



BELIEVING
REWARDING
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ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2021

**BELFAST
ROYAL
ACADEMY**

Title	Attendance Policy with Covid-19 Amendment
Summary	Guidance for members of staff, pupils and parents regarding: Procedures for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing pupil attendance in school.
Purpose	To ensure that all pupils, parents and staff recognise the importance of pupil attendance, and that the correct protocols are implemented.
Operational Date	September 2021
Next Review Date	September 2022
Version Number	8
Supersedes previous	Yes
Author	Senior Teacher (TH)
Frequency of Review by Author	Annually
Reviewed and Approved by Board of Governors	Annually in September

To be posted on School website	Yes
Date and version posted	September 2021

i. Rationale

Belfast Royal Academy is committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential, both academically, and through involvement in the extra-curricular life of the school. Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. As a school, we acknowledge the correlation between good attendance and high academic achievement, and place great importance on attendance and punctuality.

Belfast Royal Academy will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where every pupil will feel valued and secure.

Although the school recognises that perfect attendance is not always possible and that absence may be the result of circumstances beyond the control of the pupil, there is an expectation that pupils and their parents will try to keep absence to a minimum. Attendance percentages can be misleading as although an attendance of 90% may seem to be acceptable, it equates to 19 days of absence throughout the year, and it is deemed to be poor by the Department of Education as indicated below:

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide (DENI)

The procedures in relation to punctuality and attendance aim to be pro-active in identifying and resolving any problems in which punctuality and attendance are potentially a factor. The school also recognises that unsatisfactory patterns in relation to punctuality or low levels of attendance may give additional cause for concern in relation to the overall wellbeing of the child¹.

¹refer to Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Wellbeing Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

ii. Aims

- To improve/maintain the overall attendance of all pupils at Belfast Royal Academy.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

iii. Attendance Target

The target rate of attendance for this academic year is above 95%.

iv. Engagement with other Schools

We continue to work with other schools in our Area Learning Community, discussing and sharing best practice in order to sustain improvement in relation to attendance. This is achieved through formal and informal meetings.

v. Rewards

We recognise the importance of rewarding pupils who have achieved 100% attendance within an academic year. This is achieved in conjunction with the Positive Behaviour Policy and may involve:

- Verbal Praise from the Class Tutor/Head of Year
- Merit points as indicated in the 'Merit Guidance to Staff' document
- Head of Year/Key Stage Leader Commendation
- 100% Attendance Certificates

vi. Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Education Authority, through the Education Welfare Service, has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results. Where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85% they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. The Education Welfare Service will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

vii. The Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. The Vice Principal (Pastoral), via the Attendance Officer and the Key Stage Leaders, should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention. The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets on a regular basis.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of each lesson, as outlined in the Attendance Procedures for Staff Document.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way the School adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2021/16.

viii. The Role of the Parent

Belfast Royal Academy is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

The parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that their son/daughter regularly attends school.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and that their child arrives to school on time.
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term time.
- Notify the school by telephone, using the **School Attendance Line – 028 9075 4761**, before 10.00 a.m. on the first day of a pupil's absence from school, and on subsequent days of absence if an initial time frame is unclear.
- For a planned absence, provide a letter to the Class Tutor seeking permission for a pupil to leave school during the day.
- Fully cooperate with the school in seeking to overcome problems of attendance and/or punctuality.

Parents/Guardians should note:

- The 'N' codes on SIMS which refers to the fact that no reason has been provided for a pupil absence, will be collated and after 11.20 a.m. a text message/notification is sent to parents of all pupils who have failed to register on that particular morning.
- Parents are asked to respond by either replying to the text or by telephoning the Attendance Line number. These absences can be coded directly to SIMS.net.
- If there has been no contact the unexplained absence will be highlighted in the Unexplained Absence Report which is emailed to Class Tutors and Heads of Year daily.

