

Attendance Policy

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Date created:	May 2024
Date of last review:	May 2024
Date of next review:	May 2026

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Introduction

Brunel School is a nurturing and empowering secondary SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) school. Our mission is to cultivate an environment where every student can flourish academically, emotionally, and socially, guided by the values of Integrity, Love, Availability, Inclusion, Compassion, Safeguarding, and Aspiration.

Rationale

All schools within our Special Partnership Trust seek to ensure that our pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each to realise his/her true potential with regards to academic progress and social development.

Each of our schools will provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels valued, safe and secure. All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons
- Promoting a robust Safeguarding culture due to the vulnerable needs of our cohort of pupils at Brunel School

Legislation and Guidance

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

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Trustees and LGB are responsible for:

Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher is responsible for:

Implementation of this policy at the school

Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors

Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

Role the Designated/Deputy Safeguarding (DSL) lead:

The DSL/DDSL will scrutinise the attendance information emailed via the Office Team **each** morning; any unauthorised absence will be immediately addressed.

The DSL/DDSL will promote a culture of Attendance to ensure that attendance is "everyone's business."

The designated senior leader - Attendance Champion is responsible for:

Leading attendance across the school

Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

Having an oversight of data analysis

Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues via our Pastoral Team including our Therapeutic Lead.

Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
Educate families around the importance of attendance
Celebrate pupils and their families when attendance is good or has improved

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
Working alongside outside agencies to prevent and tackle persistent absence
Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Tutors are responsible for:

Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office to be done by 9:30pm and 1:40pm Brunel School use ARBOR to record/ submit registration information.

Tutors must not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when they call the register

School office staff will:

Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on ARBOR
Transfer calls from parents to the pupil tutor or member of the Pastoral Team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
Ensure first day follow up calls for all any unauthorised absence.

Parents/carers are expected to:

Make sure their child attends every timetabled day on time
Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

Attend school every day on time

Education Welfare Officer (EWO):

In order to address any continued/persistent pupil absences once the attendance intervention strategy protocols have been followed Brunel School will refer the pupil to the Education Welfare Officer with a view to improving the situation; parents/carers will be notified of such measures (APPENDIX E). The school will provide the following information to inform the future work of the EWO:

- Reason for referral and any other relevant information
- Prior action taken by referrer (include details of contact with parents/carers)
- Attendance data

The school will work with the EWO in the pursuit of any recommendations made; reviews of such work and the impact of this will be agreed with the EWO.

Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

All SPT schools keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. SPT schools take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

Present

Attending an approved off-site educational activity

Absent

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

The original entry

The amended entry – to include details regarding updates of absence

The reason for the amendment

The date and time on which the amendment was made

The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

[For pupils of compulsory school age] Whether the absence is authorised or not

The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Brunel pupil's will arrive to school at 9.00am - pupils are expected to arrive in school on time each day.

There are clear registration procedures in each school – identifying registration time/s and the length of time registration/s takes place.

Any safeguarding concerns raised regarding attendance will be logged on CPOMS. Any immediate concerns will be shared with the DSL/DDSL

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If Brunel School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers should request leave of absence using the Brunel School request form – and attach any appointment/invitation letters.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

- A pupil who arrives late:
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Ongoing punctuality difficulties will be discussed with parents/carers and directly with the transport company as appropriate.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact social care or the police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer and undertake welfare home visits

Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as;

The school recognises the pressures placed upon families which contain a child with disabilities and/or special educational needs and the need for respite. We also recognise that the additional costs involved in taking such children on holiday can make them prohibitive, often to the point where the family could not afford them. In many cases, the only option is to take the holiday when costs are lower or times are quieter for the child (e.g. – if the child is autistic) within school term times. Without condoning it, the school recognises that this is sometimes the only option available to some families. To address this, the school has developed a protocol on how it manages pupil leave of absence in exceptional circumstances (**Appendix F**); to support this process our schools will undertake a risk assessment to secure safeguarding. If the school has any doubt in regard to the safety of any pupil whose parent has requested an exceptional circumstance this will be discussed with the CEO/LADO/Social Care/MASH with immediate effect. In accordance to established protocols any Child in Care will not be authorised for any leave of absence from the school without discussing this with their allocated social worker.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via school office/ website . The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Operation Encompass:

The school will take particular notice of any child who has been subject to an Operation Encompass telephone call; if a child is absent this will immediately be followed up with contact via MASH/Social Care/CEO/LADO. All details will be recorded in the school's safeguarding CPOMS chronology.

