involve the Pupil Attendance Support Officer when attendance drops below 90% for individuals.

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.

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:

1. Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
2. truancy before or during the school day
3. absences which have never been properly explained
4. children who arrive at school after the register has closed
5. shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
6. day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
7. days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents 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 parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar. It is presumed that if a child is off for several days then there will have been some form of medical intervention.

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 parents 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):

We monitor absenteeism electronically for each child and are able to see patterns emerging in some cases. 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 parents' 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 parents 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' parents are initially asked to attend a Governor Attendance support panel where strategies are out in place to help support the family with ensuring pupils attend school more regularly. All our PA pupils and their parents are referred to the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will assign an officer to the case. This may then lead to meetings between the family and the officer, a parenting contract and ultimately a fine.

All PA cases are also automatically reported nationally, annually to Lancashire Education Authority.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

1. Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception
2. Further consecutive days of absence require details in writing upon return to school

If your child is absent we will:

1. Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
2. Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist. **The persistent absence threshold is 10% absence** This is worked out each half term by number of sessions missed. Pupils who hit 10% absence are classed as On Track to PA (OTPA). This is tracked through

the year but is reported at the start of each Summer term.

3. Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

Telephone numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we do not then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

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

Parents 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 parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

1. Meetings in school between parents, pupils, teachers and the Headteacher;
2. Implications of absence from school explained to children and parents;
3. Use of Early Help or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team) through Team around the Family (TAF) meetings;
4. Governor Attendance panels which may lead to a fine;
5. Termly attendance letters.

The Local Authority School Attendance Team:

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, 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. 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 **8.55 am** and we expect your child to be on the school premises at that time.

Registers are marked straight away. If your child arrives between **9.05 and 9.30am** they will receive a late mark.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time 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 parenting Contract and Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

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 parents 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.

We will only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Parents may be issued with a Penalty Notice (£60 per parent per child) if they take their child/children out of school for leave during term time without prior arrangement with the school. The decision to authorise will be made by the Headteacher.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance (10 days), by attending a face to face meeting with the headteacher then 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.

It is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by school at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.

Examples of Unacceptable reasons for absence in term time are:

- cheaper holidays
- Additional holiday time

N.B. if the reason given is 'unable to take leave in school holidays' then this must be verified by the employer on the request/evidence form.

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

1. When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period. Your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
2. Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs
3. When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
4. Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 97% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
5. 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. Repeated unauthorised absence may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Re-admission 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. Parents must request this leave in advance.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

1. Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
2. Contact school on 1st day of absence and give written details after further consecutive days absence
3. Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using form
4. Attendance at meetings in school- Headteacher, Governors, PAST
5. Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

Pupils:

1. Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
2. Attend school/registration punctually
3. Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
4. Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

Headteacher / School Attendance Lead:

1. Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
2. Ensure responsibility for attendance matters are delegated to office staff
3. Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
4. Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
5. Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
6. 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

Designated Staff: Office Manager

1. First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
2. Input and update the attendance registers
3. Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
4. Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents
5. Work with children and parents in conjunction with the headteacher 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:

1. Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
2. Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
3. Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
4. To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
5. To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
6. Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

Governors

1. Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
2. Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
3. Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
4. 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 for this school is **97%** attendance 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 know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

