



Attendance policy



Approved by Governors: June 2023

Signed Chair of Governors:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. P. Lee', written over a white background.

Head Teacher:

Date of Review: July 2024

Vision Statement

We aim to create a safe, happy and nurturing environment for all our children!

Mission Statement

The Orchard School strives to provide the best quality teaching and learning with an inclusive and personalised curriculum, where all achievements are celebrated.

1 Introduction

At The Orchard School we strongly believe that attendance and punctuality are vital for our children to benefit fully from the educational opportunities available in order to maximise their potential and help to equip them for future life.

Attendance also helps children to feel a sense of belonging in their class/school community.

We believe that there is a direct link between a child's level of attendance at school and their progress. In developing this policy, the school aims to ensure that all pupils have access to a full curriculum and, taking account of any medical needs, spend as much time as possible in school.

We believe that;

- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.
- Prolonged and consistent absence, in any year group, affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.
- Unnecessary, parentally condoned and unauthorised absence should be challenged and both school and parents/carers held responsible for the impact this may have on any pupil's full attendance.

We are required to monitor and manage all attendance and absence in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations, to follow the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines in relation to attendance and absence and expect all parents/carers to work with us to ensure all pupils maintain an attendance figure of at least 96% throughout the academic year.

The Government has identified that when any child's attendance falls below 90%, they are classed as a 'P' In order to promote continuity of learning for all pupils the Orchard School takes seriously its responsibility of monitoring attendance and addressing any issues preventing regular attendance persistent absentee'.

The school recognises that some pupils will find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the school's efforts on curriculum, behaviour, pastoral support, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation and must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

2 Aims

This policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and building the trust of parents so that school is seen as a safe place for their child
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absence are recorded promptly and consistently and followed up as necessary; challenging levels of absence, both authorised and unauthorised.
- Ensuring that an informed approach supports maximum attendance for all children including those with significant medical needs.

3 Responsibilities of parents and carers

Parents have the prime and legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Parents may be prosecuted under the Education Act 1996 if their child does not attend school regularly and punctually.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Work closely with the school, to address any problems that may impede a child's regular attendance at school. This may include additional support from the community school nurse, social care and the The Schools Attendance Support Service .
- Ensure that their child arrives in school on time; parents should provide a reason for lateness unless it is due to lateness of the transport.
- Provide a reason for any period of absence
- Ring every day regarding absence of their child(ren) where necessary, unless there is an agreement made otherwise.
- Take family holidays within school holiday periods. Any requests for absence outside of school holiday times, including religious observance, must be well in advance and in writing. Such requests will be considered by the Headteacher and will only be agreed in very exceptional circumstances.

The school takes a formal approach and will refer to Attendance and Prosecution guidance if unauthorised holidays are taken during term-time.

4 Responsibilities of the school

The school will work with parents and other partners such as healthcare staff and social care to:

- Encourage open and regular communication with parents.
- Consistently record attendance and punctuality (See Appendix A for codes used)
- Monitor attendance and punctuality to celebrate achievements and follow up patterns of absence.
- Promote the regular attendance of all children including liaison with the The Schools Attendance Support Service where persistent absence occurs.
- The Attendance Lead and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will work closely to manage risks and ensure multi agency collaboration where necessary, so that children receive the appropriate level of help or intervention in order to ensure that they attend school regularly.

There may be particular concerns regarding the absence of children who are subject to 'Child in Need' or 'Child Protection Plans', and 'Looked After Children'. The school office will be made aware by the DSL of any children whose absence needs to be escalated immediately rather than progressing through the usual absence procedures. If notified of such a case the DSL or deputy then makes a decision regarding who these children need to be notified to.

The administrative team are responsible for ensuring that the DSL or deputies and pastoral team are immediately notified of their absence.

5 School procedures regarding attendance

5.1 ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

School Attendance Registers are 'legal documents' and as such must be kept in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations.

Attendance Registers can and are viewed by School staff, Parents/Carers (for their own child/ren), Governors, Local Authority Officers, Ofsted and the Magistrates Court.

All pupils must be registered twice every day, once at the beginning of school in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Every half-day registration mark must show if the pupil was present or absent.

All absence from school must be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED** in accordance with DfE Guidelines.

5.2 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of a child has;

- a) provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence that can be accepted and/or is allowed for the purposes of authorisation and,
- b) that the Headteacher agrees that the reason for absence means that the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

Note

Absences may be authorised for a medical appointment in school time, BUT school may ask parents/carers to ensure their child attends registration, is collected from school and then returned after the appointment in order for the absence to be authorised. The timing of and venue of the medical appointment may need to be evidenced and discussed with school to agree arrangements.

