



Taunton Deane
Partnership College

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Attendance Policy

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Our Ethos

We will work to the best of our abilities to ensure our children and young people are:

- Architects of their futures
- Resilient, healthy and secure
- Able to access a high-quality education
- Supported holistically

1. Introduction

Taunton Deane Partnership College comprises a number of centres providing education for children and young people who are unable to attend mainstream schooling due to social, emotional, behavioural and medical needs.

- Deane Discovery Centre
- Northfields Centre
- Holway Centre
- Hospital Education Centre
- Forest School
- Online/Outreach provision

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular attendance has a positive effect on motivation, engagement and attainment of pupils. Any absence whether it is from classroom learning or alternative provision may have a negative impact.

2. Aims

Our college aims to ensure that every pupil has access to the education that meets their needs and to which they are entitled to. Full time is always our aim.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits. We want children to attend every day unless there is a really good reason that they cannot. We want all our pupils to engage positively with their education and to realise their full potential. Punctuality and good attendance is also a key skill to develop as part of preparation for next steps.

The policy sets out what we expect from ourselves but also from students and parents/carers. We work hard to promote engagement and motivation but also good communication between home and ourselves.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child/young person's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child/young person's regular attendance at the college is your legal responsibility and permitting absence without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says:

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent is guilty of an offence.

Section 7 of the Act states that:

'every parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient fulltime education suitable to his /her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he /she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

3. Safeguarding and attendance

TDPC will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2019 version, or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare. (Please see our safeguarding policy for more information.)

4. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 2019 school attendance guidance, from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's 2015 statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996 (as amended)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2012 and 2013)

The law states that all schools must take an attendance register at the start of the first session in the morning and once during the second session of the day. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Unable to attend

5. Present at school, absence, and lateness

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If they leave the premises that attendance mark stands in terms of coding although they will be marked absent on lesson attendance records.

It is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that students attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens disruption to the learning of all students.

Internal briefings and meetings are weekly where attendance of students is discussed, all absence is discussed by tutors with students and parents/carers.

Pupils should arrive at 9.00, ready to start learning at 9.30 unless an alternative time has been agreed. The afternoon session starts at 12.00.

Calls will be made home to report absence. If the student arrives up to half an hour after the register opens, then they will be marked late (L). This counts as present. If they arrive after

this a call will have been made home to report absence and the absence mark stands. This may be authorised if there is a valid reason. See appendix one – Attendance codes. When a student arrives late, they miss part of their planned day. This may be part of a lesson, tutor period or meeting. It can often cause difficulties for a student to walk into a session late as well as having an impact on others.

6. Authorised Absence

Authorised absence means that the college has either given approval in advance to be away from school, or an accepted explanation has been offered as justification for absence. In most cases where absence is reported as illness, this will be authorised. Unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. In these cases we follow the 2019 DfE School Attendance Guidance which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence such as a prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. If a parent/carer has concerns about their child's mental wellbeing, they should contact their child's key adult in the first instance.

If a student is with us for medical reasons, the place and programme will have been agreed based on medical evidence, which has to be reviewed by the medical professional every 6 weeks. Absences are still recorded and not automatically authorised.

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to being unwell – this could be medically or due to mental ill health – this will be an agreement between school staff and home.

7. Appointments

All appointments such as Dentist and Dr should be made outside of school hours where possible. If this is not possible, then the student should be out of school for as little time as possible. Advance notice should be given for this.

8. Religious Observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

9. Traveller Absence

TDPC will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. Individual cases will be discussed with parents as necessary. Where possible in these cases the child should attend the school where the family is travelling to and should be dual registered at that school.

10. Suspensions

If a student is sent home due to their behaviour this will be recorded as a Suspension. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on Suspensions. Any suspension must be agreed by the Headteacher. Parents/carers will be notified and if the child is a Looked After Child the Social worker and the Virtual School will also be notified. If a child is open to social care the social worker will also be informed.