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

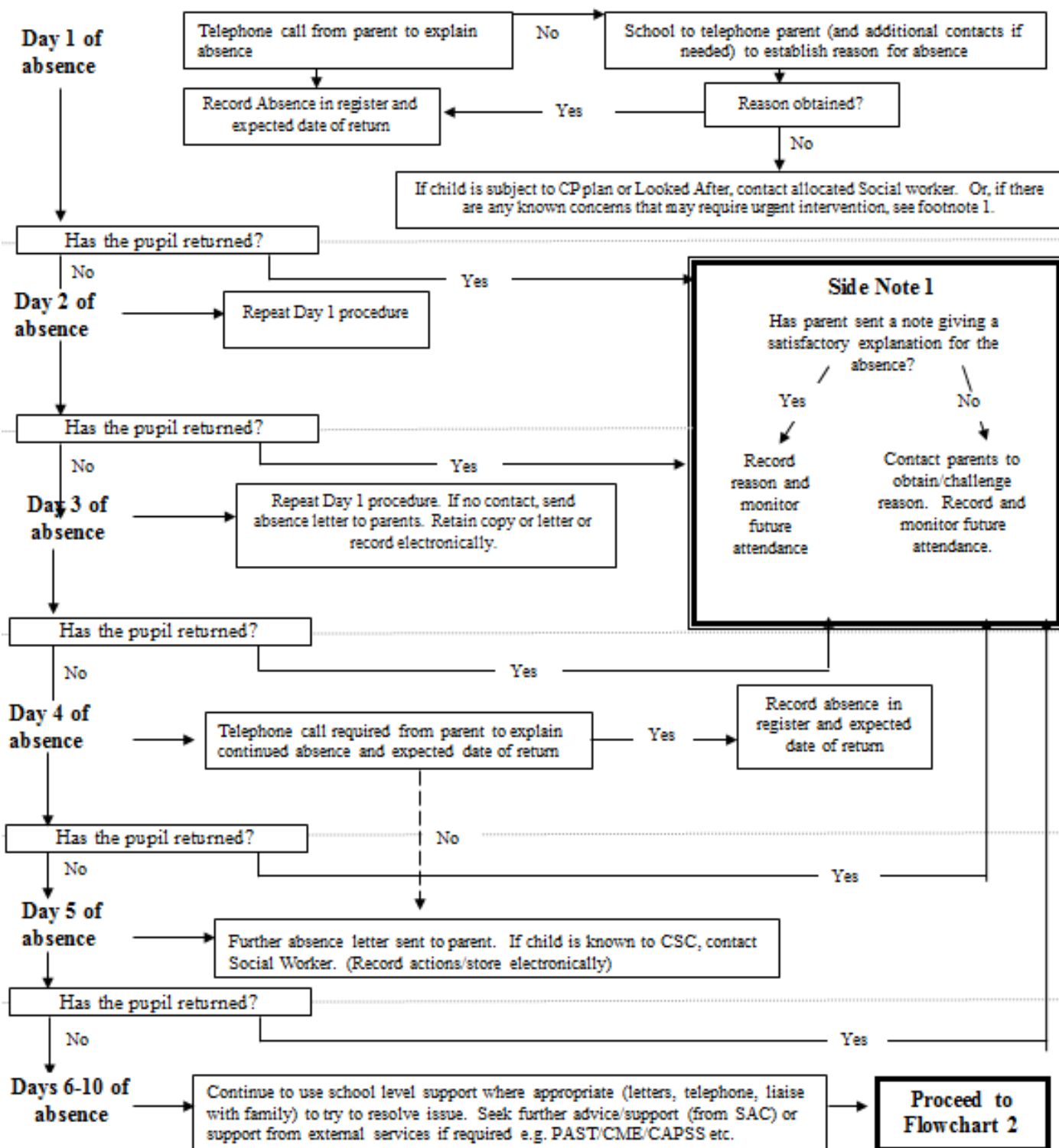
Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

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.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