In the case of an unexpected emergency parents/carers should negotiate with the Headteacher on an individual basis. Parents will be advised on the amount of absence that the Headteacher can agree to Authorise in each instance. Any extension to the original agreement will need to be re-negotiated.

If the reason provided can allow the Head teacher to authorise the absence no further action will be taken.

5.3 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Any half day absence from school for which the parent/carer of the child has;

- a) not provided the Headteacher (in advance) with a reason for that absence,
- b) provided a reason but that reason cannot be accepted for the purpose of authorisation and,
- c) the Headteacher is unable to agree that the pupil should not be in school for that half day session.

Note

Late arrival in the classroom for registration, both in the morning and afternoon, can be recorded as Late and/or unauthorised absence for that half day session (see section 5.4 below)

If no reason for an absence has been provided or if the reason provided cannot be accepted for the purposes of authorisation further action may be taken (see section 9 Attendance monitoring below).

5.4 REGISTRATION and REGISTERS

Registration

Registration happens IN THE CLASSROOM.

A child can only be marked as present if they are in the classroom on time.

A child who has arrived on school premises, is on their way to the classroom or has a sibling who has been marked present at registration cannot be accepted for the registration 'on time' of a child.

Due to the complex needs of the children the majority arrive on local authority transport and may experience difficulties on route which delay their arrival at no fault of the children or parents. Children who have arrived at school will have to wait for collection by school staff, and this takes time since it has to be done in an orderly, safe process. The school's location, being near to Junction 2 of the M5, on occasion leads to roads

surrounding the school becoming gridlocked. The Headteacher will decide whether the child has a late mark on these occasions.

Mornings

Registration for all children opens at 9.10 am and closes at 9.20am in the morning.
Lessons start at 9.20am in the morning.

Afternoons

registration for all children opens at 1.10pm and closes at 1.20pm in the afternoon.
Lessons start at 1.20pm in the afternoon.

Class teachers MUST close Registration at 9.20am and 1.20pm.

Lateness

A child arriving IN THE CLASSROOM after 9.10am but before 9.20 am in the morning or after 1.10pm but before 1.20pm in the afternoon they will be marked 'L' AUTHORISED LATE.

Registers close at 9.20am and 1.20pm and if a child arrives after this they will be marked 'U' UNAUTHORISED LATE. This 'U' mark counts the same as an 'O' mark and is an UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE on the child's Registration/Attendance Record for that half day session.

Children arriving at school after 9.20am or 1.20pm will enter via the main doors by the school office and be signed in by the adult bringing them to school in the LATE book.

If a child arrives LATE more than 5 times in any school year the 'privilege' of school marking this AUTHORISED LATE will be 'withdrawn' and if the child is not IN THE CLASSROOM before 9.10am in the morning or 1.10pm in the afternoon this will be marked as 'U' Unauthorised Late.

Unauthorised Lateness 'U' and/or Unauthorised Absence 'O' can lead to parents/carers being referred to the Education Investigation Service and parents/carers being liable to Penalty Notices (a fine of up to £120) and/or Magistrates Court proceedings against them (a fine of up to £2,500 plus costs and/or 3 months imprisonment).

Registers

All marks in the Register are made by the Headteacher or by someone delegated by the Headteacher to do so, but the Headteacher remains responsible for all marks made.

It is the Headteachers legal responsibility to ensure that registers are kept up to date and accurate and in accordance with the Pupil Registration Regulations.

It is the Class Teacher's responsibility to take registration at the times identified above and to put an appropriate mark against all children in that class before Registration closes.

They must ensure that Registration is completed accurately and in accordance with the Headteacher's instruction.

6 Attendance and illness

Unfortunately sometimes children do suffer from illness. When this happens parents/carers must make a judgement whether the illness means the child is prevented from or is unable to attend school.

It is well known that many children change quickly and may appear unwell first thing in the morning but recover almost immediately or a little later in the day. If a child has been unwell in the morning but then recovered we would encourage parents/carers to return their child to school later in the morning or after lunch.

We would request that Parents/carers ring school **BEFORE 8.00** if they feel their child should stay at home and explain the reason for the absence to avoid that absence being recorded as Unauthorised. There is an answer machine where a message can be left if parents are ringing before 8am

Reasons for authorised absence include:

- The child is ill.
 - In the case of sickness and diarrhoea parents will be requested to keep their child at home for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness / diarrhoea.
 - If the child has been confirmed as having an infectious disease e.g., chicken pox or measles there are specific periods they need to stay off school and the school will advise regarding this.
- The child is eligible for transport assistance and suitable arrangements have not been made.