11. Absence procedure – see appendix 4

If your child/young person is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by phoning the centre and keeping us informed of further absences if the absence lasts longer than one day. (See attached Centre contacts – appendix 3)

- Or, you can call into school and report to reception

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Do welfare checks if we do not hear from you or if we have concerns
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with one of our Safeguarding Team, or a member of the Leadership Team if absences persist

We will also refer the matter to the Education Attendance Service if the number of unauthorised absences exceeds 15 sessions in 26 weeks or 10 continuous sessions in 12 week period). Following recent advice from a serious case review, if we do not verify the whereabouts and safety of any child, we will contact all other emergency contacts supplied to us. If we have no response, this will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a cause for concern and we will call 101 to request a welfare check.

12. Holidays and unauthorised leave in term time

We expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away in school time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. In line with Government Policy regulations the school will not grant any leave of absence during term time except for exceptional circumstances.

- Religious observance. A maximum of a days absence is allowed for religious observance
- Medical, dental or hospital appointments. We encourage these appointments to take place out of school time. Where this is not possible we will require proof of the appointment in order to authorise the appointment.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times. Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons give for the absence, it includes:

- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school to late to get the session mark
- Shopping

- Birthdays
- Caring for siblings
- Waiting at home for a delivery
- Day trips
- Long weekends or holidays in term time

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

A pupil may attend their day of education elsewhere. These are classes as 'offsite' educational activities that have been approved by the school. Examples include an Alternative Education provider or another school or Pupil referral unit. If in exceptional circumstances our school site is closed, or transport is not available or there is an exceptional reason why the school needs to close then the student will be marked accordingly.

13. Support for poor attendance

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way. When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. Parents may be asked to meet with the key teacher to discuss the matter. If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. Attendance will also have been raised as part of the termly Education review. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter. We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue, and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

14. Part-time Timetables

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have. If, for any reason, a pupil is unable to access full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any part-time timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to a full-time timetable. Any part-time provision will be agreed through an Education Review and a written, signed record will be kept and reviewed on a regular basis.

15. Penalty Notices and Prosecutions

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent, but may have day to day care of the child. Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually. Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter. The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold, currently 10 unauthorised sessions in 12 school week period, for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution. Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance. A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following: 1. A Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.)

16. Prosecution

Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment. (See DfE's statutory guidance on School attendance parental responsibility measures for more information and Somerset County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct. Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

17. Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with the law. The school will follow Somerset Child Missing Education process and make CME referral as appropriate. Please see policy here

18. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence. If we are unable to establish the reason for absence within 1 school day, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the O code. If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts. See protocol in section 4. We may also do a home visit.

19. Reporting to Parents

We report to parents on a regular basis about their child's attendance. Attendance is a key part of the termly review which also focusses on progress in other areas. Parents/carers will be

contacted on a regular basis in addition to this by the key teacher to discuss progress in all areas.

20. Staff responsibilities

Those people responsible for attendance matters in the Centre are:

- Tutor – It is the Tutor who will make regular contact with parents/carers to discuss attendance alongside progress in other areas. Where there is a concern, the student will be discussed with other key teachers and a member of SLT at the weekly centre meeting. It is here that strategies for improvement maybe suggested/put in place.
- Safeguarding Team – This team lead by the Designated Safeguarding lead, have an overview of the attendance of all students and may follow up concerns with families or other agencies.
- SLT – SLT consists of the Head, Deputy, Assistant and SENCo. The Deputy has an oversight of attendance and progress for students in the centres. This monitoring will raise concerns so that SLT ensure that there is a follow up plan
- Office staff take and make calls and messages. This will be logged on the school system



Appendix 1

TERM TIME LEAVE - ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

Amendments to the 2006 regulations were made by the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) and came into force on 1 September 2013.

