



# **The Castle School**

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## **Attendance Policy**

**June 2023**

CEO: Sarah Watson  
Headteacher: James Lamb

Due for review: Summer term 2024

**Purpose:**

- To ensure and encourage a high level of attendance for all students, in order that they maximise their educational achievement.
- To ensure limited unauthorised absences.

**Key Points:**

- Effective monitoring of attendance is vital.
- Registers must be accurate and kept in accordance with this policy.
- There are many stakeholders involved in ensuring good attendance at school. These include:
  - Parents/carers
  - Students
  - Education Safeguarding Service Officer (County)
  - Staff at The Castle School, including members of SLT, Heads of House, tutors and pastoral support staff
- Appendix 1 lists the names and roles of staff at The Castle School who play a role in ensuring good attendance for all students.

**The school day:**

It is an expectation that all students are in school by 8:45am when formal registration begins. Students remain in school until 3:20pm when they are dismissed. It is an expectation that students partake in enrichment wider than the core curriculum at The Castle School. This may mean that students spend additional time at school after 3:20pm.

**Attendance and Punctuality:**

Across the school, attendance and punctuality are acknowledged and rewarded when in line with or above the school targets. The tutor awards House points that feed into ClassCharts. Students are able to spend these points as they wish, from the Rewards Store.

- Governors, Directors and staff within the Trust recognise the high correlation between achievement and attendance and strive to maintain high levels of attendance for all students.
- Parents and carers have the responsibility to ensure attendance at school. Unless there is a major health concern, attendance should rarely drop below 96%.

We ask for the cooperation of all parents and carers in helping the school to monitor attendance closely.

Any planned medical absence should be notified by telephone or letter. As far as possible, appointments should be made out of school hours.

- Once the school has obtained confirmation, the school will authorise the absence if the reasons given are considered appropriate e.g. illness, unavoidable medical appointment etc. If the reasons given are not appropriate, the absence will be considered as unauthorised and the parents/carers contacted. The school will follow up any absence which has not been notified.
- **Holidays/leave of absence in term time will not usually be authorised because they will affect a student's education.** There is **no automatic right** to take children

away from school for a holiday. A leave of absence will only be given for exceptional circumstances. The school may request a Penalty Notice for 10 or more consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence where the student's attendance falls below 96%.

Exceptional circumstances **may** include:

- Emergency service / forces personnel with proof of enforced holiday period.
- Forces personnel returning from or embarking on active service.
- Holiday industry employees with proof of this being the **ONLY** time period allowed by employer.
- A transcontinental leave request to see a terminally ill close relative.

If a leave of absence in term time is requested the following procedure must be followed:

- Parents/carers should complete a form and return it to the school office (see example in Appendix 2)
- If the request is due to work commitments preventing time off at other times, then evidence from the workplace should be provided.

### **Penalty Notices**

The school follows DfE guidance and will take legal action against parents/carers who do not send their children to school regularly. We do try to work with parents and carers to ensure there are no barriers to school attendance. If strategies for supporting regular attendance do not work, the school will take legal action. In the first instance, a Warning Penalty Notice will be issued. If this does not result in improved attendance, a fine will be issued (Appendix 3). The school works closely with the Education Safeguarding Service to ensure full attendance and adherence to procedures. At The Castle School, regular attendance is classed as attendance of 96% or more. Attendance below this level could result in the issue of a Warning Penalty Notice, Penalty Notice or court action.

### **Lateness**

Lateness of more than 30 minutes after the start of registration (8:45am) will count as an absence from that session and will therefore require a note/telephone call from parents/carers. *If there is no good reason this will count as an unauthorised absence.* Lateness to school will be subject to sanctions unless there is a genuine reason.

### **Absence from school:**

If a student is absent from school, it is expected that the parents/carers let the school know of the reason for the absence either in advance or on the day. If a child is unwell, the school should be notified by 8am, by leaving a message on the absence line through the main school phone number. If the school is unaware of a reason for absence, parents/carers will be sent a truancy message, with a request to respond, so the child's whereabouts are known. Any parents/carers of children who are additionally vulnerable will be telephoned to check where they are. At any point, if there is a concern for a child's welfare, the Police may be contacted so a door knock can take place. This may be carried out by school staff if there is a need.

### **Strategic Planning and Data Analysis:**

The school uses ClassCharts to analyse data daily, tracking absent students and

ensuring key staff follow up where appropriate. A weekly attendance summary table ensures gaps and trends are monitored regularly and acted upon. Heads of House meet with the Attendance Officer weekly to plan actions and next steps for families where absence is a concern, alongside securing the implementation of the attendance flow chart (Appendix 3). Heads of House meet the DHT Pastoral fortnightly in link meetings to review attendance. Attendance is a regular focus on the Strategic Leadership Team's meeting agendas, as well as year group raising achievement plan (RAP) meetings. House teams meet every half term to ensure tutor group RAPs review data and tackle PA.