If the reason for absence is accepted the absence for that half day session will be Authorised by the Headteacher and no further action will be taken. If it is not accepted further discussion with the family will be required and the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised.

When parents/carers indicate that their child may be absent for a long period (e.g., all week) the school may contact the parents after 2-3 days to enquire about the child and whether they are likely to return to school earlier etc.

We encourage parents/carers to make their decisions knowing that if a child is a little unwell the school is able to monitor their condition and contact the parent/carer to collect them should they deteriorate.

Medication

Parents/carers should be aware that in the case of a child being prescribed medicines this does not automatically mean that the child should be absent from school. Many medicines can be given outside school hours, and the school's medical policy allows us to administer medicines, with written consent.

Duration of absence because of illness

The School can allow parents/carers up to a maximum of 7 days (14 half day sessions) each Academic year (from September to the following July) due to illness assuming an acceptable reason for absences has been provided.

When a child has exceeded this level of absence parents/carers may be asked to provide the Headteacher with some further information, or evidence (sometimes in writing) that supports the view of the parent/carer that their child was 'unfit' to attend school.

This information provided will then be reviewed to consider if it would allow the Headteacher to continue to Authorise the absence. The information may be recorded or filed in school

Note. *We intend parents/carers to be both clear in understanding and to appreciate that, if asked for some further information or evidence, it does not mean that we do not believe them when they say their child is unwell, but, it does provide school with the necessary information and detail which supports the Headteachers decision to continue to Authorise the absence. (Governors, the LA and/or Ofsted review or question schools Registration Procedures and/or Attendance figures.)*

If, when asked for, a parent/carer does not or cannot provide further information, or evidence absence will remain Unauthorised.

School and parents/carers can work with the Community Children's Nurse to meet and discuss any unresolved issues.

Long term sickness absence

Where a child is in hospital for a prolonged amount of time and where it is medically appropriate, school will liaise with the relevant hospital teaching service so that they can work with your child whilst they are in hospital. This would be recorded as being educated off site and would be equivalent to an attendance at school.

If a child leaves hospital and a return to school is not medically appropriate/approved, or needs to be a gradual re-integration, then school will liaise with families to provide educational activities at home.

7 Parent / Carer reporting of absences

We would request that Parents/carers ring school **BEFORE 8.00** if they feel their child should stay at home and explain the reason for the absence to avoid that absence being recorded as Unauthorised. There is an answer machine where a message can be left if parents are ringing before 8am

There may be particular concerns regarding the absence of children who are on a child protection plan, are looked after or have a child in need (CIN) plan . The school office will escalate these cases immediately to the DSL or deputies who will decide whether other agencies need to be notified immediately rather than progressing through the usual absence procedures.

If a child is absent and no call has been received by the school before 9.20am the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised.

If a child is absent and parents/carers have not contacted school before 9.20am a member of School staff will attempt to contact them (via the contact details, they are required to provide and keep up to date). If there is no response to this contact or if the contact details are out of date the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised.

Where there has been no reason provided for a child's absence, the school will contact the parents/carers by phone / text at before 10.00am on the first day of absence. If no sufficient explanation is received regarding the child's absence the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

If no contact can be made, the school will contact other emergency numbers held on record.

If no contact has been made on the first day, the school will make best endeavours on the second day to continue to make contact and, if this is not possible, will make a safe and well check. This will enable school to make face to face contact with the family to ensure all are safe and well and establish the reason for absence and identify further support if necessary. If there is no answer a letter will be delivered asking parents to contact the school as a matter of urgency on that day.

Safeguarding

In some cases of Absence and/or lack of contact with parents/carers we may need to contact other Agencies such as Social Care, the Police and health Care Professionals to meet our 'Safeguarding Children' responsibilities.

8 Leave of absence

Since September 2013 Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise any 'Leave of Absence' (sometimes previously known as 'term time holiday') unless a parent/carers makes an application, in advance, detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' , (respite or Religious observance, holiday in term time) they would want the Headteacher to consider.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 absence **may not** be authorised unless:

- (a) An application has been made in advance to the Headteacher by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides;

- (b) The Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

Penalty Notices

Parents/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices should their child take any Leave of Absence if they have not requested this, in writing, to the Headteacher detailing the 'exceptional circumstances' they would want the Head teacher to take into consideration in deciding if any Leave of Absence can be agreed and Authorised.