The amendments made it clear that Headteachers may only grant leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances. Any request for leave must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional leave at present by the Department for Education. However, from discussion with the DfE and professional associations it is suggested that exceptional leave would be:

- Rare
- Significant
- Unavoidable
- Short

(NAHT, 2014)

Somerset County Council (SCC) supports schools:

- In expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school regularly. Any absence from school will impact on educational achievement, success in later life and longer-term health and well being
- In ensuring the law is upheld. Parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school where they are on roll. Schools must explain their stance on term time leave in their attendance policy so that parents/carers are clear on expectations and potential consequences, such as **any unauthorised absence including taking term time leave not agreed with the school, can result in legal action being taken including Penalty Notices and court prosecution.**

SCC cannot override a school's decision not to authorise any term time leave.

Taking a child on holiday in term time interrupts the learning of the whole class and teachers have to spend time helping children catch up when they return. Parents should arrange holidays during the 13 week school holiday periods. Schools are open 190 days which leaves 175 days of the year for holidays.

Attached are suggested forms schools may wish to use when asked by parents/ carers for term time leave. Schools may wish to develop their own request forms.

REQUEST FOR TERM-TIME LEAVE

To the Headteacher

School/College

I wish to apply for term time leave for my child

Name	Class
1.	
2.	

from

to

inclusive

The Exceptional Reasons for this request are:

Signature
(Parent/Carer)

.....

Date

.....

Please make your request prior to making any bookings and at least four weeks before the anticipated leave date.
NB. If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in a penalty notice being issued or legal action taken for poor attendance.

APPROVAL LETTER

Dear

Name of Child:

Re: Request for Term Time Leave

Thank you for your request for term time leave.

I am in agreement this is for exceptional reasons and have authorised this leave.

The leave is from

to

Should the leave be extended for any reason, the extension may be regarded as unauthorised absence which may be used in any legal action for poor school attendance.

Signature
(Headteacher)

.....

Date

.....

LETTER OF REFUSAL

Dear

Name of Child:

Re: Request for Term Time Leave

You have requested school days leave.

Your request for term time leave has been carefully considered but unfortunately it has not been possible to authorise it for the following reasons:

The reasons are not considered exceptional

The leave has not been requested in advance

Other

Please be aware that if you decide to proceed with the Unauthorised term time leave the school may request a Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority.

Signature
(Headteacher)

Date

Appendix 2

For any unauthorised leave absence during term time, the school can make a request to the education attendance service/Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued as a result:

- **each parent** may be issued with a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent from school as a result of unauthorised leave of 10 sessions or more (5days)
- a maximum of one Penalty Notices may be issued per parent, per child in a 12 month period
- the legal definition of a parent is contained in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and refers to any adult who is a natural parent, someone with parental responsibility or someone who cares for a child
- the penalty notice is a fine of **£60 payable within 21 days** of its date of issue. If this payment is not received in full the amount payable will double to £120 payable in full within a further 7 days
- if the Penalty Notice is paid, no further action will be taken for that offence period. However, if no
- payment is made or if there are further unauthorised absences, the education attendance service/LA may take further legal action, which may result in court proceedings.

Appendix 3

With regards to children of compulsory school age found in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion:

The Local Authority have powers to implement a Penalty Notice to those parents or carers whose children are seen in a public place without a justifiable reason. The amount is £60.00 as in appendix one. A police constable, local authority officer, Head teachers and those authorised by them are authorised to request Penalty Notices.