Pupils with Long Term Health Issues:

Any pupil who has a prolonged stay in hospital will be discussed with the school nurse who will become the conduit for all health-related information between the school/health care providers; any such discussions will be formally recorded in the minutes taken when the school/school nurse meet

each half term. The class teacher will be able to provide homework for the pupil concerned if this is deemed appropriate; this will be discussed between the school, nurse and parents(s).

Flexi-schooling:

Another option is to register a pupil for “Flexi-schooling” where a pupil can be educated off site; if flexi-schooling is agreed by any of our schools within our Special Partnership Trust they will follow the protocols determined by the Local Authority.

Any flexi-schooling agreement will be discussed/ agreed by the LGB and recorded as such in the minutes held; review of the flexi-school agreement will fall in line with the protocols agreed by the Local Authority. The school will discuss all aspects of school work which will be addressed in the home environment and regularly reviewed by the school, this process school work will be discussed/ agreed with the parents and sent home, this will form the basis of all discussions held.

Out of school provision:

Some pupils/students within our Special Partnership Trust receive their education off site; any such provision will have been agreed with the Local Authority and will be documented as such within their Annual Review paperwork. As such, the school remains responsible for the education, safety and welfare of the pupil/student.

In order for any one of our schools to monitor this agreed school offer each school will:

- Agree the aims/outcomes of the out of school provision/school offer with the Local Authority (record all aims/outcomes/frequency of visits within the agreed documentation provided by the LA)
- Ensure any out of school provider has the appropriate DBS checks and are compliant with the Keeping Children Safe in Education documentation
- Record the number of pupils within the Headteachers report to Trustees/LGB
- Record the pupils electronically in accordance to the Local Authority’s spread sheet ‘Children missing from education’ each term
- Make regular checks (at least half termly) with the provider on the agreed aims/outcomes (record all such checks on the template provided)
- Review the provision regularly

Strategies for promoting attendance

Each school works closely with pupils/ parents and carers to promote positive attendance and engagement with school. The context of pupil need is key – and development of an appropriate package of education, support care is an essential part of promoting attendance.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year

One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission

Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Attendance monitoring

Through the regular scrutiny of attendance records the Headteacher and DSL will be able to identify any concerns in relation to attendance particularly in relation to any aspects of the safeguarding chronology held by the school.

If a pupil is beginning to show a sporadic attendance record and this is not linked to any on-going medical complaint or additional reason of which the school is aware, the school will attempt to rectify this with the parents. The Headteacher will contact the parents initially via a telephone call to discuss and clarify reasons for lower attendance (all telephone conversations will be logged by the school). This will always be followed up with a letter outlining what has been discussed / agreed. If any issues continue, the Headteacher will write to the parents / carers inviting them to a meeting (alongside social care colleagues if / as appropriate) to discuss the reason(s) why attendance continues to decline and agree a support plan to rectify this.

If the child concerned continues to attend school sporadically following these measures this will be discussed with MASH / the EWO Team for their advice and guidance as outlined within our Safeguarding Policy.

The Trust wide Safeguarding Group considers Attendance Policy and practice as part of the safeguarding remit. Analysis of attendance (through trust wide reporting) informs the safeguarding group of attendance trends and patterns across the Trust.

Attendance data

It is recognised that there are **no national attendance data sets** to benchmark our pupil's attendance although through research we have identified the following averages:

National average absence rate special schools	9.1%	SPT attendance target: 90% or above
National average mainstream	5.2%	

It is our aim therefore to scrutinise our attendance data to determine reasons for non-attendance to ensure we do not exceed the data benchmark.

It will be the responsibility of the office team to collate all attendance data recorded in pupil's registration certificates found within SIMs collating and presenting this in an attendance data report to the Headteacher each term end. This data will enable the Attendance Officer to determine two aspects:

School data is analysed in detail every term as part of the head teacher reporting to Governors and Trustees.

- Raw data (**ACTUAL** attendance data recorded via registration certificates / Arbor)
- **VERIFIED** data (data which has been scrutinised to determine reasons/codes for any absenteeism)

Using agreed templates, the attendance officer will scrutinise the attendance data for each pupil whose attendance falls below the SPT benchmark (90.19%) adding supporting commentary if/as required. This information will be passed onto the Headteacher to inform the report to the LGB/Trustees.

Following such procedures will enable the attendance office to produce verified attendance data which in turn will be reported to the LGB/Trustees each term.

Verified data:

It is a truism that disabled children and those with special educational needs have greater levels of absence from school than do their mainstream peers. This is usually as a direct result of their impairments (attending therapy sessions or for surgical intervention for example), but it can often be the result of an indirect consequence of their 'condition'. For example: a child may experience a seizure just as the transport arrives to take them to school, forcing them to miss it. The child's inability to attend school is not 'illness', as once they have recovered from the seizure, he/she would have been fit to attend school, but could not now get into school due to transport/mobility issues. Similarly, this is not a 'Medical' absence as the child was not attending hospital.

