

## **GRANGE INFANT SCHOOL** **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **National guidance**

Statutory: It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy. It is statutory to have a home school agreement as set down in Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **The importance of school attendance**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

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

### **The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education other than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of permissible circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

### **Department for Education Guidance School:**

#### **Working together to improve school attendance (September 2022, updated August 2024)**

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age, who are registered to a school, attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons. School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE):

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_-\\_August\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

Hampshire County Council (HCC):

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Behaviour and anti-bullying
- Child protection
- Exclusion
- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Teaching and Learning

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our Home School Agreement, which parents must sign following their child's admission to school (statutory). It is very important, therefore, that all children attend regularly and so this policy sets out how together, we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents and pupils via the school website.

## **Section 1**

### **Rationale/statement of intent**

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our children and endeavour to provide an environment where all children feel valued and welcome. Families, parents and children play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to children and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital that every child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

## **Section 2**

### **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance fortnightly on our Friday Flyers and website
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, with their attendance and punctuality rate
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements

- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and local authority rewards (if provided)
- Set attendance targets for the school and for classes and display these in the school
- Run events when parents, children and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school

### **Roles and responsibilities**

Our Attendance lead, Sam Myers, HT with the school's Attendance Team (Kirstie Allison and Michele Kennell) will:

- Oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties
- If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Staff in the classrooms will:

- Ensure that all children are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with children at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence through CPOMS
- Support children with absence to engage with their learning once they are back at school
- Read the school's attendance policy

Responsibilities of the children in partnership with the parents:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time

Responsibilities of parents/carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that the school is informed of absence continuing beyond one day
- Avoid taking the child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments

The attendance lead and/ or the Headteacher will only grant leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance. *See Section 4*

### **Section 3**

#### **Recording attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.55am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.05pm.

## **Lateness/punctuality**

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and for the start of the afternoon sessions. The start of the school is used to organise the learning for the day. If a child is late, they will miss work time with their class teacher and vital information for that day. This can cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing for the child, leading to possible further absence.

The classroom doors open and the school day begins at 8.45am with a period of registration following this from 8.45am – 8.55am to ensure that the children are on time for assembly at 9am. All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with HCC and DfE guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a child is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. We would ask that all parents and carers, where possible, ensure that doctors and dentists appointments are made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Children who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other children. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see Section 6 for further detail.) From January 2026, parents and carers will receive a weekly text update of the number of minutes they have been late.

Parents, guardians or carers of children who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice, in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (See Section 6 of this policy for further detail.)

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected child to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. (*See The Late Collection Policy*)

## **What to do if my child is absent?**

### **First day absence**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. If your child is absent, you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence.

### **If your child is absent, we will:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with a member of the leadership team if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the HCC's Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) if absence is unauthorised and falls or remains below 90%

### **Third day absence**

After three days of absence, if a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, the school is required to start 'Child missing in Education' procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child. Prior to this, the school will make all efforts to establish contact with the family and parents. This will be through text messages, telephone calls and ultimately, a home visit by 2 DSLs.

### Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. This would be on day 11 of absence. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the Local Authority (LA) is notified that the child is at risk of being missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. We ask for all of our families to keep us up to date with contact numbers and there are regular checks on telephone numbers and people to contact, throughout the year.

### Continued or on-going absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks/30 sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as **persistent absentees**. Absence for whatever reason, disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows that these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the DfE. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, we will contact the parents/ carers and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will invite parents/ carers in for a meeting to address this and to offer a voluntary attendance contract to support.

The school will support the family in increasing attendance over a 4 to 6 week period. If attendance does not improve in this time, medical evidence will then be required if the child is away from school. If attendance still does not improve, the case will be referred to the Legal Intervention Team/ LIT. All our persistent absentee pupils and their parents will be subject to an Attendance Plan/ Parent Contract.

## Section 4

### Request for leave of absence

Regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 states that all schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to specific or 'exceptional' circumstances.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave: for public examinations
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. **There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off school in term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holidays will not be authorised.** Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence, need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set own in HCC's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail.) Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

## Section 5

### Understanding types of absence – authorised and unauthorised

Children are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for absence or illness. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- Unauthorised absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parents' request. This includes, parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily (such as for shopping, birthdays or to look after siblings), truancy before or during the school day and absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an unauthorised absence to an authorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

## Section 6

### Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

### Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and HCC will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

- 1 The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance
- 2 The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence, the school must enforce HCC's Code of conduct, issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>

### Penalty Notices for non-attendance – Hampshire's Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive (codes G, U or O on the register)
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed

- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- Absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance
- Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.
- Legal measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parents/ carers' request for leave of absence
- Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:
  - 1 Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
  - 2 A holiday that has been taken without permission
 and the unauthorised absence (coded G) is for 10 or more sessions (five days) in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week period then a Penalty Notice for non-attendance will be issued.

