



ATTENDANCE POLICY (STUDENTS)

MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

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Attendance (Students) policy

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Attendance Aims

At Middlewich High School we aim to:

- Improve the overall attendance of students.
- Create a culture in which excellent attendance is the norm
- reduce the number of persistent absentees and those students on track to become persistent absentees.
- Develop a framework to promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including students, parents, staff and governors.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- Promote effective partnerships with the Cheshire East ACOSS team (Attendance and Children Out of School Service) and other external agencies.
- Recognise the needs of individual students when planning reintegration following a significant period of absence.

For the purpose of this policy

- A 'parent' means:
 - All natural parents, whether married or not
 - Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
 - Any person who has a care of a child or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the child)

'We' means:

- The school at which the student is registered and the staff body

Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, achievement, bullying, behaviour and inclusion including:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Achievement
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Behaviour Principals
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Inclusion and SEND Policy
- Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School Policy

Attendance and punctuality expectations

At Middlewich High School we consider attendance a priority and of utmost importance. Excellent attendance and punctuality are proven to be substantial and fundamental factors in every student's chances of achieving success in school.

Our school vision is 'Excellence in Learning - Achievement for All '. Students will achieve and excel if they attend school every day and follow our school values by being:

- **Ready** to learn ensuring they have the correct uniform and equipment and are prepared for the day
- **Respectful** by having excellent punctuality, ensuring learning is not delayed for themselves or others
- **Safe** knowing that attendance is monitored and actions taken if absence persists

All students have a **minimum attendance expectation of 96%**, although this appears quite high it equates to 8 days absent and 48 missed lessons across the academic year which is significant in terms of lost learning. Research suggests that the overall absence rate of students not achieving grades 9-4 at GCSE was over twice as high as those achieving grades 9-5. In addition to the academic impact of poor attendance, students also miss out on enrichment and wider holistic development. Poor attendance impacts on student wellbeing as they miss being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school life.

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full -time education. Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly, this means their child must attend school every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. There is specific guidance regarding illness and absence for school age children on the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Daily attendance routines

Absence is reported via our school absence line 01606 537670 (option1). All unplanned absence must be reported to our attendance team before 8.30am on the morning of the child's absence. If absence is planned this must be communicated to school wherever possible 2 working days prior to absence. This is to avoid the school having to make unnecessary contact with families.

- Our breakfast club opens at 8am to support students that arrive to site early before our school gates open. Students can have a snack such as toast and a drink free of charge.
- Our school gates open at 8.30am and are closed at 8.40am All students are met at the school gates by a member of our school staff to ensure they arrive to site safely, this also allows us to identify students very early in the day that may require some support. We make every effort to make this staffing consistent so students get to see a familiar face as soon as they arrive.
- Students that arrive after 8.40am need to sign in at the late gate (situated by the Drama Studio) and explain the reason for their lateness. Students who arrive late to school will receive an on the day late detention.
- We have a 30-minute personal development form time at the start of the school day, this allows the tutor to complete the legal registration that is required. This also provides an opportunity to touch base with a staff member that knows them well and address any concerns.
- Student that are in school on time receive a present mark (/).
- Morning registers close at 9.10am meaning students arriving after this time will have an absence mark for the morning session. *If a student arrives late to school following a medical appointment, they are coded as L, rather than M. A note/comment could be added to SIMS for reference.* Absence will be considered authorised or unauthorised as detailed in Appendix 2.
- Once morning registers close our attendance support team review all absence and alert our pastoral and safeguarding team if there is absence repetition or if the student's absence being monitored.
- If we do not receive communication regarding a child's absence we will consider that absence unauthorised. Several attempts are made by the school to contact families. This includes an automated day of absence text message and email requesting families contact the school to provide a reason for absence.
- If no response is received our attendance support team phone the child's priority contacts as per sims database.
- If there is no answer, voicemails (where possible) are left explaining the reason for the call and detailing the next steps in regards to a welfare visit. See page 5
- Our second legal registration mark is taken during lesson 3 at 12:30pm. Afternoon registers close at 13.00pm meaning students arriving after this time will have an absence mark for the afternoon session. Absence will be considered authorised or unauthorised as detailed in Appendix 1.
- We take attendance registers and collate attitudes to learning scores every lesson (see behaviour policy). All attendance data is available live on our parent portal

We monitor attendance daily and when attendance begins to decline we intervene rapidly to ensure absence does not become entrenched. This may include informal and formal action, working in tandem with families and external agencies including Cheshire East local authority to facilitate support.