Another example may be a pupil with extreme autism who is too distressed to leave his room following a stormy night: likewise, he is not 'ill' but is unable to attend the school because of his autism. Unfortunately, the agreed attendance codes do not cover situations like this, which places our children into a disadvantageous position. In attempting to overcome this, we have expanded the use of the C code (other authorised circumstances) to include condition related absences and hospice stays. By doing this, we are able to provide more sophisticated data which more accurately reflects the complex situation experienced by our children.

Through the scrutiny of attendance codes, the Attendance Officer will identify percentages in the following areas to inform verified data using the raw data presented; such data will be supported by a commentary which demonstrates how the data has been analysed providing the reader with further context:

The Attendance Officer has the responsibility for monitoring progress data for any pupil who may experience a prolonged absence from school alongside the Head Teacher of the school and are not meeting the SPT attendance benchmark. Data associated with progress over time will be scrutinised and where this has slowed (emerging progress) opportunities will be identified to 'close the gap'. Such measures will be discussed / reviewed with the class teacher and the parents / carers will be contacted to discuss further; follow up discussions (if/as required) will take place in Pupil Progress meetings and will include parents/carers if/as necessary.

Brunel School will therefore work closely with parents / carers to ensure the continuation of targets – e.g. – IEPs, therapy, academia can be addressed as much as possible whilst the pupil is at home. The school will endeavour to provide any additional resources – e.g. – iPad, notebooks, and therapy plans that the parents would need to address targets identified

The attendance of all pupils will be formally discussed at each pupil's Annual Review with parents / carers and recorded via our Annual Report to parents. Attendance data will be formally recorded within the review paperwork provided by the Local Authority. Attendance data will additionally be recorded in the electronic e-PEPs paperwork for all Children in Care; this will be the responsibility of the designated Child in Care Lead.

Every child attendance/absence is recorded using the agreed code in the class register which is transferred to an electronic system (SIMS) by the office team. This information is then made available to the Local Authority and the DfE.

Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

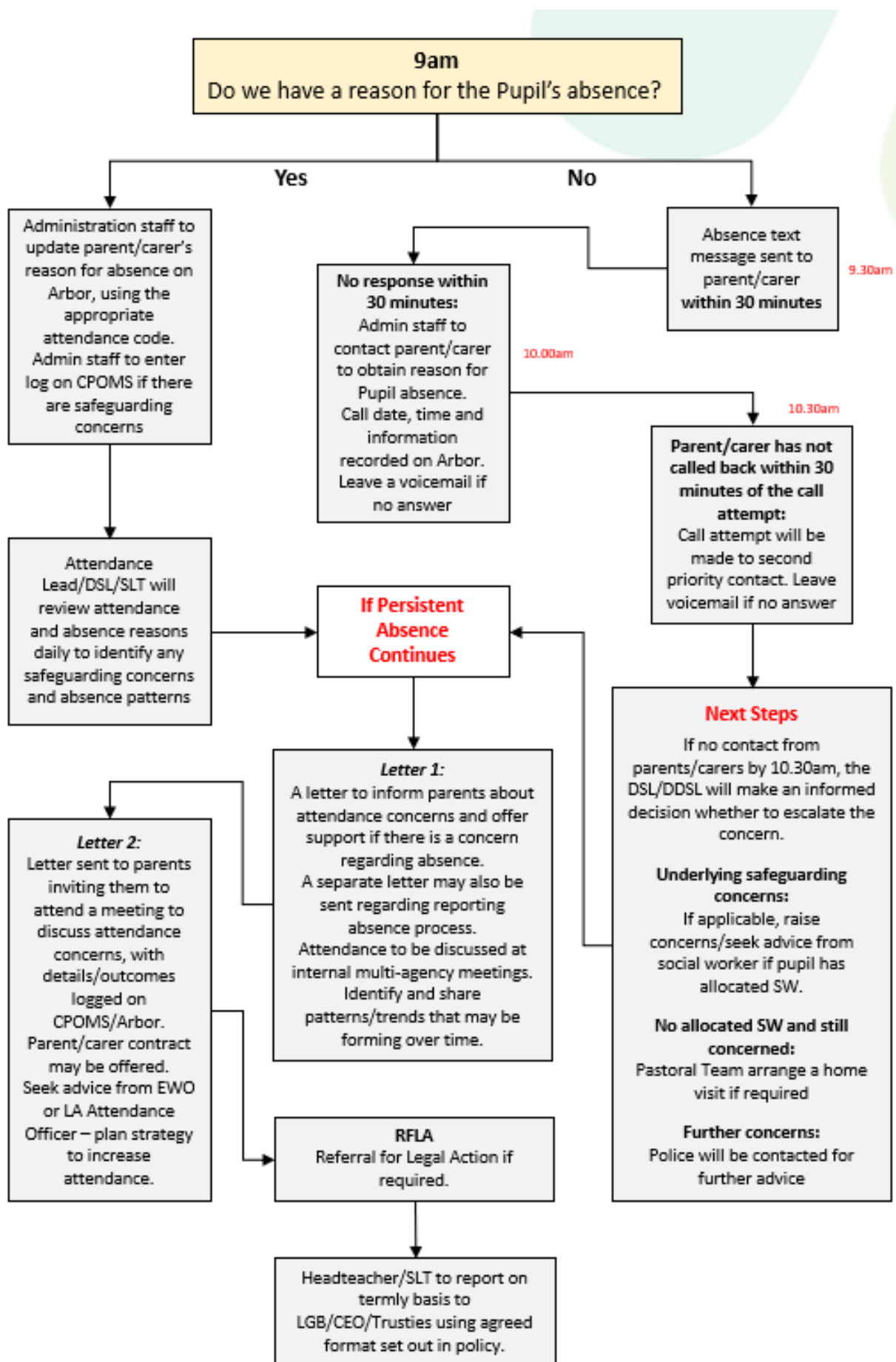
APPENDIX A: Formal data report to Trustees/LGB