*Parents are informed of the Attendance System by letter - **Appendix 1**

Parents/guardians will be able to view their son/daughter's attendance on the SIMS Parent App. Information in relation to registering for the App is outlined in SIMS Parent App Information for Parents – **Appendix 2.**

If a child is going to be absent for a prolonged period of time, the specific circumstances surrounding the absence will determine how it is coded. Absences will be coded in advance, as much as possible, but if a pupil makes a speedier recovery the illness, coded as 'I' on SIMS will be changed. If it is not possible to determine a definite date of return, parents should telephone the school every morning (Attendance Line) before 10.00 a.m. to prevent a text message being sent.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.40 a.m. for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration on your child's attendance record using the 'L' code. If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the Head of Year in the first instance to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Family holidays during Term Time

Belfast Royal Academy discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Extended Leave Application

This allows pupils, for a limited period only (ideally no more than three weeks), to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. Parents should note that family holidays either agreed or not agreed do not fall within this category, and will only be considered in the following circumstances:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK.
- A need to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:
 - death of a relative;
 - care for a sick relative;
 - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or
 - attend to immigration matters.

Parents/Guardians must make an application to the School, outlining the reasons for the request and the proposed period of extended leave. The School will consider each request on an individual basis, taking into account the circumstances for which leave is sought, the pupil's attendance (and attainment) to date, previous similar requests and whether or not the pupil's specific needs will be met (both personally and academically) during the proposed absence.

ix. The Role of the Pupil

It is the responsibility of the pupil to ensure that they attend school regularly and punctually.

Pupils should:

- Arrive to school by 8.40 a.m. in time for morning registration.
- Arrive to every timetabled class before the second (passing) bell.
- Bring a letter from their parent seeking permission in advance to leave school during the day.
- Show their planned absence (chit) to those teachers whose classes they will miss, and to a member of the General Office before they sign out.
- Sign in on arrival, if late, at the General Office.
- Never leave the school premises at any time during the school day without permission, and without signing out at the General Office.
- Fully cooperate with staff (teaching and non-teaching) to overcome problems in relation to punctuality and/or attendance.

Pupils Leaving School during the School Day

- When a pupil leaves school, they should show the chit to their subject teacher and go to the General Office to sign the '**Sign-out**' book. (They will only be allowed to sign this book when they show their chit to the office).
- The Matron should also give pupils a chit and send them via the General Office to sign the 'Sign-out' book. The Matron should send a notification email to the relevant Head of Year and the General Office if a pupil has been sent home.
- Staff taking pupils out of school at any time during the school day should inform the staff in the General Office so that the pupil(s) may be coded accordingly.

X. The Role of the Class Tutor

Class Tutors are expected to monitor absences and/or punctuality in the first instance. The Class Tutor will receive an Unexplained Absence report on a daily basis showing the pupils whose parents/guardians have failed to contact the school about their son/daughter's absence.

Class Tutors should:

- Complete SIMS registration daily. **It is important that it is completed accurately and only by a member of staff.**
- Record pupils as 'Present' up to 8.45 a.m. and 'Late' thereafter. Pupils who have been issued with a Late Pass should be marked 'Present' up to 8.55 a.m.
- Inform the Head of Year immediately if they are concerned about a pupil's attendance and/or punctuality.
- Issue chits to pupils for all planned absences.
- Forward all 'annotated' absence notes to the General Office either during or after Registration – see section on 'Planned absences'.
- Endeavour to clear their daily Unexplained Absence list by asking pupils to bring in notes for unexplained absences.
- Record a comment in the registration column in SIMS if an unexplained absence is not cleared, such as, note is required for unexplained absence on <date> - this will appear on the SIMS Parent App.
- Commend pupils for their attendance.
- Contact the Head of Year if a pupil is absent for more than two days.

Xi. The Role of the Class Teacher

Class Teachers should:

- Mark their register every Period using SIMS, taking care not to overcode an existing SIMS code.
- Pupils who arrive to class after the second (passing) bell should be marked 'Late', unless they have a note (or an email is received) from a teacher which explains their lateness.
- Check and sign the chit for any planned absence.
- Speak to the Head of Year if they have a concern regarding a pupil's attendance and/or punctuality.

xii. The Role of the Head of Year

The Head of Year should:

- Stress the importance of attendance/punctuality regularly through their Form Assemblies.
- Check the Late Book at the office regularly. Pupils who have a total of 7 'Late' marks in a term should be issued with a Friday Detention.
- Telephone the parents of pupils who do not respond to text message/notification within three days of an absence, or those pupils who have an Unexplained Attendance record of less than 95%.
- Any pupil who returns to school and still has not cleared their absence should be given the pro-forma (**Appendix 3**). If a Friday Detention has been issued and there is still no parental response, the parents should be telephoned.
- Follow the Attendance Protocol (Appendix 4).

