

JUNE 2022



ATTENDANCE POLICY

**HORIZONS EDUCATION TRUST
AMERICAN LANE, HUNTINGDON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE. PE29 1TQ**

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INTRODUCTION

The majority of pupils at our schools have patterns of good attendance because they enjoy coming to school for their education. Parents and carers of pupils have over time been supportive to maximise attendance.

The DFE has set out clear guidance to promote full attendance and expects all pupils to achieve 95% attendance and below 90% attendance is persistent absence therefore triggering a cause for concern.

In making decisions about pupil attendance the schools will appropriately take into account medical reasons and exceptional circumstances in discussion with parents and when appropriate seek guidance from the Cambridgeshire Local Authority Attendance Team.

We are flexible with the planning of our arrangements for return to school and will support families to enable access to education after operations using a team approach with Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and medical advice. In some cases attendance for a few hours per day can be organised with a bespoke plan to support moving and handling and positioning.

PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Registration: Roll call registration (electronic SIMS) takes place twice a day and registers close at 9.30am and 1.30pm.

LATENESS

We appreciate most pupils arrive by education transport and travel can be subject to unavoidable delays. Any student arriving in school after registration has been taken will be recorded as 'L' (late). If they arrive after registration period has finished they will be recorded as 'U' (unauthorised absence) if there is no acceptable reason.

We expect pupils to begin lessons immediately after registration in all cases.

Any child arriving after 9.30am or 1.30pm without an acceptable reason will be marked as unauthorised. Parents and carers should be advised that lateness at the beginning of the day is particularly detrimental to academic and social progress because they rely upon predictable routines, especially pupils with autism and for this reason will be treated very seriously by the school and the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Persistent lateness will be followed up for all our pupils because we believe that all children have a right and entitlement to a full education offer.

ABSENCES

Absences from school will be either Authorised or Unauthorised depending upon circumstance.

Authorised absences are where a student has been absent and a satisfactory and legal reason has been communicated to the school via the teacher or school office.

Each school expects authorised absences to be kept to a minimum so each pupil can maximise full attendance and not fall below 95% satisfactory attendance.

Any routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during school holidays when possible.

Where absence through illness has led to attendance of below 90%, parents/carers will be contacted and be expected to provide medical information and/or appointments evidence.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are when no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents and carers or the reason provided is not deemed as acceptable by the school.

Examples of these may be lateness after the end of registration, attending a birthday celebration, shopping or going on holiday.

The school, using DfE guidelines, makes the final decision about whether or not any absence is seen as Authorised or Unauthorised.

SAFEGUARDING

Each school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns.

This could be to follow up a range of child protection concerns of significant harm such as child sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation.

In addition if the school suspects that a pupil may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school, the designated safeguarding teachers for the school reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, which will be social care or police, using the child protection procedures.

The school will notify parents/carers if a referral is to be made. However, the school may be advised this is not appropriate in every circumstance, depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent/carer.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Our schools recognise that when a child is missing from education at school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect or a risk indicator of sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows the LSCB procedures.

Under section 8 h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of pupils with 10 days continuous unauthorised absence or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time.

A referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team that a trace cannot be established to enable this to be investigated further by the police.

Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well. Parents and carers should be advised this may include home visits by the Attendance Team/Police to establish a child is safe and well. Please see Appendix A; CME flowchart for school procedures.

The school will contact relevant agencies after first day of absence without confirmation from parents/carers if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' plan or due to risk assessment is considered extremely vulnerable.

RELUCTANCE TO GO TO SCHOOL

Sometimes pupils seem anxious about leaving home to go to school. They may tell you that they feel unwell or give another reason to not attend. You may notice that they are worried from the things that they say e.g. that they do not want to do particular subjects, feel that they have no friends or are being bullied. If this is the case please contact the school immediately to speak to the class teacher or Assistant Head.

HOME EDUCATION

On rare occasions parents and carers make enquiries about home education in schools. We have supported families to move their children back into the school system when special education needs have not been met previously. In all instances the child found it difficult to adapt to a new placement due to lack of routine attending school.

The Local Authority will determine whether or not to accept home education requests or challenge the request due to parental capacity to meet the special educational needs provision required to enable a child to make expected progress overtime.

Parents should be advised they are unable to withdraw their child from any school if they are subject to a 'School Attendance Order'.