**Reducing persistent (<90%) and severe (<50%) absence:**

At The Castle School, there is a relentless drive to ensure that students get the best opportunities. We have high expectations to support this vision. Therefore, we will actively challenge families to access support available to secure their child's attendance at school. This may involve working with the School Engagement Officer. There may be a need to involve wider support services to understand how to remove the attendance barriers best, including SEN services, CAMHS, ESS, CSC, FIS, and others. More recently, the Somerset Educational Psychology team have produced information and resources linked to emotional based school avoidance, which the school will use to improve persistent and severe absence.

CEO

Mrs S Watson

**Post Holders at The Castle School with roles linked to attendance** (contact via the Main Office)

Headteacher:

Mr J Lamb

Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral):

Mr J Wordsworth

Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral):

Mr D Beer

Assistant Headteacher and SENDCo:

Mrs C Owen

Assistant Headteacher and SEMHCo:

Mrs S Sherring

School Engagement Officer:

Mrs S Evans

Attendance Officer:

Mrs A Holley

Pastoral Support Officers:

Miss K Ridgway

Mrs H Jenkins

Welfare Officer:

Mrs A Horsley

Return to Learning Manager:

Mrs S Thomas

Data Manager:

Mrs J Slinger

Office Manager:

Mrs A Broadway



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## REQUEST FOR TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Reminder to parents/carers: There is no automatic right to holidays within term time. We believe that children need to be in school to make the most of their education. There are situations which may be authorised. Please refer to the Attendance Policy for further details. If your request is not authorised, you may be fined.

NAME(S) OF STUDENT(S) ..... TUTOR GROUP(S) .....

If you have children in another school who will also require leave of absence, please give their names and school.

NAME(S) ..... SCHOOL .....

Please state your reasons for requesting term time leave of absence. If this is because your employer will not grant holiday during school holidays please attach a supporting letter from your employer:

### DATES REQUESTED:

FROM: ..... TO: ..... (inclusive)

Please continue overleaf if necessary

**Please return this form to the Front Office.**

A confirmation letter will be sent to you by post once a decision has been made.

### For office use only:

Current Attendance Percentage: ..... %

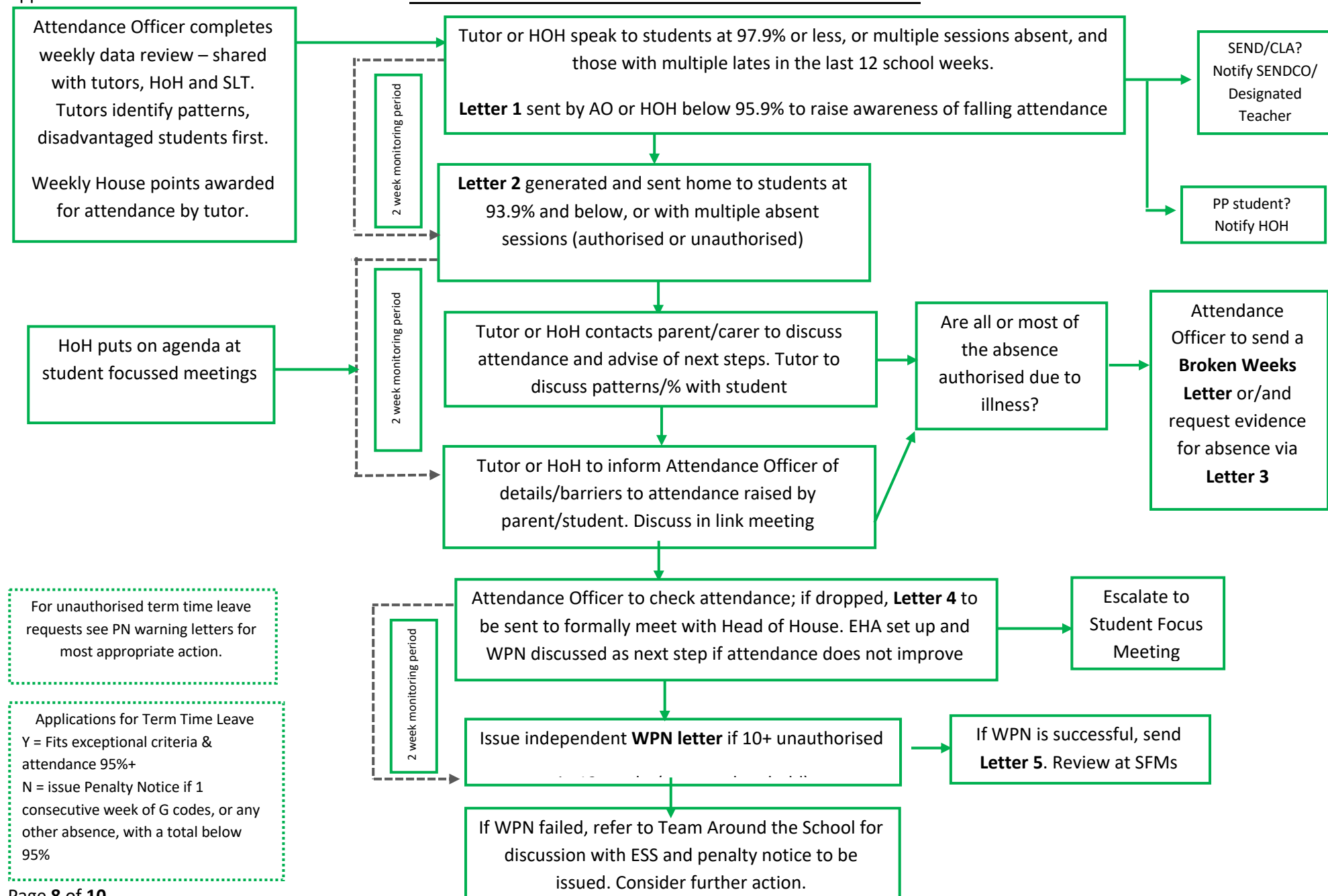
Leave of absence authorised? **YES/NO** By whom ..... Date .....

