



# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Effective Date: October 2015**

**Last Reviewed: March 2017**

**Reviewed by: Miss K Hayward**

**Next Review Date: March 2018**

## **Rationale**

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at Sandy Upper School, in order to establish positive life habits necessary for future success and progress. Regular attendance encourages students to build friendships and develop social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing life skills. Through not attending school students will also inevitably miss out on essential learning and on events taking place, such as school visits, which could disadvantage them and their progress.

## **Aims**

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone at Sandy Upper School;
- To develop and implement an effective attendance policy that touches all aspects of the school's life, and relates directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;
- School strives;
  - i. To encourage all students to reach their true potential and eventually become independent learners, who value learning with, and from, others; to have a positive attitude to life-long learning;
  - ii. To value application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action, as well as co-operative endeavours;

## **Attendance and the Law:**

Parents/guardians have a legal obligation to ensure their child(ren) attends regularly. By law all children of compulsory school age must get a proper full time education.

- The 2011 Education Act states;  
"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –
  - a) To his age, ability and aptitude, and
  - b) To any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

## **Responsibilities**

### **Parents/Guardians**

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- To notify the school if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's safety, as well as administrative reasons;
- Provide written confirmation of the reason for an absence on their child's return to school;
- To request authorisation for all 'leave of absence' including holidays and appointments in school time;
- To provide evidence of medical or other appointments in school hours;
- To work with the school and Attendance Officer to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- To attend meetings as required in relation to their child's attendance;

### **Students**

- Students are expected to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school by 8.35am and to the start of lessons;
- If late, students must sign in at Student Services;

- If students are required to leave the premises during the school day they must sign in and out at Student Services. (This is for their safety as well as administrative purposes);
- Students should inform their House Achievement Leader if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, long term medical issues, etc.;
- Students should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents/guardians to their Form Tutor and to pass correspondence to their parents/guardians;
- Students should understand that only 'real' illnesses can be a reason for absence.

## The School

The school's Governing Body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management, including the attendance register. It is, therefore, registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Principal manages the day-to-day running of the School and in doing so takes responsibility for the implementation of this policy. The principal will regularly update the House staff about attendance data and issues and the school will review this annually.

The school will;

- Maintain two registers
  - i. An admissions register (known as the school roll)
  - ii. An attendance register for all students, including those that are not of compulsory age.
- Contact parents/guardians if a call is not received by 10.00 am on the first day of absence. This will be followed by a home visit if telephone contact cannot be made;
- Monitor attendance and punctuality on a weekly basis;
- Submit the details of the level of absence within the school through the termly School Census;
- Report attendance data to parents/guardians and all other appropriate bodies such as the House Achievement Leaders and school Attendance Officer;
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and how to implement, care, guidance and support policies in order to recognise where there may be issues affecting students attendance and to be pro-active in dealing with issues in the appropriate way;
- Implement strategies to support students and their families who have difficulties in attending school regularly and do not reach the attendance target set;
- Ensure form/class teachers are aware of their class's attendance percentage and are pro-active in addressing issues;
- Reward good attendance;
- Ensure class and subject teachers contribute to the reduction of absences by delivering interesting and engaging lessons and insist on good attendance and punctuality for themselves, colleagues and students;
- ***Follow the procedures regarding attendance and absence, as outlined in this policy. (Appendix i)***

## Taking the register

Registers are treated as legal documents – indeed they may be used as evidence in court cases. For this reason they are retained for a minimum of three years.

- The legal register is held on our SIMS (Management Information System);
- The register will be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session;
- For each student, the register must be marked either as present or absent.
  - / - is entered to show the student is present in the morning session.
  - \ - is entered to show the student is present in the afternoon session.
  - N – is entered to show the student is absent until the reason is known;

- Once the school has been officially notified of the reason for the absence, the appropriate registration code will be inserted by the Attendance Officer. (Appendix ii)
- The register must clearly differentiate between whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school;
- It is the policy of the school that no absences are unaccounted for;