Parent/Carers can be issued with Penalty Notices should any Leave of Absence be taken without any Application/Request being made.

Parents/Carers should ensure that any Request/Application **is made in advance** and returned to school as far in advance of the proposed holiday or appointment of any Leave of Absence to be taken.

Parents/Carers should ensure that they know if their Leave of Absence application has been authorised by the Head teacher before planning, booking or paying for anything in relation to that Leave of Absence application

Legislation dictates that a Leave of Absence Requests/Application can only be considered if it is from a Parent/Carer with whom the pupil normally lives.

Leave of Absence Requests/Applications from a Parent/Carer that a pupil does not normally live with or from any other family member cannot be considered under any circumstances.

9 Attendance monitoring

The school electronic register allows the close monitoring of patterns of attendance.

The Pastoral Team/ DSL and DDSLs scrutinise this weekly, generating an action plan to support families. Where attendance falls below 90% the reasons for each child's absence will be reviewed in consultation with other professionals as part of a safeguarding review and action planning.

Where a child's absences cannot be clearly explained and have been recorded as unauthorised then an individual plan of action will be agreed to improve attendance.

The school will:

- Call, the parents highlighting concerns around attendance and asking how we can support them get their child into school.
- The next step is to write to parents/carers to highlight the concerns regarding the child's absences and invite them into school for a discussion. This may include the class teacher, the safeguarding lead, community children's nurse. The aim of the meeting is to share concerns and discuss solutions and expectations for supporting improved attendance.
- Discuss attendance as a key part of the EHCP review
- In extreme cases, set up an agreement through The Schools Attendance Support Service with the parents/carers regarding expectations of the child's attendance. This agreement will be signed by all parties. Where this agreement does not result in improved attendance the Local Authority through The Schools Attendance Support Service may decide to prosecute parents for their child's non-attendance.

Below are some triggers that will require further investigation and communications with parents/carers and may involve a referrals too and involvement with other external Services.

Absence on more than 3 occasions without a parent/carer contacting the school BEFORE 9.00am the school will follow The Orchard School Policy Procedures. **See Appendix B**

Pupil Attendance below 96% (Expected Minimum Attendance)

If at any time a child’s actual Attendance falls below 96% (the absence might be Authorised, Unauthorised or a combination of both) school will contact parents/carers to highlight the fall in attendance, to identify any issues.

If there are no improvement after action above, school will write to parents/carers inviting them into school for a meeting with Parent Liaison Officer and Headteacher to discuss the child’s attendance, and how it can be improved

Pupil Attendance below 93%

If at any time a child’s actual Attendance falls below 93% (the absence might be Authorised, Unauthorised or a combination of both) school may put a Parent Contract in place to support attendance issues.

Pupil Attendance below 90% (Persistent Absence)

If at any time a child’s actual Attendance falls below 90% (the absence might be Authorised, Unauthorised or a combination of both) school will support the family and encourage engagement to increase the child’s attendance.

Any 12 half day sessions of Unauthorised Absence (including Unauthorised lateness)

May result in a referral to Education Investigation Service for issue of Warning Notice

Any further 12 half days of Unauthorised Absence (including Unauthorised lateness)

May result in a referral to Education Investigation Service for issue of Penalty Notice (A fine of up to £120 per parent/carer per child, non-payment results in Magistrates Court with a fine of up to £1,000 plus costs)

Any further Unauthorised Absence (including Unauthorised lateness)

May result in a referral to Education Investigation Service for possible Magistrates Court. (A fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment plus costs)

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| 100% | Excellent attendance | Full attendance and no days missed from school the best chance of success |
| 96% | Good attendance | 8 days missed from school |
| 95% | Below the expected level of attendance | 9 days missed – less chance of success and makes it harder for your child to make progress |
| 91% | Below the expected level of attendance and needs to improve | 18 days missed |
| 90% | Worrying and attendance needs to improve | 19 days missed (persistent absence threshold). Your child will find it very hard to make progress- 190 hours missed at school |
| 85% | Poor attendance and must improve | 28 days missed |
| 80% | Poor attendance and must improve | 38 days missed- 240 hours missed at school |
| 70% | Poor attendance and must improve | 57 days missed – 345 hours missed at school |

Relevant legislation / guidance

The Education Act 1996

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Relevant government guidance