- The Head of Year will receive the following weekly reports from the Key Stage Leader.
 - A 'Late' report showing cumulative 'Lates' for the term.
 - An 'Unexplained Absence' report.
 - 'Percentage Attendance' report.
 - Pupil with 'Chosen Code' report.

xiii. The Role of the Key Stage Leaders

The Key Stage Leader will generate and scrutinise the reports before they are forwarded to the Head of Year. Pupils, who have an unsatisfactory record, will be identified, and the Key Stage Leader will liaise with the Head of Year and, in some cases the Attendance Officer and Vice Principals, in order to establish the most effective intervention strategy.

The Key Stage Leader should:

- Stress the importance of attendance/punctuality regularly through their Year Assemblies.
- Telephone the parents of pupils who have an unexplained attendance record of less than 90% (see **Appendix 3**).
- Arrange parental interviews with the parents of pupils whose attendance does not improve without a valid reason.
- Follow the Attendance Protocol (**Appendix 4**).

xiv. The Role of the Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer will liaise with the Heads of Year, Key Stage Leaders and the Vice Principal (Pastoral) in order to establish the most effective intervention strategy.

The Attendance Officer should:

- Stress the importance of attendance/punctuality regularly through their Assemblies and various Parental Induction events.
- Meet with Key Stage Leaders on a weekly basis.
- Attend parental interviews with the parents of pupils whose attendance does not improve without a valid reason and/or is less than 85%.
- Contact parents via letter if attendance remains a concern (see **Appendix 3**).
- Refer pupils, in conjunction with Vice Principal, to the EWS.
- Follow the Attendance Protocol (**Appendix 4**).
- Meet with the EWS on a termly basis and prepare a termly Attendance Report.

xv. The Role of the Vice Principal (Pastoral)

The Vice Principal should ask the Key Stage Leaders/Attendance Officer for regular/weekly updates on attendance/punctuality in order to allow for further action to be taken, such as referral to the EWS.

They should meet with the EWS to discuss the attendance of pupils in Forms I to V regularly, and monitor the attendance of the pupils in the Sixth Form. The Vice Principal, in discussions with the EWS may wish to refer a pupil through the Exceptional Teaching Arrangements (ETA), if deemed appropriate.

The Principal should be kept fully informed of all pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern.

Covid-19 Amendment

While it is hoped that Belfast Royal Academy will be able to accommodate as close to maximum face-to-face pupil attendance as possible, it is fully appreciated that this will present a range of challenges that may result in some pupils having to continue learning from home intermittently.

Code	Code description	Statistical Meaning	SIMS description
(Left Open Bracket	Authorised Absence	Covid-19 Illness Confirmed This code should be used in situations where a pupil is sick and Covid-19 is confirmed. This includes pupils who test positive (including asymptomatic) and able to work remotely.
)	Right Closed Bracket	Authorised Absence	Covid-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed This code should be used in situations where Covid-19 is suspected but unconfirmed (a pupil is sick and showing symptoms)
{	Left Open Curly Bracket	Unauthorised Absence	Covid-19 Self-Isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household member This code should be used in situations where a pupil has chosen not to attend school due to own underlying health conditions or due to health conditions of other household / family members. If a pupil is sick, they should be recorded as such.
}	Right Closed Curly Bracket	Unauthorised Absence	Covid-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learning from home This code should be used in situations where a pupil is required to self-isolate but is not learning from home or sufficient evidence has not been provided to satisfy school.
[Left Open Square Bracket	Approved Activity	Covid-19 Self-Isolating & Learning from Home Formerly Code 8 (used between March 2020 to December 2020) This code should be used in situations where a pupil is required to self-isolate on the advice of school / PHA or medical health professional and is learning from home and is able to evidence learning from home. This code may also be used in exceptional circumstances where medical evidence is provided to support the child abstaining from school.