## Understanding Types of Absences

### Authorised Absence

- Authorised absence is absence with permission from the Principal or other authorised representative of the school. This includes absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health;
- Even when students are engaged in Approved Educational Activity off-site, they must not be marked as present, as good Health and Safety practice requires that the school needs to know who is on the premises in the case of a fire drill or real emergency;
- The school **may** authorise absence in the following circumstances;
  - i. Personal illness (excessive or extended absences **will require medical evidence**)
  - ii. Medical Appointment (copy of appointment to be seen and copied)
  - iii. Family bereavement
  - iv. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to a child's health and safety
  - v. Religious observance (limitation apply)
  - vi. A travelling child's absence

### Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the authorised representative of the School. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

- The school will not authorise absence in the following circumstances;
  - i. No explanation is offered by the parent/guardian
  - ii. The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc.)
  - iii. Leave of absence which is taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of the time agreed by the school.
  - iv. Special occasions, such as birthdays
  - v. Minding siblings
  - vi. Parent/guardian or sibling illness
  - vii. Family holidays in term time
- Unauthorised absence from school is considered truancy. This can take the form of absence from school for complete days, lateness and absenteeism from individual lessons. Each of these is as serious as the other, but the strategies for effecting change may need to be different;
- When parents are unaware of such absences there may be significant danger to the young person's safety as it likely that their whereabouts are unknown by a responsible adult;
- Unfortunately, there may be occasions when truancy is condoned by parents. If such collusion occurs it is the duty of the school to work with the student and family to change their attitudes towards school, thus encouraging full attendance;

### Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

- Persistent Absentees are students whose attendance falls below 90%;
- While discretion may be deployed (e.g. in cases of long term illness), Sandy Upper School will refer any individual child whose attendance is 90% or below to the School Attendance Officer. At this point legal proceedings could follow; (Appendix i)
- No absence below (90%) will be authorised unless in extenuating circumstances, such as long term illness;

- All PA's are tracked and reported to the House Achievement Leaders;

### **Punctuality and Lateness**

The School actively discourages late arrival by staff setting a good example and by challenging it whenever it occurs.

- A child will be registered late in the morning if they arrive after 8.40am, the scheduled start of the day. The 'Late' will be recorded on our electronic management system and a behaviour point will be added to the student's record;
- Lateness can be an indication of more serious problems, as well as poor time management. Students who travel to school independent of an adult, may not be coming here directly. We have a duty to ensure every child's safety and therefore will telephone home after 3 recorded lates;
- Our level of contact will be increased if lateness continues until after 10 lates when the School Attendance Officer will be informed;
- For full details see Appendix iii (Punctuality Protocol)

### **Temporary Schools Closures**

Where a school has to close due to severe weather conditions, problems with amenities such as water or heating, fire, structural damage or in-service training, no attendance registers are needed. This will be coded appropriately.

### **Reporting Absence – First Day Response**

- It is the policy of the school that no absence should be unaccounted for;
- On the first day of absence parents/guardians are expected to contact the school, preferably by telephone before 9.00 am;
- The parent/guardian reporting the absence should give the reason for the absence and the expected date of return;
- If the date of the return is unknown, regular contact on a daily basis should be kept with the school; if the school receives no contact a member of the office team will:
  - i. Arrange to check if the student is in the lesson that they should be in. If he/she is present, the register will be marked accordingly. If he/she is absent they will:
  - ii. Telephone the parent/guardian,
  - iii. If contact cannot be made, the school has a duty of care to ensure the student is safe and therefore a home visit will be made.
  - iv. If contact is still not possible, it may be necessary for the school to contact the Police to alert them that the child is missing.
- When the student returns to school, even if the absence has been reported verbally, the parent/guardian is expected to confirm the reason for the absence in writing within three days. This can be letter or signed note;
- The written confirmation will be placed on file;
- If written confirmation is not received within the expected time frame, a standard letter will be sent out for completion;
- **If this is still not returned within a school week, non-compliance with the school policy will be recorded on the register.**

**NB: - Reporting an absence, verbally or in writing, does not guarantee authorisation.**

## Leave of Absence

### External Appointments within School Hours

The school recognises that there are occasions when students need to go out of school for an appointment (e.g. doctor, dentist, optician, etc.). If at all possible, all appointments should be made outside of school hours or during the lunch break.