Safeguarding

We expect parents to contact the school on the first day of their child's absence and provide a reason for their absence. All unexplained absence is unauthorised. If, despite reasonable attempts by school no contact is made, the absence will remain unauthorised. On day two of an unauthorised absence our attendance officer informs our pastoral and safeguarding team and a home visit is conducted to ensure the child is safe. If we still are unable to make contact, we will leave a letter at the address requesting contact from the parent. Following this home visits are conducted every day up until day 2 of further absence at which point contact is made with appropriate agencies in order to establish a child is safe. All home visits are conducted with two members of staff.

Requesting leave of absence

All requests of absence must be made in advance, leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively. All requests must be made at least 14 days prior to absence, with the exception of medical appointments which requires a minimum of 2 working days' notice, and completed using our 'Absence request' form, available in the attendance section of our school website.

Only exceptional circumstances will a leave of absence be granted. Each application is considered individually, considering the reasons for the request, context and the student's attendance. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteachers discretion. If leave of absence is granted, Mrs Naylor, as headteacher, will determine the length of time the absence will be authorised.

All efforts should be made to avoid medical appointments during the school day. Where this is not possible families should get agreement from the school in advance and the student should only be absent for the minimum time necessary for the appointment. Families need to contact the school, in writing, at least 48 hours before the appointment, detailing the amount of time required and providing accompanying evidence such as an appointment card or letter.

Families should plan holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from the school to take their children out of school during term time unless absolutely unavoidable. In line with the Department of Education attendance guidance (May 2022), it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Families that partake in unauthorised term time holidays are at risk of a fixed penalty notice.

Attendance data

We recognise that headline attendance figures do not always provide us with the information we require to target individual support due to the ever-changing size of the data set. For this reason, we adopt two approaches to our attendance data analysis.

We analyse attendance data weekly and cumulatively supporting the immediate identification of patterns and trends and providing timely communication and importantly additional support to families. Our attendance team review sessions missed and follow our attendance actions for unauthorised absence and authorised absence respectively. In addition to this our pastoral team analyse overall attendance figures half termly, termly and cumulatively to identify students that require intervention, this is detailed in appendix 4. We meet termly with the ACOOSS (Attendance and Children Out Of School Service) team to discuss our attendance data and identify students and cohorts at risk of poor attendance, agreeing targeted actions, including formal support and access to services for those families.

We review punctuality weekly, communication is made with families for any students arriving late on two or more occasions within a fortnight. The pastoral team inform the form tutor and direct them to contact family, the pastoral team also send a letter to families detailing how many occasions the student was absent, what time they arrived and the reasons given. The form tutor monitors punctuality for a period of two weeks. If no improvements are seen the family are asked to attend a meeting to discuss punctuality further. This does not apply to students that arrive after the register closes, where this will be considered an unauthorised absence and will receive a U or O code.

Reducing absence

We do not tolerate absence and our attendance expectations are communicated at least termly to families. If barriers to attendance emerge we encourage families to contact the school and work with our pastoral team to overcome these issues. Contact details for staffing are available on page 8. Students with deteriorating attendance will be communicated with on a more regular basis in reference to our attendance systems detailed in the appendix.

Poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. It is important that as a school we understand the individual barriers to attendance and not treat those students with poor attendance as a homogenous group. We recognise some students find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we work with families to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other student and therefore the attendance ambition for these students is the same as they are for any other student but we work with families and appropriate persons within and outside of school to ensure any additional needs are met.