Reason:

Parents informed? **YES/NO** by whom ..... Date .....



## The Castle School Attendance Process Flow Chart





### Attendance Information Sheet

We would like to remind you about the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Missing lessons makes it hard to catch up and students have to work harder when they come back. Students attend school for 190 days per year; there are 175 non-school days a year for holiday, cultural experiences and family time. Any child with attendance of 90% or below is classed as a persistent absentee (PA) by the Government. Every school is required to take action to work with families to improve attendance. It may be useful for you to know what attendance figures mean for your child.

<b>100%</b>	<b>Excellent Attendance</b>
<b>Above 98%</b>	<b>Good Attendance</b> Students with attendance above 98% have had less than 4 days of absence in the year.
<b>Attendance Drops Below 96%</b>	If your child's attendance drops below 96% you will receive a letter highlighting this.
<b>94%</b>	If your child's attendance drops to 94% you will receive a letter and be asked to attend a meeting.
<b>92%</b>	If your child's attendance drops to 92% we will look to plan together actions to improve attendance, which may lead to a referral to other professionals for their input.
<b>90% and below</b>	<b>Persistent Absentee (PA) as defined by the Department for Education</b> Students with 90% attendance have had 19 days absence over the year. Students with this attendance level are missing a month of school per year and may drop at least one GCSE grade per subject with this level of absence. Parents of students with this level of attendance may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice or have legal action taken against them.
<b>85%</b>	<b>Exceptionally Low Attendance/Persistent Absentee</b> Students with 85% attendance have had 29 days absence over the year. These students are missing six weeks of a school year; it will be very difficult for them to keep up with work and they may drop more than one GCSE grade per subject. It is highly likely that a Fixed Penalty Notice will have been served and should attendance not improve significantly after this, a referral will be made for legal action to be taken against parents for not ensuring their child attends school regularly.

#### Reporting an Absence

- All absences must be reported by 8am each day (and on each subsequent day) by either calling the absence line or emailing the relevant school staff member.
- If you know your child is going to be absent, please let us know in advance. If your child has been absent due to a medical appointment, please attach or email in a copy of the appointment card/hospital letter.
- Medical evidence **may** be required if your child has a prolonged absence of more than three days. Medical evidence **must** be produced if we have previously written to you stating that no further absence due to illness will be authorised without it.

Examples of medical evidence (this is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide to the school directly):

- Medical appointment card/printed slip
- Medical appointment letter
- Copy of prescription showing name and date
- Prescribed medication with pharmacist label showing name and date
- Hospital discharge letter

### **Punctuality**

Arriving late to school and into lessons is very disruptive for the teacher and other class members. It also means that the late student themselves miss important input from teachers.

If for whatever reason you know your child will be arriving late, please call the absence line or provide your child with a written note.

Please note: We never ask for 'doctor's notes' so please do not approach your GP asking for this.