- If an appointment is during the school day, a request for the absence to be authorised should be made at least **24 hours before** the appointment to allow for authorisation to be considered;
- The request can be made verbally or in writing through the Attendance Office or Form Tutor who will place the request in the register folder which is sent to the office during morning registration;
- If your child's attendance is below our (98%) threshold, evidence for the appointment will need to be provided with the request (e.g. appointment card/hospital letter);
- We acknowledge that there are occasions when requests cannot always be made in advance as appointments at doctors and dentists, etc., can sometimes be made on the actual day. Where this is the case, required evidence must still be provided when the child returns to the school or the absence will not be authorised.
- Without this requested evidence, the absence will not be authorised;
- If authorisation is granted, written confirmation will be provided through an 'Authorised Appointment' form (Appendix iii);
- We must have evidence of which students are on the school's premises and in our care, therefore when a student leaves the school to attend an appointment during the school day, he/she must sign out on the daily 'signing out' book held in the Student Support office;
- If the student returns during the school day they are also required to sign back in;
- We require all students leaving for an appointment to be collected by a parent/guardian in person. We will not allow a child to leave alone. (Being told that a parent/guardian is going to wait in the car park, etc., is not sufficient for our safeguarding procedures);
- All paperwork to do with the appointment will be put on file;

### Holidays within Term Time

The latest amendments to education law September 2013 make it clear that Headteachers may not grant **any** leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The purpose of this change in the regulations is doubtless to highlight the crucial link between student's attendance and their success within school and to ensure Headteachers take a firmer approach towards parents/guardians who remove their children from school during term time in order to go on holiday. The school will therefore consider every absence application individually, although **our policy will be NOT to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances**.

- Holiday in term time can only be agreed by the Principal;
- The Principal will use discretion to grant authorised absence in a school year **if both the following apply**:
  - i. The parent/guardian the child normally lives with applies to the school in writing, with appropriate evidence, at least 4 weeks advance of the intended holiday.
  - ii. There are '**exceptional circumstances**' for the holiday
- Special reasons or exceptional circumstances that may be agreed to are:
  - i. A dying relative in a different country;
  - ii. A family funeral in another country/ part of the country;
  - iii. Holidays for fostering or adoption purposes;
  - iv. Religious observance;

- v. Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during normal school holiday times. (Evidence must be provided to this effect)
  - vi. When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- The school is therefore unable to authorise absence because of:
    - i. Availability of cheap holidays;
    - ii. Availability of desired accommodation;
    - iii. Poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
    - iv. Overlap with the beginning or end of term;
    - v. Another sibling in another school where the holidays do not coincide;
    - vi. A special treat for the child;
  - Authorisation will not be considered during assessment times for Years 10 to 13. This may also include during the preparation period leading up to the examinations;
  - When deciding on the authorisation the following will also be taken into account:
    - i. If the child's attendance is above the school's target of 98%;
    - ii. If there have been any other holiday requests during the same school year. (There must be only one request for the academic year);
  - Should the application not be authorised and the holiday is taken, the **Education Welfare Service** in consultation with the school **may** issue a **Fixed Penalty Notice**.

### Procedure in School

On receipt of a written absence request, the following will occur:

- i. The request will be considered according to the above criteria.
- ii. If insufficient information is received, further details will be requested from the parent/guardian.
- iii. If appropriate, the parent/guardian may be requested to attend a meeting to discuss the circumstances.
- iv. If special circumstances are identified authorisation of the holiday may be granted by the school.
- v. Parents will be notified of the outcome in writing.

### Education of Students with Medical Needs

In response to the guidance – Access to Education for Children & Young People with Medical Needs, DfES 0732/2001 – Sandy Upper School recognises its responsibilities 'for all pupils unable to attend school for medical reasons. Young persons should be able to access education without stigma or exclusion.' The school's aim is to ensure students have access to as much education as their medical condition allows.

- Students covered by this may:
  - Be recovering from an illness or injury, keeping the student away from school during recovery
  - Have a long term or recurring illness
  - Have an illness or clinically defined mental health disorder which causes them to be absent for a period in excess of 15 days, where medical opinion states they are still unable to access mainstream school
- The **SENCO with the appropriate House Achievement Leader** will be responsible for:
  - Ensuring that Medical Needs Referral Forms (Request for Involvement and Request for Medical Information forms) are completed and passed to the relevant agencies as quickly as possible.
  - Ensuring that the student is transferred to School Action Plan of the Inclusion Register, and that, working with the relevant school staff, a Personal Education Plan is drawn up.
  - Ensure that Personal Achievement Plan is written.