If a child has other types of unauthorised absence (coded O and U) and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1 10 sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period
- 2 One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £160. If the fine remains unpaid, Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay. If there is a second fine issued within 3 years, it will be £160 and court proceedings may take place if the fine is not paid. If a child is absent from school 3 or more times within the 3 years, there will not be a further fine but court action may take place.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties).

## **Section 7**

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons; difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch! For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

### **Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater families**

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

## **Section 8**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

Updated: January 2026

Date of Review: January 2027

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **DfE: Working together to improve attendance 2024/ 2025**

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

#### **MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

#### **EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

#### **LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

#### **FACILITATE SUPPORT**

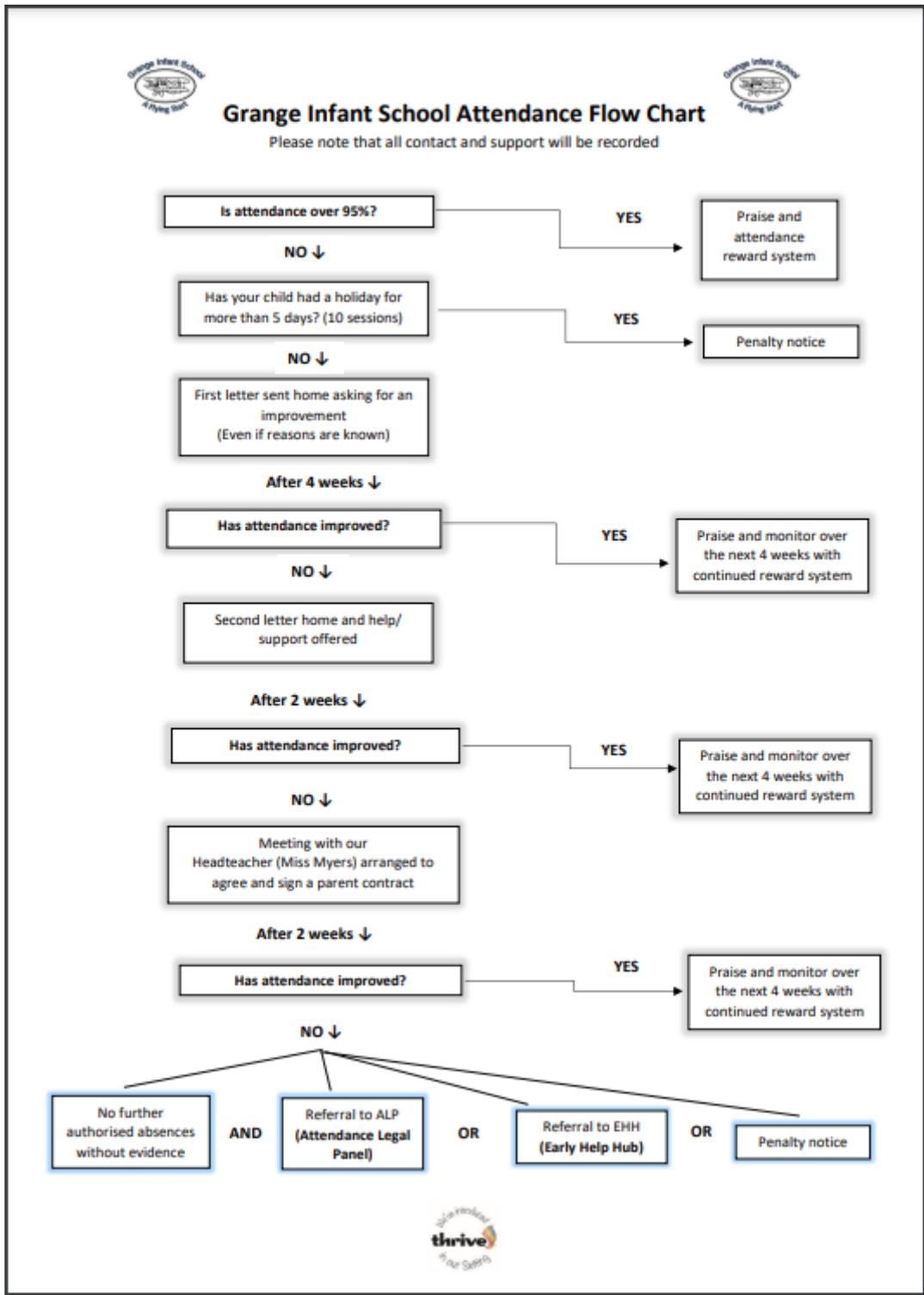
Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

#### **FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

#### **ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



### APPENDIX 3

Attendance/ absence codes:

#### Key

**I** Illness

**M** Medical/Dental Appointments

**\** Present PM

**#** School Closed To Pupils

**U** Late (After Register Closes)

**X** Not Required (Non-compulsory School Age)

**O** Unauthorised Absence

**L** Late

**/** Present AM

**-** No Mark Recorded