



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Applies to:	All Summerhill School attendees
Staff member responsible:	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)
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1. Introduction

At **Summerhill School** we recognise that regular school attendance is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly by the School seeking to work actively with parents and carers to ensure a regular pattern of attendance is maintained. We expect every student on roll to attend every day when the School is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to offer support when barriers to learning have been identified and aim to safeguard your child in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our students and we use a variety of rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality. We encourage children to attend and put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of a positive attitude towards school and learning. Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and to work alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents and carers have a duty to promote full attendance at school under **legislation** and '**safeguarding**'.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives are:

- To work in partnership with families and other agencies in order to achieve the best outcomes for children via early help pathway available in the country to achieve high attendance and punctuality.
- To provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Summerhill Community feel secure and valued.
- To emphasise the importance of and encourage students maximum attendance and promote punctuality to enable them to take full advantage of their education opportunities. All students will aspire to have 100% attendance with a minimum 97%, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- Record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism;
- Promote effective partnership with external agencies, such as the **Education Support Service** and follow their standard approaches in managing attendance issues.

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996, 2002, and 2011
- School attendance (Guidance) May 2022, working together to Safeguard Children Guidance.

- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) regulations 1999
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007, 2012 & 2013,
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance September 2016,
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory Guidance,
- Regional Local Authority Penalty Notice Protocols & Early Help Pathways,
- Meridian Trust Behaviour and Safeguarding Policies.
- Supporting Pupils at school with Medical Conditions DfE Guidance
- Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs DfE Guidance

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

4. Attendance and safeguarding

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable: -

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
 - (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

b) **Absence from school is a safeguarding concern.** A student may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and 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 child's welfare is always paramount.**

c) Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of Summerhill School, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for students encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and respectful relationships/anti-bullying.

Failure to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

5. Statutory Duty

Schools are responsible for recording students' attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all students of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll. The schools utilises a central administrative system – Arbor for this purpose.

It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. Students must arrive in school by 8:40am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8.40am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:30pm and will be kept open until 14.00pm.

6. Parental Responsibility and/or day to day care.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. The Education Act 1996 section 7 defines the Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

(7) The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The Education Act 1996 section 576 defines the meaning of “parent”.

(1) In this Act, unless the context of otherwise requires, “parent”, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person-

(a) who is not a parent of his but who has parental responsibility for him, or

(b) who has care of him, except that in section 499(8) it only includes such a person if he is an individual.

Definition of a parent

A parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and School will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular student when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day-to-day responsibility for a child.

7. Local Authority Responsibility

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend the school which he/she is registered at, then the parent/guardian is guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at schools, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend can be prosecuted under Education Act 1996, section 444 1A (as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced new powers in relation to issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. Penalty notices must be issued in a manner which conforms to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all relevant Equal Opportunities Legislation. To this aim each Local Authority has a Code of Conduct in relation to issuing Penalty Notices.

Summerhill School recognises Dudley Councils 'Education Support Service' and will implement prosecution where it is fair and equitable to do so.

8. Summerhill School Interventions for Managing Persistent Absenteeism

A student is deemed as persistent absent (PA) if they miss 10% of their own individual sessions; meaning all students below 90% will be PA regardless of the time of year. Any pupil absent for 19 days or more within a year will be identified as PA. All students whose attendance has fallen to this level or are at risk of reaching this level will be closely monitored through the School's tracking procedure, and regular contact made with their parents/carers. Parents/carers will be given opportunities to work with the School in improving their child's attendance.

Summerhill School has an open working process with the Dudley Local Authority and other agencies to intervene and support families using the **early help pathway**; this process assists in the assessment of need, using an **Early Help Assessment** (EHA (formerly known as CAF) (See Appendix B) in order for appropriate support to be given, or referrals to be made. Summerhill School will assist parents and students in the removal of any barriers preventing regular attendance by offering support in respect of safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and welfare within the early help pathway.