- Arrange for the relevant member of staff to meet with the Medical Needs Team to plan appropriate coursework.
- The school will also be responsible for requesting special arrangements where necessary.

### **Parents/Guardians**

- Parents/guardians are expected to be full collaborative partners in the process of ensuring all students maximise their attendance. Where difficulties arise parents/guardians must be able to access information, advice and support during a student's illness. Opportunities to allow the student to be involved in decision making and choices will also be arranged.

### **Monitoring and Protocols for dealing with Absences**

- The Attendance Officer will monitor absences via electronic registers on a week to week basis;
- If a student's attendance falls below our school target of 98%, 'Trigger Point 1' will be activated as per our system protocol.
- If the attendance rate continues to deteriorate, the school will begin to follow the protocol for subsequent trigger points;
- All actions will be recorded electronically by the appropriate person depending on the level of trigger point;
- At the start of the school year, any student who had been referred to the Educational Welfare Officer in the previous academic year will be expected to attend an attendance meeting with their parents/guardians, House Achievement Leader and Education Welfare Officer. If attendance becomes an issue they will be contacted further by the Educational Welfare Officer.

### **Reward System**

- Rewards for good attendance are given to individuals, class groups and houses.
- For full information see Appendix v
- Where appropriate attendance awards will be publicised on the schools website and in the weekly newsletter.

## School Attendance System Protocol

### TRIGGER POINT 1 – 98% and below

#### First Point of Contact

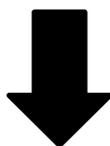
Form/Class teacher to be informed of the student's attendance rate by the Attendance Officer responsible for the weekly monitoring of attendance.

The Form Tutor will evaluate the cause of absences and determine how to inform parents/guardians.

After all absences, students will have a discussion with their Form Tutor.

An Attendance file to be opened and data inputted onto an electronic spreadsheet set up by the Attendance Officer. Actions recorded on this by the Form Tutor.

If after a 4 week period there is no improvement, an official **letter must be sent**.



### TRIGGER POINT 2 – 95% and below

#### Second Point of Contact

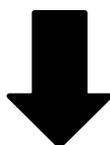
House Achievement Leader to be informed of the Student's attendance by the Attendance Officer

Form Tutors to evaluate the cause of absences and determine how to inform parents/guardians. This should be either through a discussion or formal letter.

Request medical proof for all future absences. Where this is not available, absences to be deemed as unauthorised.

After all absences, students to complete a return to school form and have a discussion with House Achievement Leader.

School Attendance Officer



## School Attendance System Protocol

*If, after a 4 week period there is no improvement, the House Achievement Leader to arrange a face to face*



### TRIGGER POINT THREE – 90% and below

#### Third Point of Contact

Formal letter to be sent. Face to face meeting to be held.

Request medical proof for all future absences. Where this is not available, absences to be deemed as unauthorised.

School Attendance Officer to arrange a meeting with parents/guardians.

After all absences, students to complete a return to school form and have a discussion with House Achievement Leader.

*If attendance improves, but there is then a subsequent decline, the Attendance Officer must be contacted.*

Appendix i.i

Dear

**School Attendance – Trigger Point 1**

I am writing to advise you that at Sandy Upper School we promote and encourage good attendance as it is a major contributor to good attainment. Students who attend regularly generally achieve better outcomes at school and consequently in their futures.

I am writing to alert you to the fact that your son/daughter's attendance has now fallen to XXX%. I have attached his/her attendance certificate to date for your information.

It would obviously be preferable for children to have 100% attendance. We realise this may not be possible for all children but would appreciate your support in ensuring that your son/daughter's attendance improves to at least our minimum school target of 98%. We will be monitoring his/her attendance in the meantime.

If you have any concerns that you feel may have an impact on your child's attendance, or if we can support you in any way to help improve XXX's attendance rate please do not hesitate to contact your child's form teacher or House Achievement Mentor.