FLOWCHART 1: PRIMARY SCHOOL PATHWAYS FOR ATTENDANCE ISSUES – DAYS 1-10

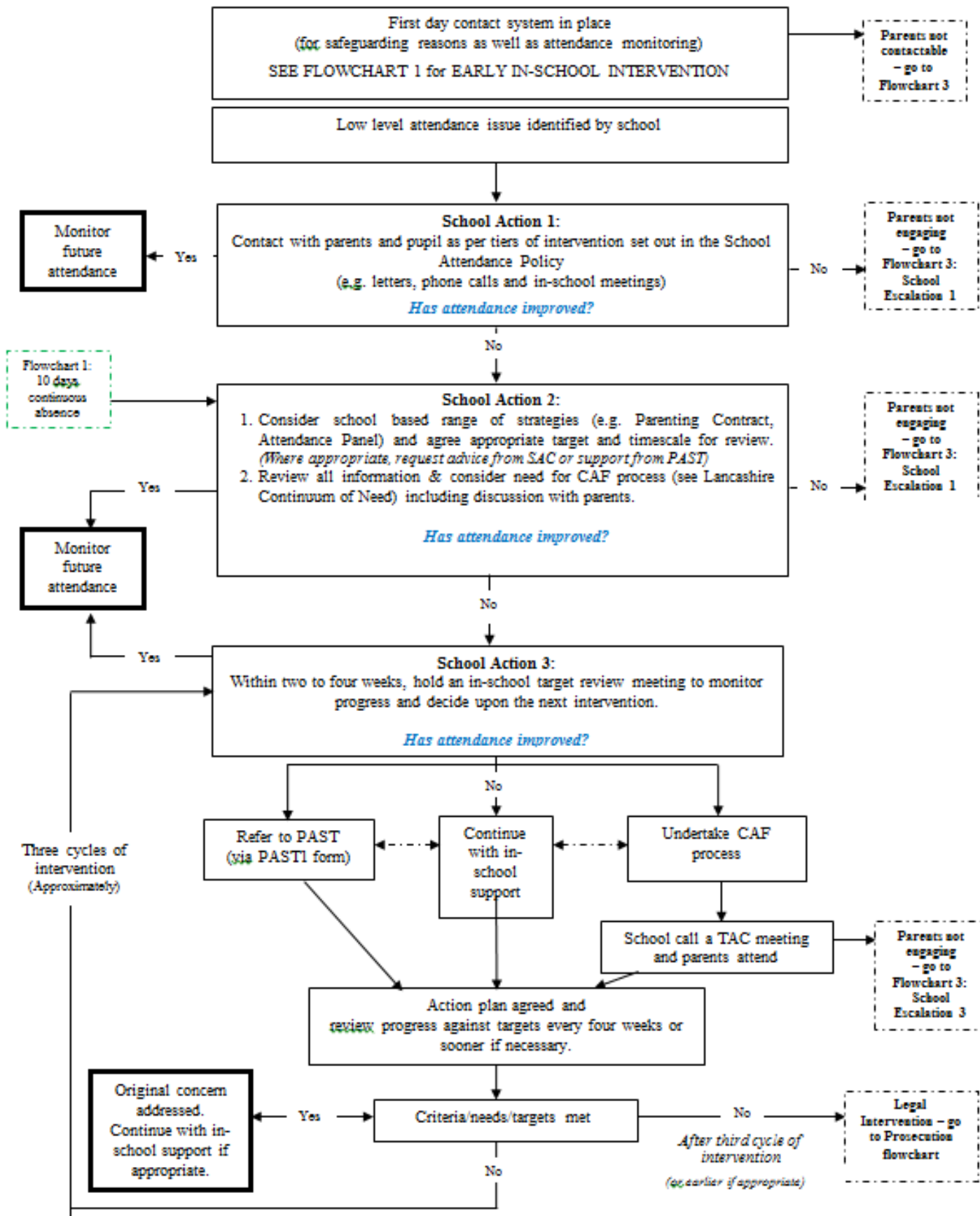


If at any point there are concerns about the safety or welfare of the pupil, follow safeguarding procedures immediately.