]	Right Closed Square Bracket	Approved Activity	<p>Covid-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing</p> <p>Formerly Code P (used between March 2020 to December 2020)</p> <p>This code should be used in situations where pupils are not required to attend physically at school due to social distancing rules, imposed by DE or school. E.g. pupils required to attend on certain days or for a certain number of hours per day (not to be used if pupils are self-isolating). This decision must be informed by health professional advice.</p>
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Belfast Royal Academy

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Belfast, BT14 6JL**Telephone**
(028) 90740423**Email**
enquiries@bfsra.belfast.ni.sch.uk**Principal**
H WOODS (MRS)**Fax**
(028) 90750607**Web**
www.belfastroyalacademy.com

Dear Parent/Guardian

In order to provide the best possible service to our pupils and their parents, we are continually looking for ways in which to improve our links with you and keep everyone up-to-date and well informed. To enable you to receive information from school more quickly and reliably, we use Schoolcomms, an electronic school communication system. This system will allow the school to send you letters by email to your inbox and short messages directly to your mobile phone as a text message. In this way we hope to keep you better informed regarding school events, news and organisation.

An additional benefit will be managing attendance. As you are aware, if your child is absent from school without prior explanation, we would ask you to phone the school immediately to let us know using the Attendance Line.

ATTENDANCE LINE NUMBER: 028 9075 4761

Telephone calls about absences will not be dealt with through the main school number.

If we have not received information regarding your child's absence by 10.00 a.m., we will let you know by text.

- The school text number is 028 25 022026 and should be saved on your mobile telephone. **This number cannot be used for anything other than replying to a text message.**
- You may reply to the text message, giving the reason for the absence; this will replace the need for a note.
- **Please endeavour to pre-empt this text by ringing the school on the Attendance Line before 10am each morning of your child's absence. The telephone facility is in operation from 8.15 a.m.**

Absence notes will still be required for an absence about which you know in advance, such as a medical appointment.

The school will use the email address and mobile number that we hold for the Priority 1 contact in our database. Please complete the attached reply slip and return it to the Class Tutor of your son or daughter. We would also ask you to let us know immediately if your details change during the school year.

Your details will not be used for any purpose other than school business. You will **not** receive any spam or marketing material. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

M T Wilson
Vice Principal



PARENTAL REPLY SLIP

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN IMMEDIATELY

To Class Tutor

Pupil's name: _____

Form: _____ **Registration Class:** _____

PRIORITY 1 CONTACT DETAILS

Please print clearly

Parent Name: _____

Email address: _____

Mobile telephone number: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SIMS Parent App Information for Parents including the SIMS Parent Acceptable Use Policy

Belfast Royal Academy

Cliftonville Road
Belfast, BT14 6JL**Telephone**
(028) 90740423**Email**
enquiries@bfsra.belfast.ni.sch.uk**Principal**
H WOODS (MRS)**Fax**
(028) 90750607**Web**
www.belfastroyalacademy.com

Dear Parent/Guardian

We believe the SIMS Parent App can improve how we share information with you and help you support your son/daughter.

Access to the online service, called SIMS Parent App, will enable you to see accessible information about your son/daughter where and when you need it, in real time. This service is designed for use by all parents/legal guardians and you will be able to access the information remotely, through a PC, or mobile devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones.

You will be able to see information on your son/daughter's attendance and punctuality, achievement and behaviour points and assessment reports and see what lessons they have each day.

Key benefits

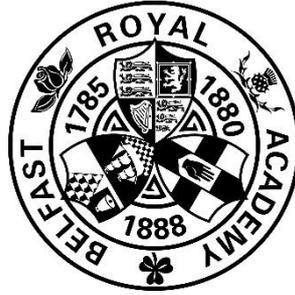
- Real-time information on your son/daughter's progress available 24/7, such as attendance information, merits, academic notes and timetable - secure online access to real-time data ensures parents and students are working together to the same goals.
- Gives you instant access to your son/daughter's achievement, progress and attendance information.

To sign up for this service and receive your unique username and password, please sign and agree to the **SIMS Parent App Acceptable Use Policy and complete the Parental Access Request Form. We require BOTH forms for your account to be activated and if both parents require access – we need 2 signatures.** These should be returned to the General Office.

When both the documents are returned, you will be provided with your individual link via email which will enable access. If you require further assistance/information, please contact the General Office.