Centre Contacts	Holway Centre
Address	Byron Road, Taunton TA1 3JD
Contact Number	01823 349338
Contact email	office@tdpc.somerset.sch.uk
Head teacher	Kim Lawrence
Key Teacher	

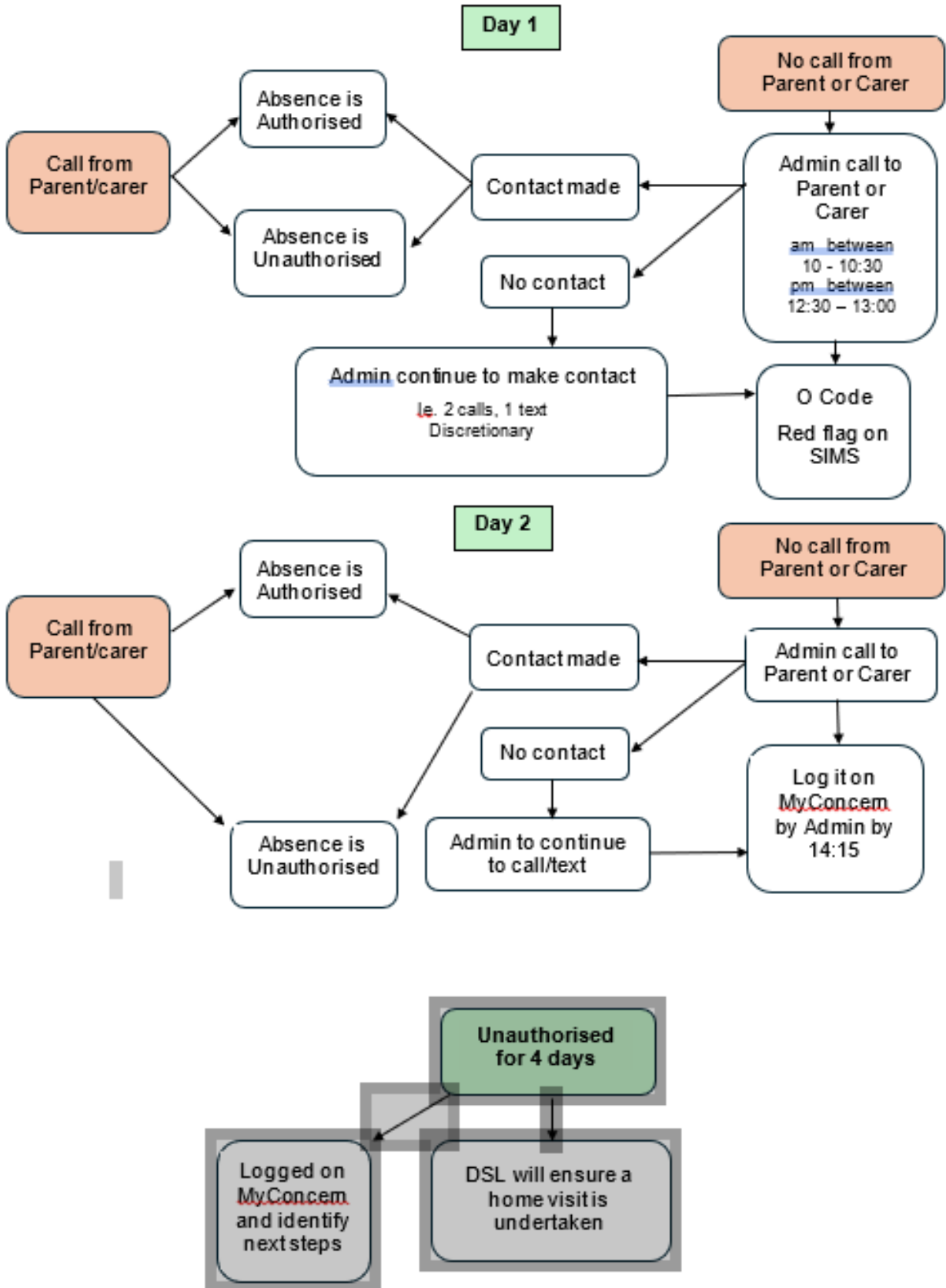
Attendance Policy Reply Slip

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the Attendance Policy at The Centre.