Data	Spring Term:	Academic year:
Pupil attendance SPT TARGET: Special School Average Attendance Rate: 90.19% Verified data		

APPENDIX B: Attendance case study

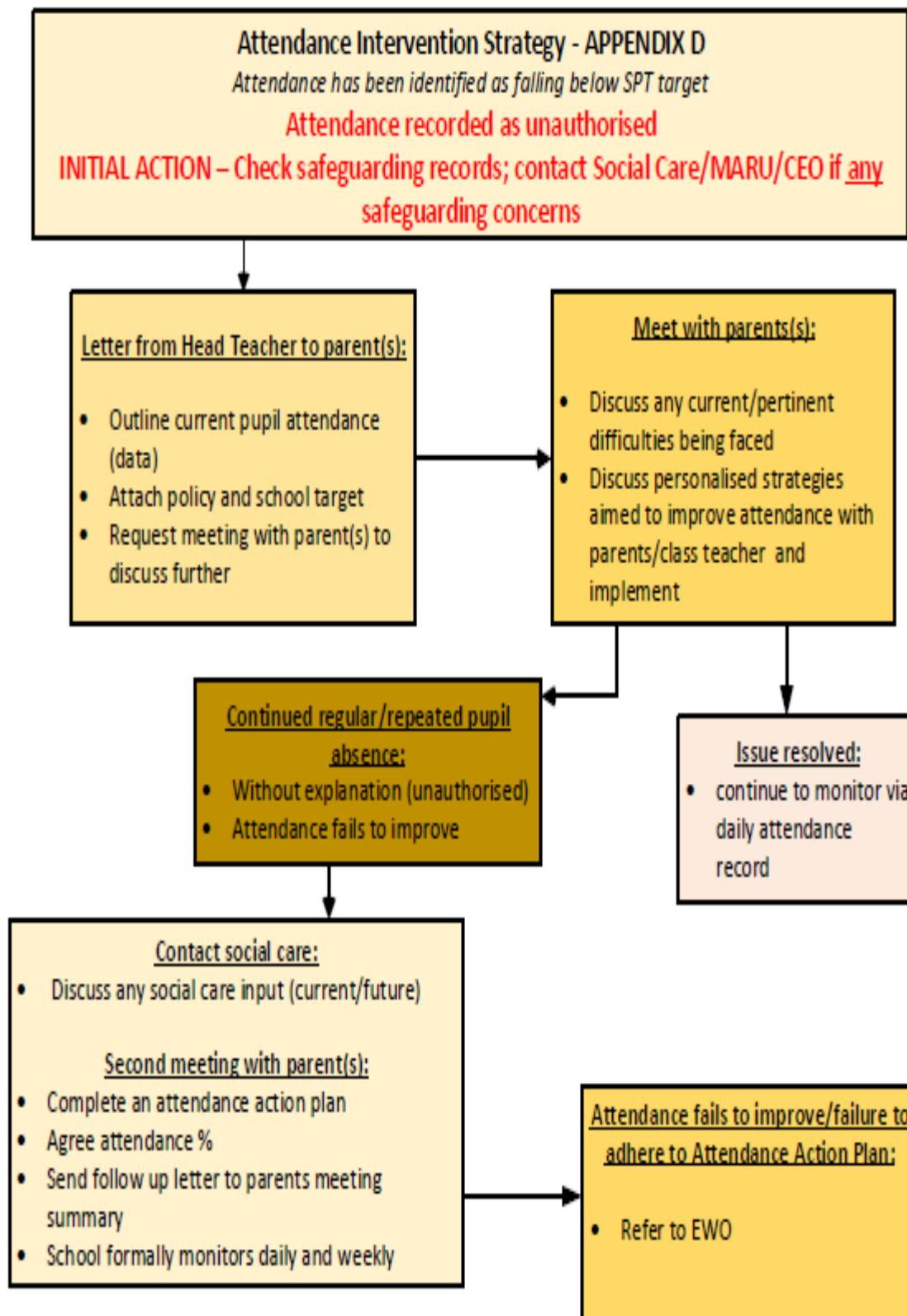
Attendance Case Summary			
Pupil Name:	Pupil Needs/Banding profile: Main area of need: Diagnosis and associated difficulties:	Attendance data 201X – 201X: XX%	School benchmark: 90.91%
Context: •			
Actions/interventions taken by the school: •			
IMPACT: •			
Attendance: Autumn Term 201X – XX%	Attendance: Spring Term 201X – XX%	Attendance: Summer Term 201X – XX%	