Please contact us if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

## Appendix 1.2

Dear

### **School Attendance – Trigger Point 2**

As you are aware we continue to work hard to improve our student attendance levels, thus improving the life chances of your child and enabling them to achieve their full potential. Unfortunately XXXX's attendance has now dropped to XX%, and in accordance with school policy, we are now asking you to provide us with medical evidence for all future absences (prescribed medicines, prescriptions, doctors' notes, hospital letters and appointment cards only). We will not be able to authorise any absences without this evidence from this point onwards, regardless of reasons provided.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance at school. I must advise you to make certain that your child resumes a regular attendance as soon as possible, and that failure to do so may result in the School or Local Authority giving consideration to taking legal action against you – a course of action that can be avoided with your full co-operation.

If you have any concerns that you feel may have an impact on your child's attendance, or if we can support you in any way to help improve XXXX's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact your child's House Achievement Leader.

Please contact us if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

## Appendix 1.3

Dear

### **School Attendance – Trigger Point 3**

I am writing to you concerning the continuing problem of your child's irregular attendance at school. XX current attendance is only XX%.

We have sought your co-operation in addressing this but unfortunately your child's irregular attendance has now reached a stage where the School or Local Authority may consider taking legal action against you for failing to carry out your statutory responsibility of ensuring that your child receives an efficient full-time education at school. The action will be to prosecute you in Magistrates court.

I would like, therefore, to invite you to a meeting with myself and the Local Authority Attendance Officer to find ways of improving his/her attendance and so avoid the need for further action. This meeting has been arranged for XX.

If this date or time is inconvenient, please contact me at your earliest convenience so that a suitable time can be arranged.

Yours sincerely

House Achievement Leader

Appendix i.4

Dear

As you are aware we continue to work hard to improve our student's attendance levels thus improving the life chances of your child and enabling them to achieve their full potential. As part of the School's Attendance Policy we are arranging meetings for all those students who have had attendance levels of 90% or below (at the end of the previous academic year) and who would be at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.

The aim of this meeting is to discuss the reasons for the previous absences and offer advice and support to enable your child to achieve a minimum of 98% attendance for the new academic year.

The meeting will be held at:

On:

At:

It is very important that you attend this meeting however if you are unable to make the above time or date please inform the School as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