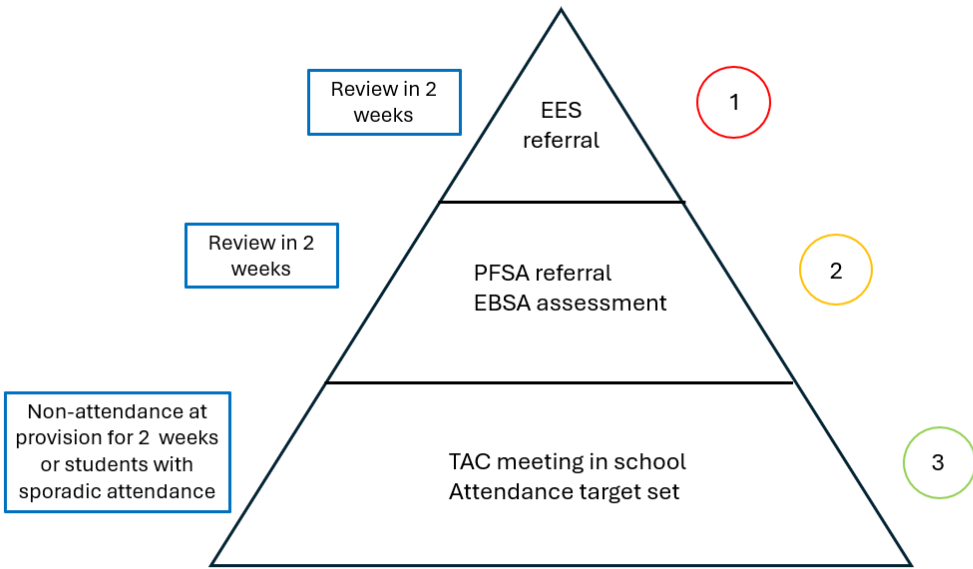
SIGNED	
PRINT NAME	
CHILD'S NAME	

Appendix 4

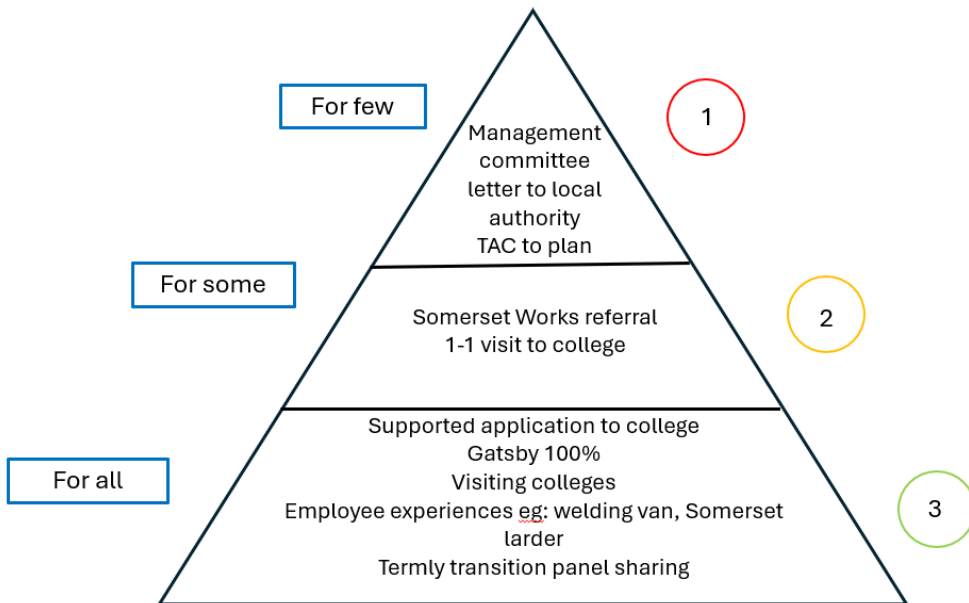
Absence Procedure flowchart



Appendix 5



Graduated response to attendance concerns



NEET graduated response