Yours faithfully

M T Wilson
Vice Principal



Belfast Royal Academy Parent App Acceptable Usage Policy

This Policy applies wherever access to the Belfast Royal Academy Parent App management system interface is provided. This Policy applies whenever information is accessed through the Belfast Royal Academy Parent App, (whether the computer/mobile/ICT equipment used is owned by the School or not) and applies to all those who make use of the School's App Service.

Ownership and Administration of this Policy

Belfast Royal Academy owns and administers the Policy.

Objectives of the Belfast Royal Academy Parent App Acceptable Usage Policy

Security

This Policy is intended to minimise security risks which might affect the integrity of the School's data, the Authorised User and the individuals to which the Parent App data pertains.

In particular, these risks arise from:

- The intentional or unintentional disclosure of login credentials to the Belfast Royal Academy Parent App system, by authorised users.
- The wrongful disclosure of private, sensitive, and confidential information;
- Exposure of Belfast Royal Academy to vicarious liability for information wrongfully disclosed by authorised users.

Data Access

This Policy aims to ensure all relevant aspects of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) are adhered to. This Policy aims to promote best use of the system to enhance communication between Belfast Royal Academy and Parents\Guardians.

Parent App Acceptable Usage Policy Rules

Authorised Users

Belfast Royal Academy's Parent App system is provided for use only by persons who are legally responsible for pupil(s) currently attending the school. Access is granted only on condition that the individual formally agrees to the terms of this Policy.

The authorising member of school staff must confirm that there is a legitimate entitlement for a user to access information for pupils, with the names of the users stated on the Parental Access Request Form. A copy of the form will be held by the school for audit purposes.

Requests for Access to the Parent App must be made to Belfast Royal Academy using the Parental Access Request Form.

Personal Use

Information made available through the Parent App system is confidential and protected by law under the Data Protection Act 1998. To that aim:

- Users must not distribute or disclose any information obtained from the system to any person(s) with the exception of the child to which the information relates or to other adults with parental responsibility for that child.
- Users should not attempt to access the system in any environment where the security of the information contained in the system may be placed at risk e.g. a cybercafé.

Password Policy

You must assume personal responsibility for your individual user name and password and always keep it confidential. Never use anyone else's username or password.

These usernames and passwords should never be disclosed to anyone.

Passwords and user names should never be shared.

- Passwords must be at least 6 characters in length.
- Passwords must contain characters from 3 of the following 4 categories:
 1. English uppercase characters (A to Z).
 2. English lowercase characters (a to z).
 3. Base 10 digits (0 to 9).
 4. Non-alphabetic characters (for example, !, \$, #, %).

Passwords must not be similar to your own name or username.

Questions, Complaints and Appeals

Parent App users should address any complaints and enquiries about the system to Belfast Royal Academy by email: info@bfsra.belfast.ni.sch.uk or telephone: 028 90 740423.

Belfast Royal Academy reserves the right to revoke or deny access to the system of any individual under the following circumstances:

- Where the validity of parental responsibility is questioned.
- Where a Court ruling preventing access to child or family members is issued.

Users found to be in breach of this Acceptable Usage Policy

If any child protection concerns are raised or disputes occur, the school will revoke access for all parties concerned, pending investigation.

Please note: where access to the Parent App is not available, Belfast Royal Academy will still make information available according to Data Protection Act (1998) in another form.

Users are liable for any potential misuse of the system and/or breach of the Data Protection Act that may occur as a result of failing to adhere to any of the rules/guidelines listed in this document.

Belfast Royal Academy makes no warranties of any kind, whether express or implied for the service it is providing and will not be responsible for damages suffered while using this system.

I formally agree to the terms of this Policy:

Parent/Guardian name (PRINT)

Parent/Guardian name (SIGN)

