

Ladycross Infant School



Attendance Policy

Review History

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LADYCROSS INFANT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. RATIONALE

Ladycross Infant School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education they provide and therefore from punctuality and regular school attendance. It is our experience that children with interrupted attendance, often make less progress, struggle with emotional resilience and have greater difficulty forming strong friendships. This often causes a further cycle of reluctance to attend school, which compounds the negative impact on learning.

There are legal obligations on parents/carers to secure education for their children who are of compulsory school age. This involves sending them to school and collecting them on time and regularly, once they are on the register. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with any problems, which may lead to non-attendance.

To this end, the school will do as much as they can to ensure that all pupils arrive and leave school at the correct time and achieve the maximum possible attendance.

There are two circumstances covered within this document, of which parents should be aware. Parents should be aware that this policy covers both daily attendance and leave of absence requests.

2. LADYCROSS INFANT SCHOOL'S STATUTORY DUTIES

In Ladycross Infant School the following procedures have been developed in order to fulfil our responsibilities to comply with current:

- Attendance records are in accordance with current LA guidelines.
- A computer database of registration information (Arbor) is kept to enable the school to collate statistics and monitor attendance.
- Registration will take place at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Children should be in school by 9am. Children who arrive after 9am but before 9.10am are marked as late. Once registers have been closed at 9.10 am a child is considered to be absent from that lesson and is marked as (U).
- The class teacher will inform the Head teacher of any concerns regarding a pupil's attendance pattern.
- Attendance registers will be used as appropriate on a daily, weekly, Derbyshire term and an annual basis to highlight pupils with poor attendance.
- Absences will be deemed as authorised or unauthorised by reference to 'Categorisation of Absence'.
- There will be an annual revision and review of attendance monitoring procedures.

3. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

In September 2013 **The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) regulations 2013** came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays,

unless there are exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Parents will be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

4. AIMS

It is recognised that:

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Many parents/carers may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of them, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

5. EXPECTATIONS:

Our Home-School Agreement underlines the importance of regular and punctual attendance at school. It shows our commitment to providing a quality education for all pupils. We believe that pupils can only benefit from the education in our school through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all pupils and we will make sure that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Wherever possible, we will make contact with parents/carers where a pupil is absent from school without good reason.

We expect the following from parents/carers: (which is reiterated in the Ladycross home-school agreement and new starter's letter)

- To ensure their children attend school regularly.
- To ensure their children arrive and are collected on time.
- To ensure that they contact the school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is absent, giving details of the reason or the absence and the length of time the child will be away. This must be on the morning of the first day of absence.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever problems arise which may keep their child away from school, and may affect their child's performance, so that the school can help.
- To avoid term time absences as this seriously affect the progress of their child.

Parents/carers and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.

6. TERM TIME ABSENCES:

Parents/carers are not entitled to take their children out of school during term time. All requests will be considered individually and each case will be considered on its own merits. The decision of the head teacher is final.

The Government has recently made amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which come into force on **1st September 2013**. These state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence for holidays during the term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; in these cases, it is the Head teacher who determines the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Any parent requiring a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances **MUST** apply using the official Ladycross Infant School form. This **MUST** be done at least 10 working days before the date of the planned absence. This should be prior to any holiday/ leave arrangements being made. Any requests received after this time, without extraordinary reasons, will be unauthorised. Ladycross Infant School will reply within 5 working days of receiving the request.

6. ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE

The school will encourage good attendance by:

- Creating a positive environment where children feel safe and secure.
- Making school a lively, interesting place to be.
- Ensuring good quality play in the playground.
- Developing a system of rewards for good attendance.
- Being sympathetic and supportive to pupils who experience problems in school.
- Ensuring careful monitoring of attendance data regularly takes place.
- Reminding parents/carers of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Offering help and advice to resolve any difficulties the pupil or parent may have in fulfilling these responsibilities, including referring families to Multi-Agency Teams (MAT) and Educational Welfare.
- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents/carers who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Involving the Home/ School Mentor in tackling attendance issues.

Specific Interventions to encourage attendance:

DAILY

- Ensure accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session and within 10 minutes of the start of the session.
- Ensure daily checking of registers with following up and recording of absences.
- Ensure the schools Admin Officer updates each child's individual attendance record where necessary and update the Head teacher daily on any attendance matters.
- Admin Officer to contact parent/guardian on the first morning of absence, if no acceptable reason has already been given.

WEEKLY

- Home/ School Mentor to monitor individual pupil attendance levels across school on a regular basis and report concerns to the Head/ Deputy teacher.
- Monitor the attendance percentage of each class.

DERBYSHIRE TERMLY

- Use the Arbor reporting system to provide valuable, year group/class and pupil level attendance data to discuss at half termly attendance monitoring meetings and agree action.
- Give out certificates to all pupils who have 100% attendance every half term.
- A class reward system which acknowledges each day a class has 100% attendance and helps them save towards a class reward.
- Send an absence letter and herringbone report to parents/carers of Statutory Attendance pupils with persistent absence less than 95% attendance during each term or attendance review period. Parents will be formally invited to meet with the Home/ School Mentor and a member of the Senior Leadership Team. In this meeting, targets and a timeframe for improvement will be set. Parents will be informed that the school may make a referral, through Starting Point, to the MAT service if significant improvements aren't made.
- Send an absence letter and herringbone report to parents/carers of pupils with low attendance (less than 95% from the beginning of the school year). If there is no improvement after two letters, Parents will be formally invited to meet with the Home/ School Mentor and a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Remind parents/carers of lateness/attendance on the whole school newsletter.
- Arrange meetings with parents/carers/Headteacher/Home- School Mentor as necessary.

TERMLY

- Include attendance/punctuality information on pupil progress report sent out to parents/carers.

ANNUALLY

- Present prizes to pupils with 100% attendance in the school for the academic year.
- Report on attendance levels on each child's annual written report to parents/carers and indicate whether low, average, above average, high according to the latest Ofsted criteria.
- Send an attendance letter, explaining school processes and policies, to all families.

Specific Interventions to encourage punctuality:

- *Parents/carers and children to be regularly reminded about the school start and finish times.*
- *Late arrivals must enter through the main entrance and report to reception, signing the late book and giving reasons for lateness.*

- *Persistent late arrivals are followed up with a letter inviting parents/ carers to meet with the class teacher or Home/ School Mentor to discuss support to affect positive change.*
- *Teachers are responsible for reporting attendance concerns to HSM and Head teacher at the earliest possible opportunity.*

Communication with parents/carers and the local community may include:

- *Meetings for new parents/carers.*
- *Meetings with the class teacher or Home/ School Mentor.*
- *Attendance initiatives (both in school and the wider community).*
- *School newsletter.*
- *School prospectus.*
- *School Website*

7. PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE:

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.

- When a pupil is absent the parent/carer has a responsibility to inform school of the reason, this may be by letter, telephone or during a face to face meeting.
- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents/carers, they will be contacted on the first day of absence through the 'Text to Parents' service, by the school Admin Officer, with a request to contact the school as soon as possible. If there is no response to the text, the Admin Officer will make repeated attempts to telephone the first named contact.
- If there is no response from the first named contact, the Admin Officer will telephone the second named contact or someone else with parental responsibility for the absent child.
- Records are kept detailing any contact made and explanations given. After these steps, if no acceptable contact has been made by parents, guardians, the Head Teacher and Home School Mentor will make a visit to the family home to ascertain a reason for absence.
- Where the reason given for absence is not acceptable, the Head Teacher and Home School Mentor may also make the decision to visit the family at home.
- If there are consecutive school days absent with no explanation, the Head teacher and Home/ School Mentor will acknowledge a concern and, in line with Statutory Safeguarding Responsibilities, may make a referral to Social Care, through Starting Point.
- If there are Child Protection concerns, the Derby and Derbyshire Area Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Procedures are followed immediately.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION:

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

In addition, there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

Head Teacher:

- To agree and liaise in a time fashion with the home school mentor in order to ensure concerns are followed up.
- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To oversee efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents/carers.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence.
- To liaise with the EWO.
- To oversee the work of administrative staff.

Home School Mentor

- To monitor persistent absence and report to Head teacher.
- To make contact with parents regarding this tracking, as detailed above.
- To liaise with class teachers and school admin.
- To liaise with the EWO.
- To liaise with social care and MAT to support families with attendance.

Class Teacher:

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To refer any unexplained absences to the Head teacher or Home/ School Mentor.
- To challenge suspicious or inappropriate reasons for absence.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform senior staff of concerns in a timely manner.

Governors:

- Ensure there is a named governor for attendance.
- Ensure they monitor attendance and policies related to it.
- Play a valuable role through representation at school attendance panels, parent's/carer's evenings, etc.
- Reinforce school procedures and support actions of school staff in tackling attendance issues.
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

8. LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school, SENCo or the Home/ School Mentor. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. Other agencies to be used where appropriate in individual cases:

- Multi Agency Team- providing pupil, family and parenting support through a named Family Support worker (Accessed through a Starting Point referral).
- Behaviour Support Service
- Educational Psychology Service
- Support Service for Special Educational Needs
- Social Care (Accessed through a Starting Point referral).
- Local police
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

Other key policies to be read in conjunction with this policy:

Medicine policy

Safeguarding policy

APPENDIX 1

GUIDANCE FOR CLASS TEACHERS:

The Importance of Registration:

- An electronic attendance register must be kept on which, at the BEGINNING of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent.
- Teachers should give the appropriate code for that sessions absence, if known. This should be given some detail in the notes box on Arbor.

E.g. To input "illness" is too vague, the nature of the illness should be given i.e. "Measles" or "Measles confirmed by doctor".

When use code C (Other authorised circumstances), these circumstances should be briefly explained in the notes. E.g. "Funeral"

- In the event that an electronic register cannot be taken, the class teacher will take a paper-based register which will be sent to and held by the office. The Admin Officer will endeavour to transfer this information to the electronic system as soon as possible.
- Accurate marking of registers, and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.
- Attendance registers, and bound copies of electronic registration print outs must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.

Categorising Absence:

Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The Department for Education (DfE) believes that these codes are best used within electronic systems for recording attendance and absence of pupils. Such electronic systems are capable of producing the data necessary for absence returns to DfE without time consuming counting up of possible attendances and actual absences.

The use of fixed codes will also assist both LAs and DfE in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

- Only the school, in the context of the law can authorise absence, a note or explanation from parents/carers does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason, then the matter must be referred to the Head Teacher.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the Head Teacher.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register by the appropriate code symbol.

- Class teachers who experience difficulty in receiving a parental note should inform the Head Teacher.

On attendance reports (Herringbones), common symbols for attendance include:

I Illness
 U Late (After Register Closes)
 L Late (Before the register closes)
 N No Reason given (This is an unauthorised absence.)
 C Other authorised circumstances
 H Authorised holiday
 M Medical appointment
 R Religious observance
 / Present AM
 \ Present PM
 - No Mark Recorded
 # School Closed to Pupils

Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. All other absence must be regarded as unauthorised.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences.

- Emergency doctor or dental appointments on receipt of proof of attendance e.g. appointment card (stamped), emails, texts with children's name on or similar reasonable evidence.
- Hospital/specialist appointments for the child
- Religious observances - one day (but if this happens abroad then a maximum of 3 days, in total, to allow travel)
- Holidays if a medical professional provides advice that this absence is necessary on health grounds.
- Weddings of close family relative (parents/siblings etc.) - one day (but if this happens abroad then a maximum of 3 days, in total, to allow travel)
- Sporting competitions/events with proof of participation from the coach or organisation
- Acceptable levels of illness
- Fixed term exclusion
- Family bereavements

Approved Educational Activity

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity,

This should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for the DfE absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country and overseas.

Absences should not be authorised under the following circumstances.

- Routine appointments to the dentist, doctors, opticians etc. which could reasonably be made outside of school times
- Parents picking up their child early due to their own attendance at an appointment (as we have the facility for you to put your child in Owls club)
- Wedding of non-close family members
- Child absence due to parental or sibling sickness (we suggest you identify a family member or friend to support you with this or contact the school for support)
- Car trouble - it is your duty to ensure that you can bring your child to school, no matter what happens with your transport and you should make alternative arrangements
- Overnight stays at family members (separated parents should work together to ensure regular attendance and the means to transport children)
- Term time holidays
- School staff have legitimate information to challenge the reason for absence.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the Head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered.

Lateness

Ladycross School will actively discourage late arrival by challenging parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Pupils are expected to arrive on time and be in class at 9am.

The register is open between 9am and 9.10am.

Any pupils who arrive after 9am but before 9.20am will be marked late (L).

Any pupils who arrive late after 9.20 am will be marked as an unauthorised absence (U) for the session.

Appendix 2

GUIDANCE FOR ADMIN OFFICERS

Removal from the school roll

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2). Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the Head Teacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the Head Teacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- Where a pupil in the nursery class has not transferred to a reception class at the school.
- Except in the case of a boarder, the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.
- Where a pupil will cease to be of compulsory schools age before the school next meets and has been notified an intention to discontinue in attendance.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

Ensuring Pupil Information is up to date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils and parents/carers is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states "Personal Data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date".

On transfer to another school

When parents inform the school that they are transferring their child to another school, the Admin Office will ask them to fill out a brief form including the following information:

- Reason for leaving
- New address

- Name of the new school where the child is registered
- Signature and date of the parent/ carer

Pupils who are missing

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, this will be considered a concern. The school office will complete and upload a Common Transfer Form to the National Missing Pupils database and the Head teacher or Home/ School Mentor will alert the Children Missing in Education Service directly.



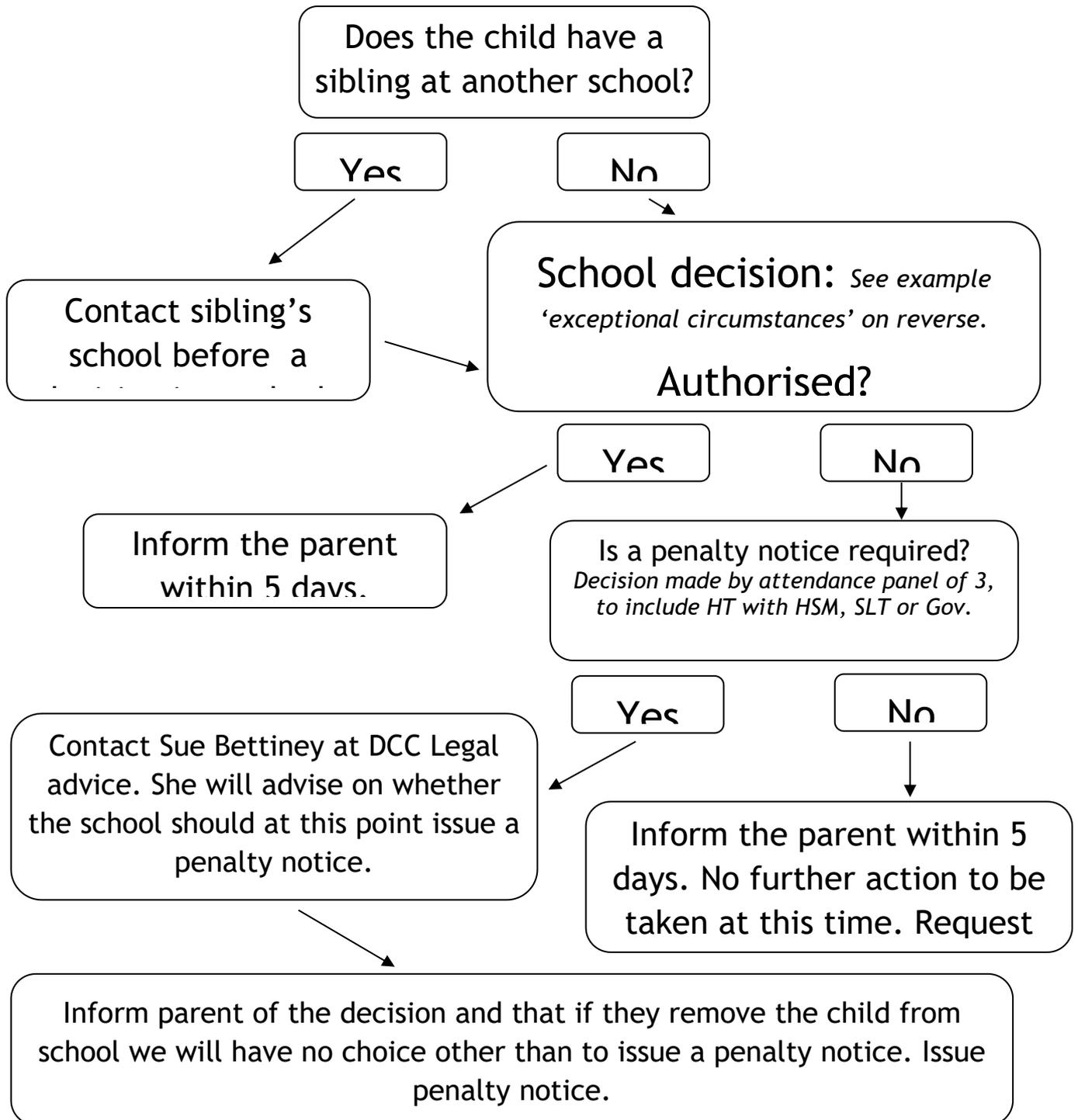
Leave of Absence Request:



Ladycross and Cloudside

Parent requests and returns a LoA form. This must be completed and returned at least 10 days before the planned LoA. School has 5 days in which to respond

At this point attendance is not taken into account. Only the circumstance around the request is considered



Appendix 4

Text from the absence challenge letter, sent when an unauthorised holiday has been taken during term time.

Dear _____,

Child's name was absent from school for _____ school days between ____ and ____ of month. You contacted us on _____ of month to say Child's name was ill / We contacted you and were informed that reason given / but were not informed as to the reason for the absence.

We have reason to believe that Child's name was, in fact, on a family holiday in _____. In view of this, in accordance with Government regulation, Child's name will be marked in the register for Dates from-until as 'G' which means 'unauthorised absence for a holiday in term-time'.

We are disappointed that you didn't feel able to discuss this with us, or fill in an authorised holiday request form for us to consider.

If this is not the case, please arrange an appointment to meet with myself or the Headteacher to discuss the matter further and provide further evidence to support your position.

If I do not hear from you in the next 5 school days, you may be issued with a penalty notice for unauthorised absence.

Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the Headteacher should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,