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour

Children missing education

Keeping children safe in education

Working together to safeguard children

Elective home education

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying

Other relevant school policies

Management of medical conditions in school

Appendix A

DFE Absence Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way and are used to collect statistics through the School Census system. The data helps schools, local authorities and the government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reason for, absence and the delivery of education

Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Absent Authorised Absence from School

Code C: Leave of absence granted by the school

Code H: leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday granted by the school

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code M: Medical or dental appointment

Code R: Religious observance

Code S: Study leave

Code T: Traveller absence

Unauthorised Absence from School

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school or more than the period determined by the school

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Code O: Absent without authorisation

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Code D: Dual registered at another school

Code B: Off-site educational Activity

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

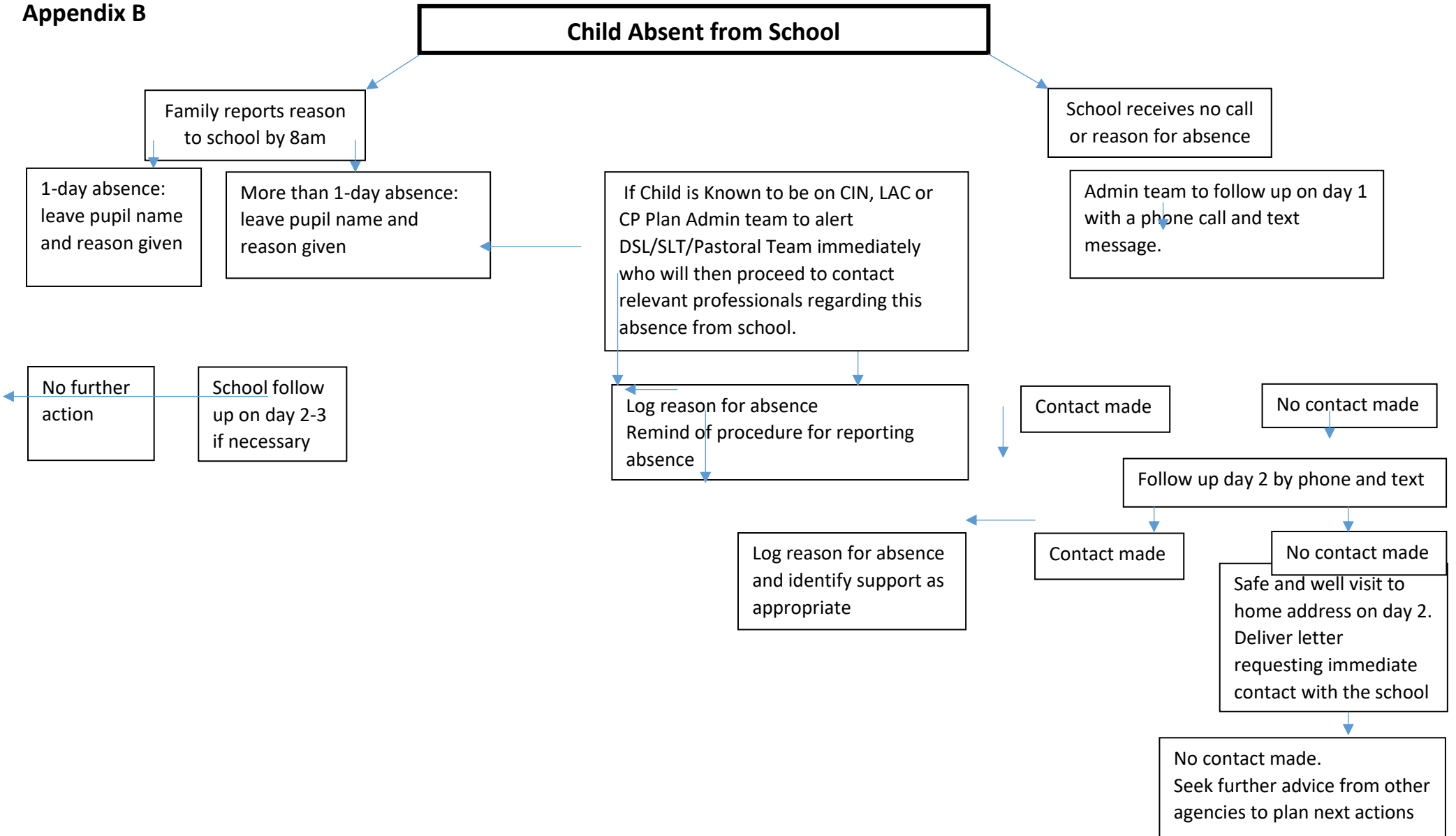
Code W: Work experience

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school

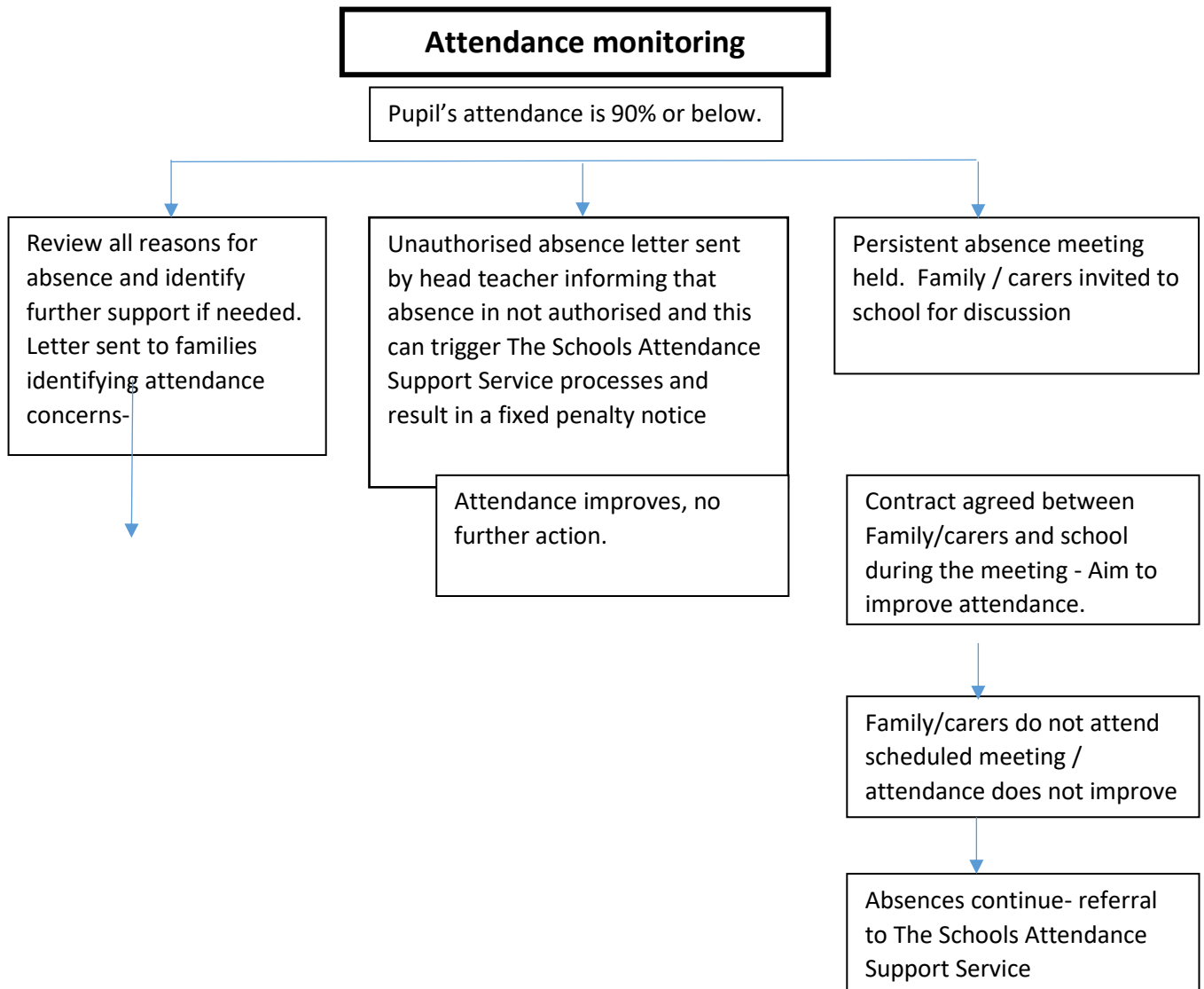
Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

Appendix B



Appendix B



Appendix C

Acceptable forms of medical evidence

- A statement of fitness form completed by a doctor
- A letter from a Doctor detailing the reason for absence and the time that they would expect the child to be off school (including Dates)
- An Orchard School proof of absence certificate completed by a Doctor.
- A letter providing the date and time of an appointment that the child is required to attend. **Please note that only the AM or PM sessions that the appointment time is in will be authorised unless there is further medical evidence to support additional time taken.**
- A hospital admissions form
- Medication labels or prescriptions may be used but will be decided at the time whether they will be accepted as acceptable evidence.