Date: _____

Pupil/s name/s/ Form class

Name _____ **Form** ____

Name _____ **Form** ____

Name _____ **Form** ____



To: Mr/Mrs _____

Date: _____

UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES

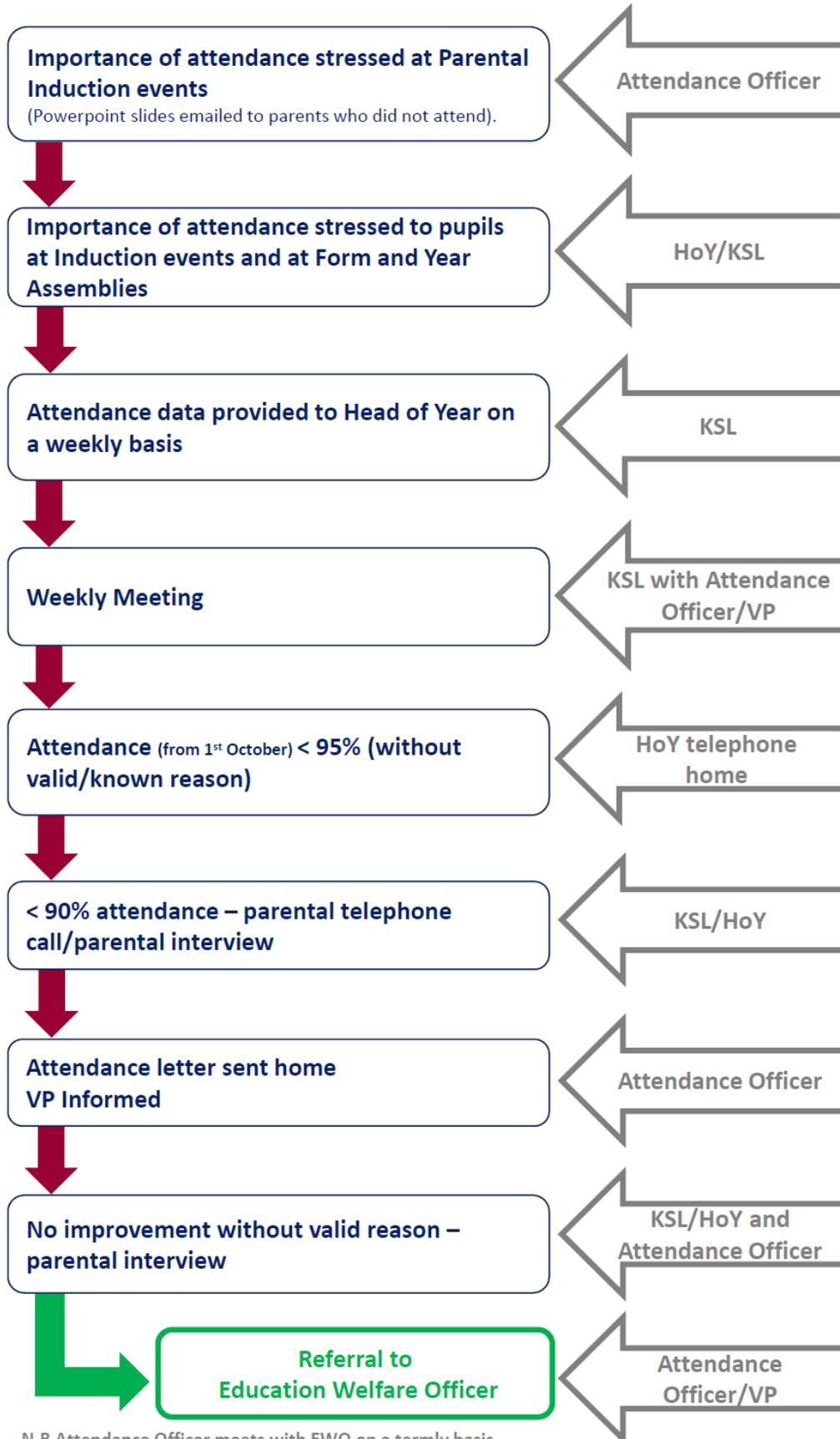
Your son/daughter _____ has failed to produce an explanation for the following absences, despite being asked to do so –

As you know, we have to provide information about attendance for the Education Welfare Service and, on occasion, for potential employers. It is important, therefore, that our records are accurate and up to date. If the school does not receive an explanation tomorrow, your son/daughter will be placed in detention for one hour on Friday afternoon.

I should be grateful, therefore, if you could confirm that your son/daughter was absent on these dates with your knowledge, giving the reason(s) for the absence(s). Please contact the school on the attendance line 028 9075 4761, reply to the text message or provide a written explanation for the absence(s).

Head of Year

Attendance Protocol 2021-2022



N.B Attendance Officer meets with EWO on a termly basis