Where support is needed we ensure the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and we endeavour to keep this consistent wherever possible. We also recognise that external agencies may be the ones best placed to support families and we work in partnership with external teams to ensure a cohesive, connected, consistent approach.

We intend to prevent persistence absence (<90%) through early identification and prompt engagement with students and families ensuring absence does not become entrenched and escalate to persistent absence. If this does occur we follow the absence system within the appendix of this policy. We work in partnership with the ACOOSS team to address persistent and severe absence (<50%). As attendance deteriorates and absence becomes severe it is essential additional support is required this may be voluntary, such as an early help plan, formalised such as a parenting contract or legal Education supervision order.

Rewards and incentives

We reward excellent attendance through our behaviour and rewards system, we also recognise improvements in attendance. We celebrate success in assemblies and through family communication.

Staffing

Staff name and contact	Responsibility
head@mhs.school	Oversee attendance strategy, process leave of absence requests, issue fixed penalty notice
Deputy Headteacher admin@mhs.school	Implementation of vision and attendance improvement, monitoring and evaluation of expectations systems and process, oversight of data analysis, communication with staff, students, families and external agencies
Link Governor adeakin@mhs.school	Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, take an active role in improvement and support, regularly review attendance data
Attendance officer attendance@mhs.school	Implementation of vision and attendance improvement, data preparation and analysis, identification of students requiring support, day to day attendance monitoring and parental contact, working in partnership with staff, students, families and external agencies
Deputy Safeguarding leader safeguarding@mhs.school	Monitor attendance and students at risk of/ or not meeting attendance expectations, work with students and families to improve attendance, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders and external agencies to support families
SENDCO admin@mhs.school	Monitor SEND attendance and SEND students at risk of/ or not meeting attendance expectations, work with students and families to improve attendance, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders and external agencies to support families
Education Support workers pastoral@mhs.school	Monitor attendance and students at risk of/ or not meeting attendance expectations, work with students and families to improve attendance, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders and external agencies to support families
Achievement leaders admin@mhs.school	Monitor attendance and students at risk of/ or not meeting attendance expectations, work with students and families to improve attendance, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders and external agencies to support families
Form tutors admin@mhs.school	Raise initial attendance concerns, work with students and families to improve attendance,
Learning practitioner admin@mhs.school	Raise initial attendance concerns, work with students and families to improve attendance,
All staff Admin@mhs.school	Set high expectation for attendance and punctuality of all students, complete register within the first 10 minutes of a lesson (legal requirement)

Appendix 1

Absence types

An authorised absence is when we have agreed with the reason why the student is not at school. It means that one of a specific set of circumstances applies as set out below:

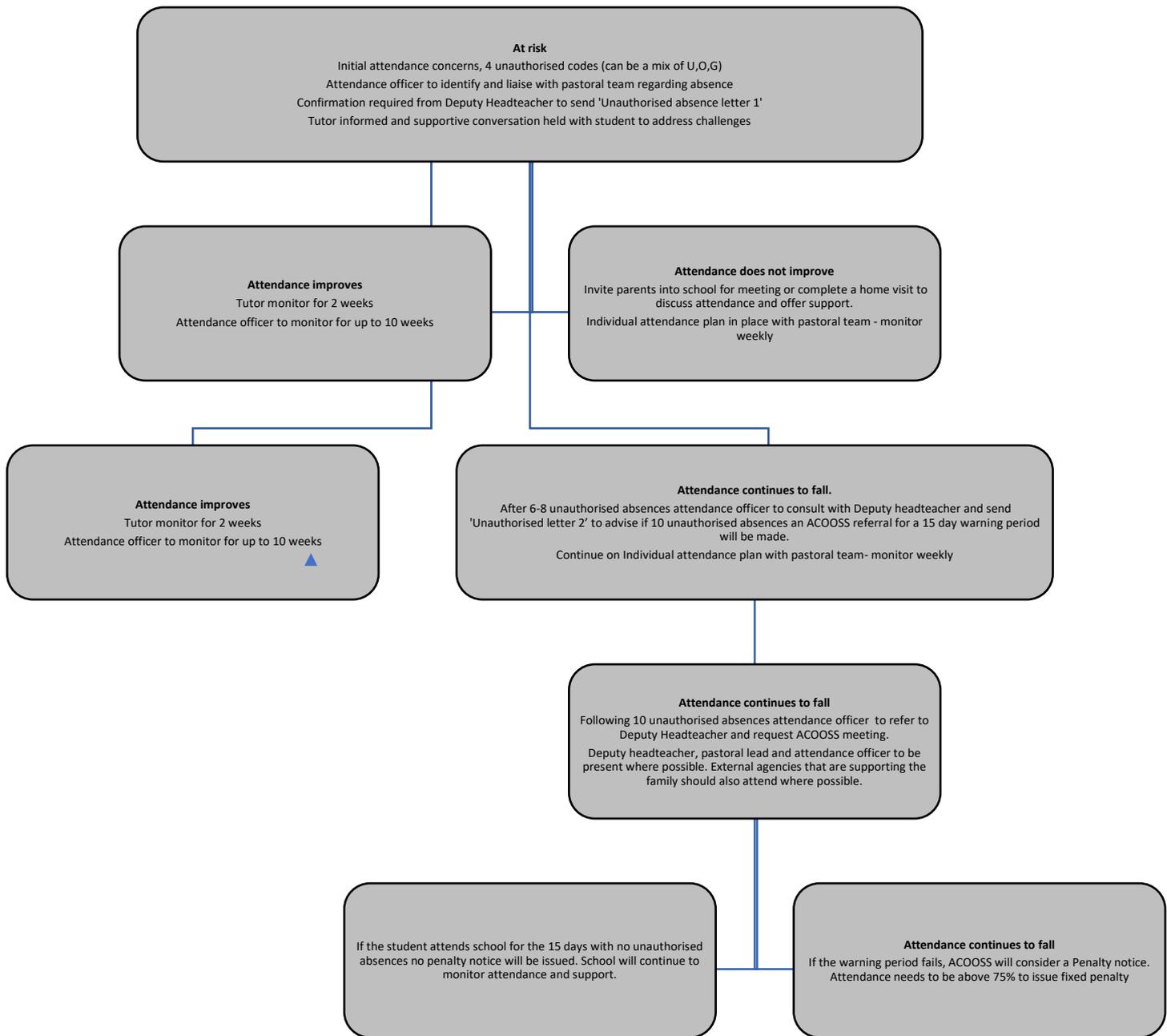
- Leave of absence is granted by the school (code C or code H)
- The student is excluded but no alternative provision made (code E)
- Illness (code I)
- Medical or dental appointment (code M)
- Religious observation in accordance with parents religious body (code R)
- Study leave (code S)
- Traveller absence (code T)
- Dual registration at another school (code D)
- Off-site educational activity (code B)
- Interview with employer or education establishment (code J)
- Participating in a supervised sporting activity (code P)
- Educational visit or trip (code V)
- Work experience (code W)
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (code Y)
- Planned whole or partial school closure (code #)

An unauthorised absence is when a student is not in school and we are not satisfied by the reasons given for non-attendance or where the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the time when the register is taken. It means that one of a specific set of circumstances applies as set out below:

- Reason for absence not yet provided (code N). This code can only remain on the register for 5 working days after the session. If the reason for the absence cannot be established after 5 working days the absence will convert to an absence without authorisation.
- Absence without authorisation (code O)
- Holiday not granted by the school or in excess of the period determined by the school (code G)
- Arrived at school after registration closed (code U)