APPENDIX C: Attendance flowchart



APPENDIX D: Data Analysis Pupil attendance

School:		Number and % of pupils with attendance falling below 90.91%:			Number of pupil's alternative provision:		Term:	
Attendance analysis: Number and %								
N	E	H	I	M	R	S	T	Y
Unauthorised absence	Excluded (no alternative provision)	Agreed family holiday/exceptional circumstance (risk assessed)	Illness	Medical/dental	Religious observance	Study leave	Traveller absence	Enforced closure due to unforeseeable circumstances
Commentary:								



APPENDIX F: Exceptional circumstances/risk assessment

Pupil leave of absence /Exceptional circumstances – Risk Assessment – Key questions to consider helping inform decision

Name:		Dates requested:	
Where is the family going (destination?)			

Question	Yes/No	Comments (if/as appropriate)
• Are there any <u>current</u> safeguarding concerns*		
• Have there been any previous safeguarding concerns*		
• Is there social care involvement*		
• Is attendance at least good (above 85%)		
• The parent provides adequate reason following agreed school protocols for any absenteeism		
• Has the parent made any previous request(s) over this academic year		Date(s):
• Have any previous requests been declined by the school		Date(s):
• Progress – is the pupil making at least the expected progress over time		
• Has the parent provided sufficient information to support this request (is the form complete)		
• Has the parent noted who will accompany the pupil?		
• Has the parent outlined how they will counteract missed teaching/learning sessions		

*Social Care - If yes – please contact social care manager/social worker/MARU to discuss further

APPENDIX G: Education off site monitoring record

Education off site monitoring record

Pupil	Name of staff undertaking visit	Date/Time	Location
Risk Assessed/DBS?	Health & Safety?	Clear Planning	Link to EHCP Targets?
Name(s) of staff providing information:			
EHCP Target Focus and Progress Against Agreed Target(s):			
Visit Report/Summary:			
Activity Leader Comment:			
Any further action required as a result of this visit today:			
Pupil Comment:			
Date/time of next visit:			

Off-site activities are recorded on Evolve and are linked to the Local Authority.

APPENDIX H: Pupil leave of absence (in exceptional circumstances) request form

To The Headteacher of Brunel School. I wish to apply to have an absence authorised for:

Child's Name:	Year:
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Do you have another child who attends a different school that will also be absent?
If so then please state the child's name and school: _____

Date of Absence from:	Date to: (inclusive)
Name & Address of Parent/carer:	
Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the school to consider & location. This section MUST be completed. Please continue on a separate sheet if needed	
Signature of Parent/carer: Date:	

Office use only Date form received:	No. of school days:	Authorised: Y / N Unauthorised: Y / N	Attendance Code:	Headteacher signed?
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This section to be returned to Parent/carer:

Please note that even if this absence request is authorised you may still receive a letter of concern from either the school or the Local Authority if your child's attendance drops below a level acceptable.

Child's Name:	Year:
<input type="checkbox"/> Absence Authorised From:	To: (inclusive)
<input type="checkbox"/> Absence Unauthorised: Current attendance %:	Date:
Signed:	Date: