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# School Attendance Policy

January 2019

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## 1. Introduction

This document describes procedures and processes relating to school attendance, punctuality and welfare of all pupils of compulsory school age. It sets out the arrangements that must be implemented to enable pupils to fully benefit from the educational opportunities available and to support families to fulfil their statutory obligations. It upholds the principle that children attend school regularly, as stated in the Education Law (Jersey) 1999, article 12, para 1:

*‘ensure that the child receives a full-time education appropriate to the child’s age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school at which the child is a pupil or otherwise, in accordance with Article 13 of the Education (Jersey) Law 1999.’*

## 2. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of **head teachers** to ensure that all staff tasked with mandatory recording of pupils’ attendance are made fully aware of the requirement placed upon them in regard to these procedures. Head teachers should encourage all staff to maximise pupil attendance and work proactively to that end.

It is the responsibility of the **Education Directorate** (Education Welfare Team [EWT]) to work in partnership with schools, parents and pupils to provide support advice and guidance.

The EWT acts on behalf of the States of Jersey in enforcing a parents’ legal duty to provide appropriate education. The main function of the EWT is to improve overall attendance and reduce persistent absences in all schools and alternative education providers. The EWT also undertake other ‘core’ duties such as: welfare; transition and support for families requiring Early Help. To address this, the EWT provides all schools with a regular visiting/consultation service, delivered by a named centre based Education Welfare Officer (EWO or CBEWO) or a school based EWO (SBEWO).

The role of the EWT is to:

- contribute to the Department’s and school’s drive for school effectiveness
- work in partnership with schools, pupils, parents and communities to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance
- link with services and agencies providing education, health and social care services for individuals with additional or specific needs

Where a school experiences an unpredictable level of need, additional support from the EWT can be requested. Initial requests should be made through the school’s named CBEWO and these will be discussed with the team manager.

CBEWOs and SBEWOs attend termly Planning and Review Meetings (PARM) to agree a schedule of consultation opportunities throughout the academic year. These consultations are an opportunity to discuss, negotiate and agree priorities for the term ahead on a rolling basis.

**Parents** are required by law to ensure that all children of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 16) receive a full time education either by registering a child at a school or by arranging an alternative to school in line with the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) policy.

These responsibilities extend beyond ensuring regular attendance and punctuality, it requires parents to make certain that each child arrives at school on time, dressed in line with the school's dress code, with the correct equipment and prepared for learning.

Parents can support their child/ren by keeping requests for absence to a minimum. It should not be assumed that schools will agree to absence requests and unjustified absences from school should not be condoned. If a pupil is unable to attend school for whatever reason, parents are responsible for notifying the school on the first day of absence and to keep the school updated on subsequent days.

Parents should work in partnership with schools in all matters concerning their child/ren's education by actively supporting school policies on attendance, punctuality, behaviour and homework.

Parents should avoid taking their child/ren out of school during term time. Such absences can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is at the discretion of the Head teacher to grant leave, only in exceptional cases.

In the area of attendance, the responsibilities of **schools and colleges** are wide ranging and they are advised to consider the following:

- encourage, promote and maintain positive individual pupil attendance and punctuality
- implement strategies and initiatives to improve 'whole school' attendance
- ensure that registers are accurate and up to date
- undertake regular audit of school registers to identify any pupils with attendance or punctuality concerns and liaise with their named EWO
- monitor and promote the welfare of every pupil
- ensure all appropriate information and records are available to the EWO as part of a schools' request for their involvement. This might include attendance plans; other evidence of relevant school-led intervention; minutes from meetings with parents and pupils and other correspondence from school to parents
- ensure all pupils open to the EWT have a pupil file to record EWO intervention
- ensure regular case work supervision is provided to the SBEWOs
- undertake termly audits of pupil files to ensure record keeping is in line with the EWT's Guidance for Maintaining a Pupil Folder
- ensure all staff access required child protection training (including opportunities for refresher training)

### 3. School Attendance Policies

Schools should develop their attendance policies in line with the States of Jersey School Attendance Policy. This should be reviewed annually. School attendance policies should ensure:

- a high priority is given to attendance and punctuality
- there is a named senior member of staff as part of the Senior Leadership Team with overall responsibility for attendance
- clear guidance for staff on the process of registration, including the appropriate categorisation of absence
- compliance with statutory requirements [including registration practices]
- information is communicated to parents and pupils
- clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness
- schools collate and use attendance data effectively
- recognition of the importance of early intervention, including first day response or contact with parents
- monitoring of post registration truancy
- schools are alert to critical times for e.g. Key Stage 2-3 and 4 transition
- a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism, lateness
- the provision of a clear hierarchy of sanctions
- the use of attendance incentive strategies
- procedures are in place for identifying and reintegrating longer term absentees
- regular structured meetings between the school staff and the EWO
- reasonable steps are taken by the school before referring to the EWO
- regular communication with parents to stress the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term time
- the use of parents evenings and other opportunities to remind parents of the school policy on attendance
- the involvement of Governors (where applicable)
- The school culture encourages attendance by taking steps to address the school based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, discrimination and the curriculum
- The use of RONIs as a tool to identifying students who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). *To be introduced during academic year 2018/2019*
- pupils are supported in planning for post 16 options during Years 10 and 11

## 4. Attendance Procedures and Recording Attendance and Punctuality

The following procedures underpin the principles in this policy and reflect good practice in matters concerning attendance and punctuality.

### **Attendance Registers**

Attendance registers are legal documents and particular attention should be paid to accuracy. Incomplete registers are not acceptable.

### **Registration**

Staff and pupils should be aware that registration is a key part of the school day. Attendance registers must be called twice daily at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.

Pupils must be marked as:

- present
- engaged in approved educational activity off site
- absent

*In the case of an emergency evacuation, school policies must contain processes to enable staff to account for all pupils on the premises. Head teachers are responsible for ensuring that all staff, including supply staff, have up-to-date knowledge of this process.*

Absences should be authorised by way of written or verbal communication with the parent. The appropriate code should be entered into the register and a reason for absence entered into the school's electronic data base. In the event of any absences school should make first day contact with parents and make every effort to ascertain the reason for any absences/lateness, where parents have not made contact.

**(N)** would be recorded if the reason for absence is unknown. Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupils' attendance record indefinitely: if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable time it should be replaced with Code O (unauthorised absence)

### **Punctuality**

Schools should actively discourage late arrivals due to the disruption this causes not only to the individual but also to the remainder of the class. Patterns of lateness can develop into non-school attendance if left unchallenged. Schools should be flexible where local conditions such as weather or local transport have an adverse effect on pupils arriving on time. Schools should have a consistent approach to lateness so as not to differentiate between classes/form groups and siblings.

- pupils who arrive up to 30 minutes after the registration has closed should be marked as late – **(L)**
- pupils who arrive more than 30 minutes after the registration has closed will be marked as a **(U)**. This will be counted as an unauthorised absence.
- pupils who arrive up to half an hour late as a result of a medical appointment can be marked as present. The school must have prior notification of such appointment and be recorded in the SIMS data base.
- pupils arriving late must sign in at the school office, recording the reason and time of arrival.

Schools are not obliged to accept reasons for absences or late arrivals to school. Should any doubts remain after investigations have been made the absence could then be recorded as unauthorised and in the cases of late arrivals the appropriate code will be applied.

### **Codes for absence**

When applying codes for absences or late arrivals, schools are required to refer to the codes and definitions for school absence (Appendix 1).

## Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Regard should be paid to the individual pupil's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it and provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise. *Unsupervised study leave is not an 'approved educational activity' and must be counted as authorised absence.* The code **(S)** should be applied for study leave.

## Leave during term time

The Education Directorate does not, at any time, support leave during term time, however, in exceptional circumstances head teachers have the discretionary power to grant leave in accordance with this policy. It starts from the premise that **every day counts** and that permission is only authorised in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, leave is not granted as a reward for good attendance.

Each case should be considered carefully taking into account:

- the age of the pupil
- the time of year
- the nature and purpose of the trip
- family circumstances
- attendance pattern of the pupil
- previous requests

While each case is unique, the guidance aims for consistency for schools and families across the Island. To further support consistency, where siblings are concerned, primary and secondary schools should liaise with each other prior to a decision being made.

Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw their child/ren from school and must request permission in advance from the Head teacher.

Where a pupil is absent for longer than the agreed time, s/he should be marked as taking unauthorised leave. The same applies to those parents who remove their child/ren from school without permission.

Parents who wish to take their child/ren out of school for longer than **4 weeks** will have to re-apply for their school placement. It should not be considered that a pupil has the automatic right to return to their departing school. Should the departing school be full upon the pupil's return to the island, the Education Directorate will support parents to enrol their child/ren in another school.

## Chronic illness / long term illness or poor mental health

Chronic or long term illness can be defined as a long lasting and/or reoccurring illness or condition which is impacting significantly on a pupil's school attendance (Appendix

2 flow chart). The illness/condition should be professionally diagnosed by a paediatrician, CAMHS or other appropriate health care professional.

When a pupil is thought to be suffering with a chronic or long term illness, education and care plans should be developed by school. These measures will take into consideration the health needs of the pupil, as well as their learning needs which may be impacted upon due to the high level of absenteeism they may experience.

### **Serious injury**

Where a pupil who has a serious injury, which has required regular absences or a sustained period of time off school, s/he will also be considered under the chronic illness or long term illness pathway.

In all cases of chronic/long term illness or significant injury, the EWO will be involved to some degree, involving as a minimum an overview of the pupil's case to ensure that their education is not disadvantaged.

### **Alternative educational provisions**

A pupil receiving part time/temporary education or training away from the school site but retained on the school register, should be marked as **(B)** in the register. This also applies to pupils on work experience who will be marked as **(W)** in the register. The supervising member of staff responsible for these students must check that the student is at the appropriate place of instruction prior to completing the register. Pupils who are receiving all of their education in a separate provision to that of an education setting must be marked as 'left' on the register.

Where a pupil is attending an alternative school setting for an agreed period of time, the receiving school should register that pupil and they should be registered as **(B)** (educated off site) by the school of origin. Should the pupil return or not return to the school of origin they should be marked as on roll or left.

### **Transfer**

Where pupils transfer to another school, the receiving school must notify the relinquishing school that the pupil has been admitted on the first day in the new school. The relinquishing school can then mark the pupil as left.

## **5. Response to absences, lateness and welfare concerns**

Schools should adopt their own strategies such as first day response when responding to absences and lateness. *Independent research has shown that first day response is the single most effective initiative in improving rates of attendance – in some schools by as much as 10%.*

Early intervention has positive effects on poor attendance and punctuality. When concerns begin to emerge it is the responsibility of the school to raise these with the parents and pupils (age appropriate) in the first instance (Appendix 3 Flow Chart). Schools should make every effort to engage with parents and where appropriate, introduce an attendance plan or consider an early help approach or a family support

worker if required. Review dates should be agreed with a view to improvements being made. Where there are no significant improvements, the school have exhausted all their strategies and absence and/or punctuality continues to deteriorate, schools should engage with parents to agree the involvement of the EWT. A request for involvement (RFI) form will then be completed.

RFI forms must be completed by the school and parents provided with an opportunity to sign their agreement (consent). Should a parent not wish to sign the RFI form, the reason will be recorded on the form. A RFI form is the mechanism that confirms a case will be opened to the EWT and that an EWO will actively become involved in some capacity. In addition it is the RFI form which provides the EWT with a mandate to keep records and information such as chronologies on pupils and families.

### **Welfare concerns**

In cases where the welfare of the pupil is a concern, schools should make every effort to engage with parents with a view to the situation improving. If attendance does not improve, schools should consider an early help assessment, and the involvement of relevant professionals.

### **Emotionally based non-attendance (EBNA)**

It is important to distinguish between truancy and emotionally based non-school attendance, the latter being considered an unmet emotional need. Schools should refer to the graduated response for EWT involvement, which incorporates EBNA. There could be a number of contributing factors to EBNA. Schools should consider using the EBNA assessment tool to establish the route of the problem and following this, the involvement and support of relevant professionals.

### **Looked after children (LAC)**

Each school is responsible for supporting, monitoring and raising concerns in relation to attendance and/or punctuality and welfare for Looked after Children. The EWT are tasked with supporting schools by consistently raising LAC during school consultation meetings including termly PARMS. Attendance and punctuality data will be collated at the end of each academic year.

### **Children missing from education (CME)**

When children and young people go missing from education, for whatever reason, steps should be taken by schools and the Education Directorate to identify and locate them by working collaboratively with other authorities and jurisdictions. A pathway is attached to this Policy (Appendix 5) to ensure that all children and young people are identified quickly to effect a swift and effective response. Additionally this pathway will support schools in following a consistent approach in the management and sharing of information in relation to children and young people who leave their school and /or the island with or without notification.

## 6. Attendance panel meetings

Where a pupil's attendance and/or punctuality attendance fail to improve, despite the involvement of both the school and the EWT, the EWO will send parents a warning letter indicating their intent to refer to attendance panel. No further improvements will result in a letter from the EWT team manager/SBEWO Manager requiring parents and the pupil (age appropriate) to attend an attendance panel meeting (Appendix 4 flow chart).

Attendance panels address persistent concerns around school attendance and punctuality. Panel meetings represent a platform for professionals to meet with parents and pupils (age appropriate) to receive and review reports from the EWT, schools and other services, and as part of this, to consider and agree suitable next steps to achieve improvements.

Parents are invited to submit their own reports/information and in conjunction with the pupil (age appropriate) are encouraged to contribute to any discussions. Should the parents fail to attend, the meeting will continue and a decision made in their absence.

The decision to progress a case to a panel meeting is made by the EWO team manager/SBEWO Manager and would typically include evidence of the following:

- persistent and long term concerns in the area of attendance and/or punctuality;
- school-led intervention
- direct involvement from the CBEWO / SBEWO as evidenced by relevant documents (e.g. attendance plans)
- appropriate involvement of other agencies, for example, evidence of Early Help;
- parental non-engagement/non or disguised compliance

The panel will include: a senior manager from CYPES; the EWT team manager and a senior manager from Children's Services.

Possible outcomes of the Attendance Panel include:

- a period of review for parents and pupil to evidence significant improvements. This will sit within an attendance plan or TAC/F Plan and may include the involvement of further professionals (Early Help) if not already considered
- an enquiry to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)
- a referral to the Parish Hall with a view to prosecution
- application to the court for an education supervision order (refer to the Education (1999) Jersey Law)

After the case has been referred to the Parish Hall, it is the responsibility of the Parish Connétable to contact the parents and pupil (age appropriate) and invite them to attend a Parish Hall Enquiry. This may result in either a deferred decision to allow for a review period or the parents being charged at Parish Hall level or parents being required to attend Court under article 12 of the Education (1999) Jersey Law.

## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Absence Codes

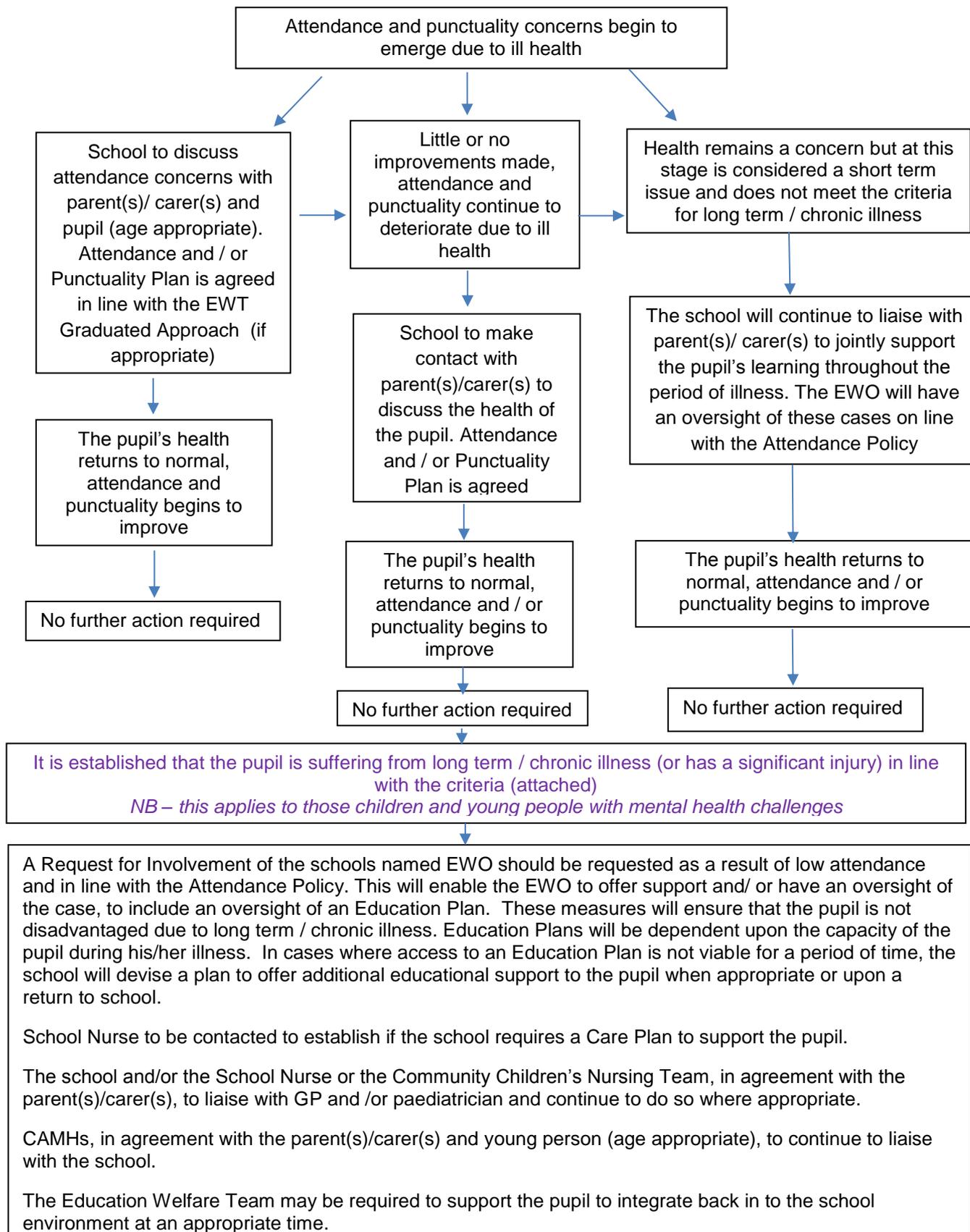
Code	What it means	When do we use it?	Statistical absence
/\	<b>In attendance</b>	When a child has arrived in school and is punctual.	
<b>B</b>	<b>Educated off site</b>	<p>When a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site in a supervised activity approved by the school.</p> <p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attending taster days at other schools</li> <li>• pupils attending another school as 'guest pupils'</li> <li>• pupils attending vocational courses at college</li> <li>• pupils attending alternative provision arranged and or agreed by the school</li> <li>• pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum supervised and arranged by the school</li> <li>• pupils attending educational support programmes such as speech and language, outdoor learning, outreach etc</li> </ul>	no
<b>C</b>	<b>Other Authorised Circumstances</b>	<p>When absences are deemed to be one off, unavoidable and/or where there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Crisis</li> <li>• Bereavement and/or attending a funeral</li> <li>• Visiting a parent in prison</li> <li>• Unexpected delays with (off island) travel (providing parents have contacted the school)</li> <li>• Parent being unwell. Whilst it may be unavoidable for a child to remain off school on the first day of a sudden parental illness, it would be expected the parent to make the necessary arrangements for subsequent days. If a child was to remain off longer than one day then further days should be recorded as unauthorised.</li> </ul>	yes
<b>D</b>	<b>Dual Registration</b>	When a pupil is dually registered at two schools. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance.	no

		<i>Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the school where the pupil is scheduled to be can notify the "other" school of any absences by individual pupils so that both schools can record the pupil absence using the relevant absence code.</i>	
<b>E</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>	When a child has been formally excluded from the school for an agreed and fixed amount of time and where the department has been notified through the proper paperwork for the exclusion.	yes
<b>G</b>	<b>Unauthorised Leave / Holiday</b>	When a family has gone on holiday or taken leave which has not been authorised by the head teacher, or where a family has failed to return on the date expected back following an authorised holiday/leave.	yes
<b>H</b>	<b>Authorised Holiday / Leave</b>	When the parents have requested permission to take their child out of school in advance and the head teacher has authorised the absence.	yes
<b>I</b>	<b>Illness</b>	When a child is unable to attend school due to a physical or mental illness. This code should also be used for periods of hospitalisation.	yes
<b>L</b>	<b>Late</b>	<p>When a child arrives after the agreed start time but not more than 30 minutes after the close of registration period.</p> <p>There may be some cases where discretion may be made such as unexpected extreme weather which impacts on the whole school.</p> <p>Discretion may also be used in individual cases where there are exceptional circumstances. These should be agreed in advance by the school with the parent.</p>	no

<b>M</b>	Medical appointments	<p>Where a child has attended a medical appointment (out of school) for the whole session. Discretion can be used if the child has only missed part of the session and advance notice was given to the school.</p> <p>Medical appointment would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GP</li> <li>• Dentist</li> <li>• Hospital appointments (not stays)</li> <li>• Off island medical appointments</li> <li>• CAMHS</li> </ul>	yes
<b>N</b>	No Reason (unauthorised)	<p>An N would be recorded if the reason for absence is unknown.</p> <p><i>An N should not be left showing on a pupil's record indefinitely and should be changed once the reason for the absence is known.</i></p>	yes
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	Where the absence is deemed not appropriate and/or there is no reasonable explanation as to why the child is not in school.	yes
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	When a child is absent for the <u>whole session</u> because they are participating in an activity supervised by a person authorised by the school. The pupil must be taking part in the activity.	no
<b>R</b>	Religious Observance	<p>Where the child is attending or taking part in an event set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/child belongs. This would include religious festivals.</p> <p>Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not “exclusively set aside for religious observance” by the religious body should not be recorded using code R.</p>	yes

<b>S</b>	Study Leave	Study leave should be used only for Year 11 pupils during mock and public examinations	yes
<b>T</b>	Traveller Absence	UK based for children of traveller families. There should be no use of the code T in Jersey	n/a
<b>U</b>	Late 30 minutes or more after the close of registration	<p>Children who arrive late 30 minutes or more after the close of registration where the reason for the lateness is not deemed acceptable.</p> <p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over sleeping</li> <li>• School refusal</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Haircut</li> <li>• Uniforms not dry</li> <li>• Car repeatedly breaking down. (Whilst a one off unavoidable break down may be seen as a 'crisis', cars that break down on a regular basis should not be seen in the same way.</li> </ul> <p>School may use discretion and mark children as present on arrival where there is one off, unavoidable and/or exceptional circumstances and parents have contacted the school.</p>	yes
<b>V</b>	Educational Visit or Trip	<p>Where a child is on a school organised trip or visit including residential trips (on and off island).</p> <p>This can also be where a student is attending an event arranged by other (official) organisations, provided they are supervised.</p> <p>Representing the island or a club in a sporting event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eisteddfod</li> <li>• Choir or music performance/event</li> <li>• Acting or drama performance/event</li> </ul> <p>This would not include time off for practise or going to watch/support events.</p>	no
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Where a child is attending a work experience placement arranged by someone other than the school, but approved by the school such as Project Trident / Princes Trust	no

## Appendix 2 – Graduated Response to Pupils with Long Term / Chronic Illness or Significant Injury and Definitions for Schools



## Definitions for schools

### Chronic Illness / Long Term Illness

A chronic / long term illness can be defined as a long lasting and/or reoccurring illness or condition which is impacting significantly on a child or young person's school attendance. The illness/condition should be professionally diagnosed by a paediatrician, CAMHS or other appropriate health care professional.

When a child or young person is thought to be suffering with a chronic / long term illness, it would be expected that education and care plans are put in place at school. These measures will take into consideration the health needs of the child or young person, as well as their learning needs which may be impacted upon because of a high level of absenteeism due to their illness/condition.

### Serious Injury

Where a child or young person who has had a serious injury which has required regular absences or a sustained period of time off school, he/she will also be considered under the chronic illness /long term illness criteria.

### Questions to ask when confirming a child or young person meets the Chronic Illness or Long Term Illness criteria

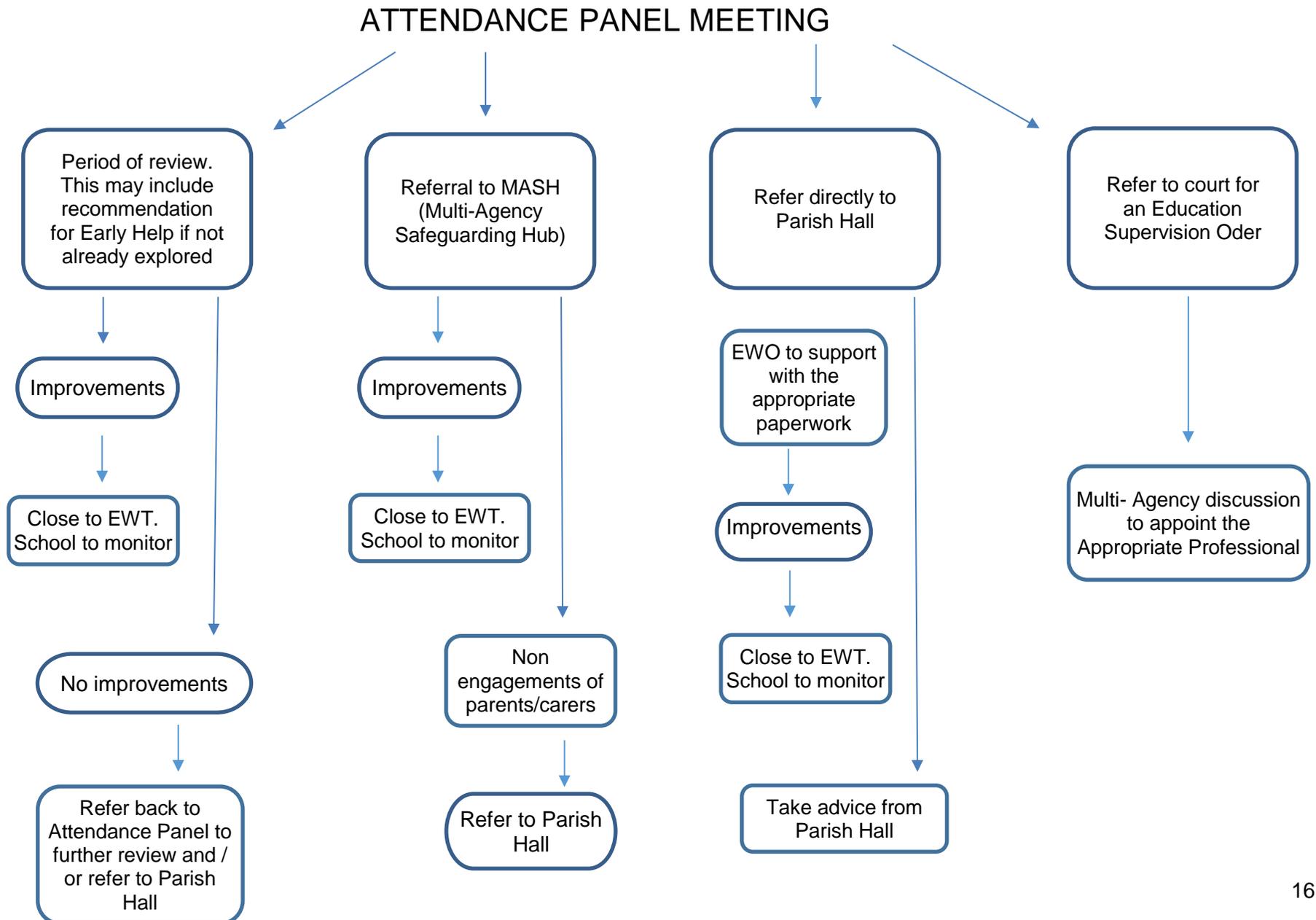
- has the illness/condition been diagnosed by an appropriate health professional (in the majority of cases a paediatrician or mental health practitioner would be considered appropriate). A serious injury may not require a formal diagnosis depending on individual circumstances.
- is there a formal education and health care plan in place?
- if an education plan is not immediately viable, has a plan been put in place to support the pupil at a later date to prevent absenteeism impacting on his or her learning needs?
- is EWO involved and/or has an oversight of the case?
- where appropriate, has a back-to-school plan been put in place?

### Examples of long term or chronic illness

- life limiting illnesses
- juvenile arthritis
- disabilities (complex needs)
- crohn's disease
- mental health challenges – supported by CAMHS
- chronic skin conditions

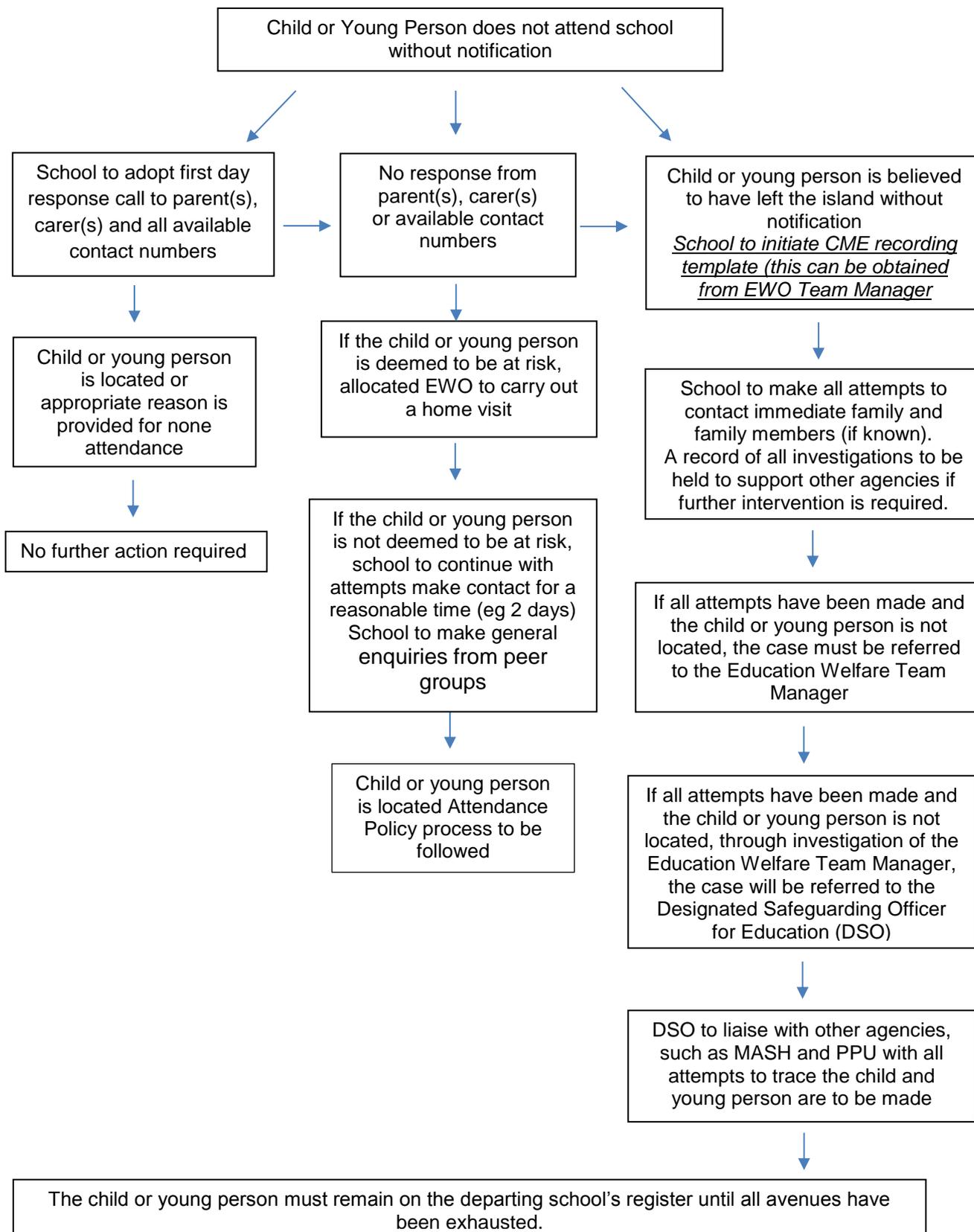


## Appendix 4 – Attendance Panel Meeting



## Appendix 5 – Children Missing in Education

### Children Missing in Education



<b>Issued by</b>	Children, Young People, Education and Skills
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