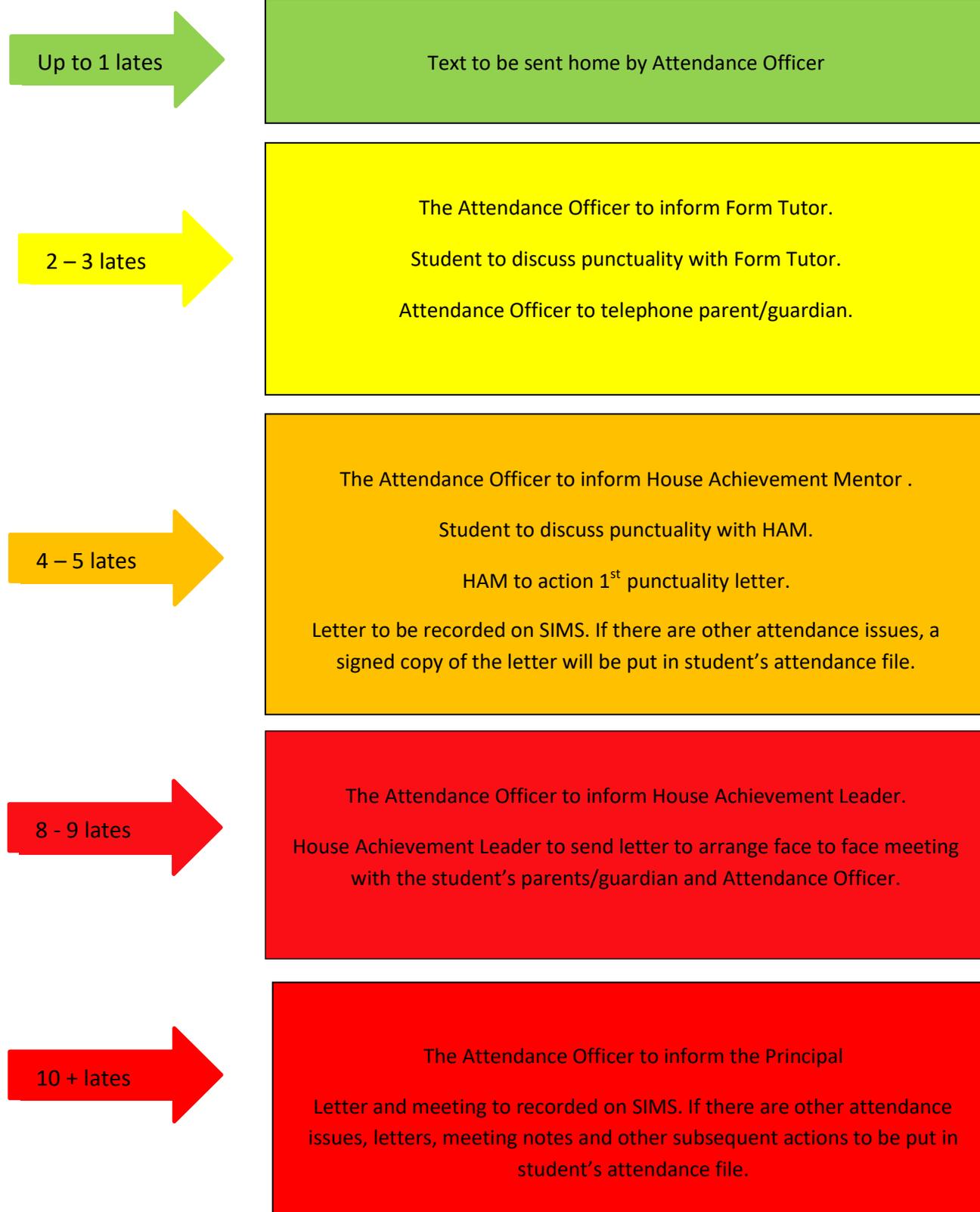
Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

## Appendix iii

### Punctuality (Lateness) Protocol

All lates to be recorded as 'L' beyond 8.40am. Arrival after 20 minutes, unless for an authorised medical appointment, is automatically coded as 'U'.



## Appendix iii.1

Dear Parent/Guardian

As you may be aware the School is working very hard to improve both attendance and punctuality. X has been identified as having been late on X occasions since XXXXXX

It is understandable and acceptable that any child can be late on an odd occasion for any number of reasons, all of which should be verified by the parent/carer. However, I am sure you will agree that excessive lateness is unacceptable.

Lateness in school causes immense disruption and inconvenience, plus actively disadvantages the progress of pupils whose lessons are constantly interrupted by the arrival of latecomers. It is also often very embarrassing for the pupil to be constantly arriving late.

I must advise you to make certain that your child resumes a punctual attendance pattern as soon as possible. Registration is at Xam. If a child arrives at school after the registers have closed without an adequate reason, we will have to record this as an unauthorised absence. 10 unauthorised absences may render parents liable to a Penalty Notice.

Please make every effort to improve this situation. We will continue to monitor your child's attendance and hope to see an improvement in the coming weeks. If there is no improvement, it is likely the School Attendance Officer will wish to make contact with you.

If we can support you in any way to do this please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer

Appendix iii.3

Dear

I am writing to you as during a recent check it was noted that, despite previously making you aware of your child's lateness, it has continued to be an issue, as XXX has been late on XXX occasions.

As you are aware, arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher, and the other students in class. If your child arrives at school after the registers have closed without an adequate reason, the school will have to record this as an 'unauthorised absence'. Ten unauthorised absences could render you liable to a penalty notice/charge of £60.

I would like, therefore, to invite you to a meeting with myself and the School Attendance Officer to find ways of improving his/her attendance and so avoid the need for further action. This meeting has been arranged for XXX. If this date or time is inconvenient, please contact me at your earliest convenience so that a suitable time can be arranged.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours sincerely

House Achievement Leader

Appendix iii

I confirm that your child has been allowed to leave premises during the school day for reasons stated below:

Child's name: ..... Form: .....

Date: ..... Time: .....

Reason: .....

.....

.....