Any request for home education must be put in writing to the Head Teacher in the first instance to enable the school to arrange an Education Health and Care Plan review with the Local Authority. It will not be deemed acceptable to withdraw a child for any reason prior to an EHCP review and agreement from the Local Authority.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PUPIL ATTENDANCE

We expect all staff to be excellent role models by having outstanding attendance and punctuality records. The following people can help with any concerns or questions regarding attendance & punctuality:

Head Teacher

Assistant Head

School Secretary

Local Authority Attendance Team

PARENTS/CARERS

If your child is absent from school for any reason (appointments, illness or other) or is going to be late, you should inform the school office before 9.00 am on the morning.

If your child is late to school they will need to be signed in at the school office.

Any child taken out of school due to illness or appointments need to also be signed out at the school office and also signed back in in on their return. The school should be notified in advance of all known appointments so that children with autism can be prepared for a change of routine in their school day.

TRACKING ATTENDANCE

We know that data part of school information enables school senior managers to have a discussion with teachers and to ask questions to seek wider school improvement. That constant questioning is more likely to affect change and to help the school to become more responsive to pupil circumstances.

Our schools have an electronic attendance system that closes at 9.30am and 1.30pm for separate sessions on SIMS. The advantage of this system is that the school office can respond to any queries about pupil attendance and provide immediate replies.

The school tracks attendance for Early Years class, main school and Post 16 using the DFE codes (see annexe 1) as follows:

- On a daily basis by the teacher with parents and carers
- Half termly to measure performance:
 - ❖ Tracking information for Early years, Main school and Post16
 - ❖ Tracking using inclusion indicators for Pupil premium, CIC, FSM, ethnicity and our vulnerable groups identified as Autism and PMLD.
- Annual end of year performance:
 - ❖ End of year reporting to Trustees to compare actual end of year attendance with school target and national performance data for special schools in School dashboard.
 - ❖ Tracking using inclusion indicators for Pupil premium, CIC, ethnicity and our vulnerable groups identified as Autism and PMLD.

WE FOLLOW UP PUPIL ATTENDANCE USING A 'THREE LETTER SYSTEM'

We follow the Cambridgeshire Local Authority guidance using a three letter system and template letters are attached to this policy. (See annexe 2). At stage 2 of the process a Parent Contract meeting is held.

TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend that school regularly. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that a child makes the most of the educational opportunities which are available to him or her.

When a child is absent from school, he or she misses not only the teaching provided but is also less prepared for the lessons after his or her return.

There are only 190 statutory school days in one year and 175 days (weekends and school holidays) available to use for holidays. Therefore every school day counts!

KEY INFORMATION

Prior to June 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed for head teachers to grant leave of absence for a term time family holiday in 'special circumstances' and for extended leave in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to these regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

We appreciate there might be very rare occasions that parents and carers may wish to apply for absence to be authorised for exceptional circumstances. Parents and carers are invited to apply with reasons in advance to the Head Teacher and mark the envelope confidential.

Holidays in school term time will not be sanctioned without an exceptional reason.

KNOWING THE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Parents will receive the annual percentage achieved by the child as part of the Annual report summary and Learning Journey.

YOUR PARENTAL AND CARER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

If your child is registered at a school you must ensure that s/he attends regularly to aim for full attendance. Parents should be aware we will always contact the parent where the child lives to follow up attendance matters because we recognise that in cases of any shared parental responsibility this is pragmatic.

The DFE regulations make it clear that parents, carers or relatives do not have any right or entitlement to take a child out of school for the purposes of a term time holiday or other any other reasons unless they are exceptional.

If parents take their child on holiday in term time this will be counted as unauthorised absence and listed on your child's school record. This will be considered the same as truancy and you will be at risk of a Penalty Notice being applied and a fine.

If parents wish a relative or adult to pick up their child at the end of the school day to suit their family circumstances we require notification and proof of identification for safeguarding purposes.

REVIEWING THE IMPACT OF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Executive Head Teacher will report the overall progress with pupil attendance and any issues arising to the Board of Trustees.

GOVERNANCE

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustees every two years unless regulations for attendance from the DfE change.

ANNEXE 1 – SCHOOL REGISTER CODES

The DfE offers a comprehensive set of register codes which all schools are required to use. These codes are as follows:

/ \ - Present am/pm

B - Educated off site - Approved Educational Activity.

C - Other authorised circumstances (including public performances licensed by the local authority, family bereavements, exceptional special occasions) - Authorised Absence.

D - Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) - Approved Educational Activity.

E - Excluded (no alternative provision made) - Authorised Absence.

F - Extended family holiday (agreed) - Authorised Absence.

G - Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement) - Unauthorised Absence.

H - Family holiday during term-time (provided this has been agreed by the school) - Authorised Absence.

I - Illness (not medical/dental appointments) - Authorised Absence.

J - Interview - Approved Educational Activity.

L - Late (before registers close) - Present.