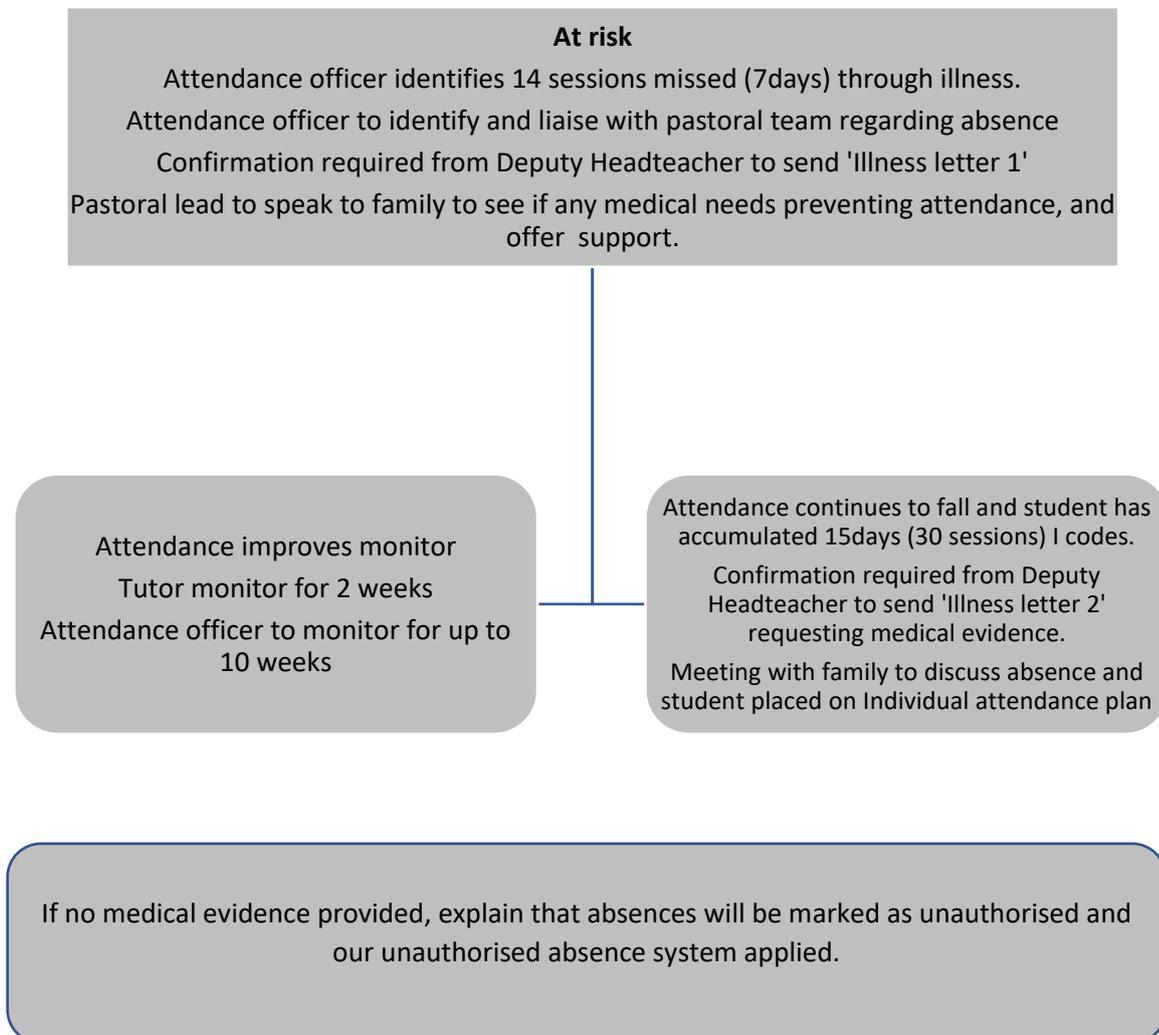
Appendix 2

Attendance system - Unauthorised absence



Appendix 3

Attendance system - Illness absence



Appendix 4

Attendance system - Cumulative attendance