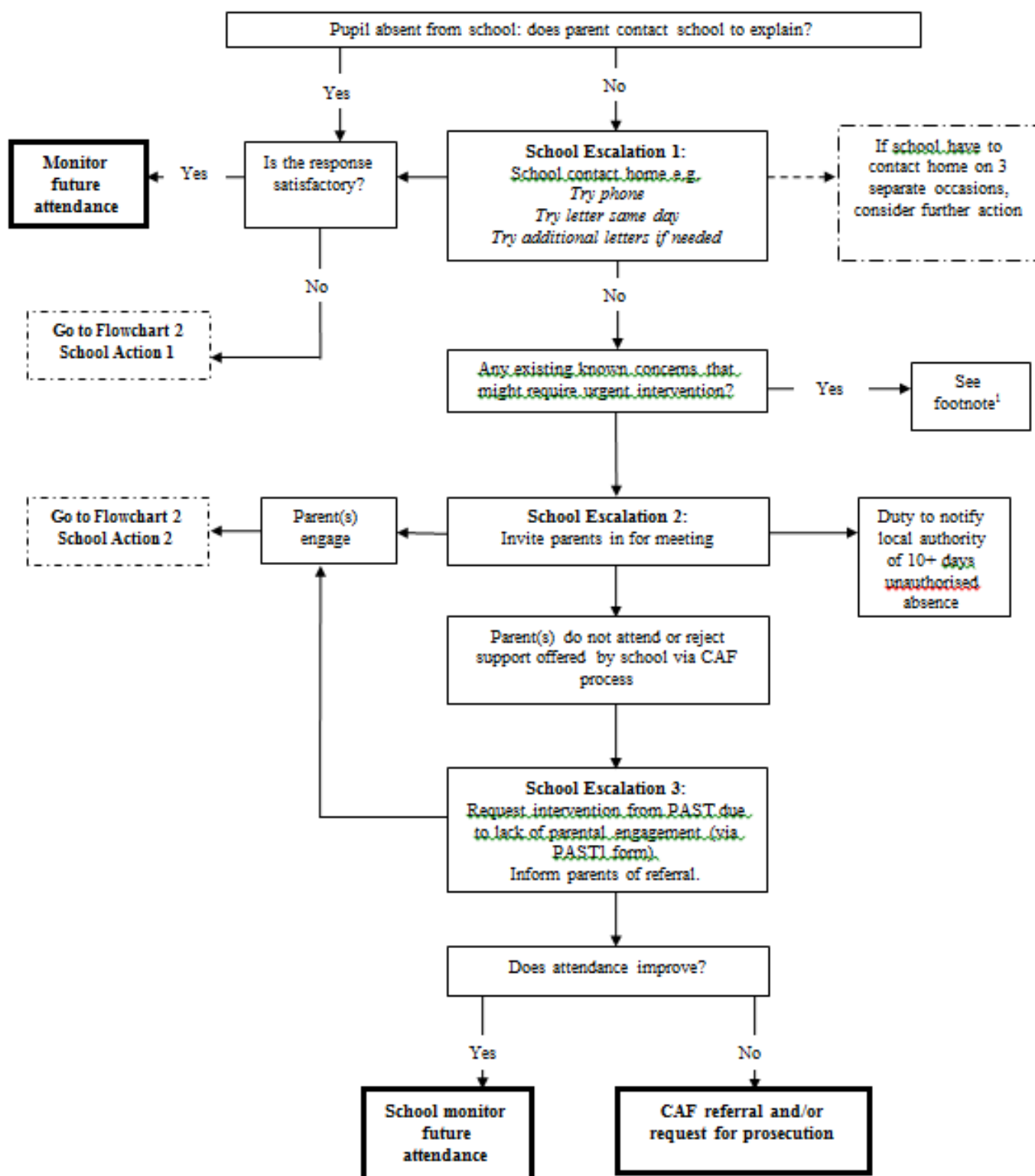
¹ In some instances, more urgent notification to the local authority may be appropriate if contact with parents/carex is problematic e.g.

1. Children Looked After – schools should notify the CLA Service Manager
2. Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
3. Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.
4. Advice can be sought from the School Attendance Consultant at any time if this is required.

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/carer is problematic e.g.

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5. Children subject to a Child Protection plan – schools should notify the named social worker
6. Children in situations of known domestic violence – schools should consider whether safeguarding/child protection procedures should be followed.