M - Medical/Dental appointments - Authorised Absence.

N - No reason yet provided for absence - Unauthorised Absence.

O - Unauthorised Absence.

P - Approved Sporting Activity - Approved Educational Activity.

R - Religious Observance - Authorised Absence.

S - Study Leave - Authorised Absence.

T - Traveller child travelling - Authorised Absence.

U - Late after registers close without an acceptable explanation - Unauthorised Absence

V - Educational visit or trip - Approved Educational Activity.

W - Work Experience - Approved Educational Activity.

X - Non-compulsory school age absence - not counted as possible attendances.

Y - Enforced closure – not counted in possible attendances.

Z - Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances.

- School closed – not counted in possible attendance.

Teachers are required to use these codes using the SIMS online electronic register system for accurate recording.

The Local Authority Attendance Team will be consulted in cases of any query.

ANNEXE 2 – ATTENDANCE PROCESSES LETTERS

LETTER 1 - SOFT LETTER

<<DATE>>

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child Name: xxx DOB: xxx School: xxx

We have noticed that your child <forename> attendance has deteriorated, I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record so that you can view a detailed breakdown of your child's absence from school.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. We are all mindful of the impact of COVID on children's learning, however we must all do our utmost to minimise the disruption, to allow for their future academic outcomes and life chances.

We will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly or if you are concerned about your child's attendance due to the impact of COVID, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer / Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel
Cc Local Authority Attendance Team

LETTER 2 - ATTENDANCE CONCERN (UNAUTHORISED)

<<DATE>>

Dear Parent/Carer

RE: <<name>> School Attendance

Name: xxx Dob: xxx School: xxx

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. We are all mindful of the impact of COVID on children's learning, however we must all do our utmost to minimise the disruption, to allow for their future academic outcomes and life chances.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason please ensure that we have been informed so appropriate support can be put in place.

I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly or if you are concerned about your child's attendance due to the impact of COVID, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer / Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant
Pastoral Personnel
Cc Local Authority Attendance Team

STAGE 2 - VOLUNTARY ARRANGEMENTS

Parent Contract Meetings are used where parents need to be reminded of their statutory duty and where a greater sense of partnership may help to move things forward. They are included in the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and referred to in the DfE Guidance on the range of statutory responses available to combat poor attendance.

A parenting contract is a formal, written and signed agreement between parents and the school and should:

- be written down and copied to everyone in clear and accessible language that everyone understands.
- be realistic, setting out achievable improvements to be made within a reasonable timeframe, and not expecting everything to be put right from day one.
- set out exactly what parents are expected to do, so that whether or not they complete their goals, can be fairly assessed. (The contract may also set goals and tasks for the child but the contract itself is with the parents, not with the child.)
- address identified specific obstacles to the child's regular attendance and how it is planned to overcome them. They don't just make general statements of good intentions on either side.
- recognise that the school may be part of the problem as well as part of the solution.
- encourage imaginative changes on both 'sides' on the basis that if we all carry on doing what we have always done we will probably carry on getting just more of the same

Further resources:

- *School attendance parental responsibility measures: Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police.*

Top tips for chairing a PCM

Chair person's checklist:

1. Introductions

Ensure there is a private meeting room

Ensure introductions of all present

Explain role of all present

Explain confidentiality and the sharing of PCM with Local Authority if required

Explain reasons for meeting

Explain and check understanding of legal process

2. Beginning

Reflect on previous meeting/ phone calls/letters sent

Check what has happened since last meeting/ phone call/letters sent

Praise any achievements and identify strengths shown when the child attends school

Identify problem areas, risks and vulnerability concerns relating to non-attendance

Respond to challenges presented by parent/s in getting their child to school

Agree purpose of meeting – *how to ensure that the child attends school*

Explore the willingness for parents to engage

3. Middle

Ask open questions and listen to parents responses

Delivery of Intervention - consider what has promoted engagement

4. End

Pull together the interaction and summarise the intervention

Agree needs, actions, further interventions and offer other support

Agree action plan and set targets

Explain legal position, enforcement – hand out legal leaflet

Set clear Attendance targets

LETTER 3 - INVITE TO PCM MEETING

<<DATE>>

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: <<name>> School Attendance

Name: xxx Dob: xxx School: xxx

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s attendance is still causing concern. We are aware that many pupils were unable to access education due to COVID and school attendance is now more important than ever. Therefore, we need to meet with you urgently to discuss the situation.

You are required to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date: xxx Time: xxx

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; we may have to refer this matter to the Local Authority who could consider more formal action. This might result in a Penalty Notice Fine and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996, and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Absence due to self-limiting illness can be authorised in the first instance but a child who is absent frequently due to a medical reason, including repeated self-limiting illnesses, medical evidence will be required.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support your child in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be initiated. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer / Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel
CC Local Authority Attendance Team

SUSPECTED HOLIDAY LETTER

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: <<name>> <<DOB>>: Horizons Education Trust:

I am writing about <<name>> absence from school from <<date>> to <<date>>.

From information received from other sources we believe that this was due to a family holiday. You have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, <<name>> absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/care in respect of each child who is absent from school. However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

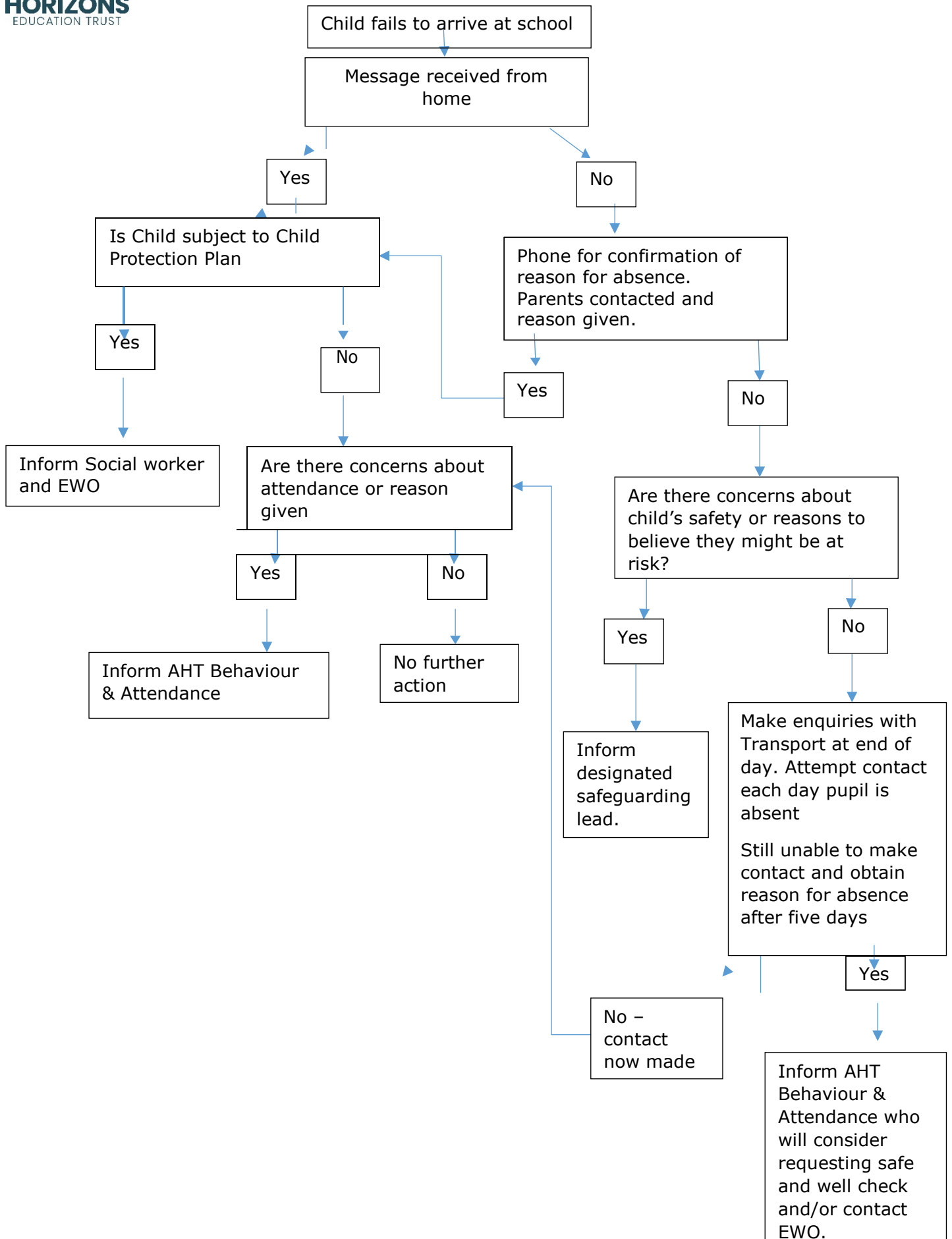
Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

cc Local Authority Attendance Team

APPENDIX A

Child Missing from Education
Flowchart



Policy agreed on: _____

Signed on behalf of the Trustees _____

Committee: _____

Author: _____

Review date (optional): _____

Website Y/N