In conjunction (Appendix A) there are a number of sanctions that school can take to address the issue of non-attendance. In order to try and identify the reason for absence we will always talk to you first to identify the reason for absence. Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) will be considered when:

- A student is absent from school for the purpose of a Leave of Absence in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A student has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further absence has occurred following written warning to improve Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with the Dudley Council Code of Conduct.

Where intervention through the 'Dudley Council' process fails to bring about an improvement in attendance the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates Court may be taken. The School will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under section 444/4441 (a) of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents/guardians realise their own responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance at school.

****Please note that the School will follow guidance from the local authority at all times with regards to support, intervention and legal processes and that these processes may differ during the academic year due to COVID guidance.***

9. School day and Punctuality

Students at Summerhill School are expected to arrive on School site by 8.30am, ready to attend Tutor Time (Reflection) at 8.40am.

Students may enter the school site and attend breakfast club on school site from 8.00am onwards. There is a legal requirement for students to attend registration sessions, unless alternative individual arrangements are made locally. Our morning register is taken during our Form time session which starts at 8.40am and ends at 9.10am for all students.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Any student arriving within 30 minutes of the register opening in the morning or 30 minutes after the register opens in the afternoon, will be deemed as 'late' and therefore will be coded as 'L' on the register; a sanction such as detention, will be used to 'repay' the missed time.

Any student arriving after the register closes (9.10am in the morning or 2.00pm in the afternoon) without a verified reason will be marked as 'unauthorised late' and coded as 'U'. A 'U code' constitutes an unauthorised absence for the whole session due to missing the legal registration period; legal action may be taken for continued U code absences.

Afternoon Registers are taken at the start of afternoon sessions which occur after students' longest break in the day (after lunch).

The School day ends at 3.10pm for all students.

****Please note that the timings above may vary during the academic year 2020-2021 due to staggered start and finish times that the School have put in place to meet COVID-19 guidelines.***

10. Reporting absences/First day absence

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the School by 9.30am on the first day of their child's absence.

Summerhill School phone number is 01384 816165.

Please select option 2 to report a student absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Parents are encouraged to provide adequate detail, because stating 'Unwell', 'Poorly' or 'Not sure if they're unwell, I'm keeping them off to see' gives insufficient information for us to authorise the absence.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

If by **9.40am** on the first day of a child's absence the School has not been notified, a member of the attendance team will send a text message. If there is no response, the School will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If no reason has been provided by the parent/carer by the end of the second day, the School may send a letter of concern to the parent/carer and/or invite them into the School and/or may undertake a home visit. Parents/carers are expected to contact the School every day the student is absent.

11. Authorising Absences

There are two categories of absence:-

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii)** (ii) Unauthorised (not approved) Only the Headteacher can approve absence.

Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

- (i) Authorised Absence
An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from the School for a legitimate reason and the School has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if the child has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- (ii)** (ii) Unauthorised Absence
An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from the school without the permission of the School. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from the School without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

12. Medical Evidence and Supporting Evidence

We ask that parents/carers making medical appointments for their child, book them early or late in the day, so students can be in school for the maximum amount of time possible for that day.

The School fully supports students' welfare and medical conditions and if your child has a chronic, persistent or recurrent health issue, we can arrange for a meeting with parents/carers to discuss what additional support can be offered to help your child to access school however we cannot simply accept parental information without the appropriate medical evidence. Students with medical conditions should attend the school as per normal unless the absence is supported by medical opinion.

- An appointment card or verification by the Doctor/Dentist/Hospital is required
- If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for any of these reasons, it is the expectation of the school that the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment or register prior to the appointment.
- Medical certificates are required for absence greater than 5 days.
- Parents/carers must obtain a 'student pass' for their child if leaving school early to attend a planned appointment. This will provide parents/carers with evidence that the School are aware of the absence in the event of being challenged.

There are of course, good reasons (especially illness), which make attendance at School sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, lessons missed cannot be repeated and "catching up" is never as good as the original learning experience.

The School recognises the need to support students during and after long term absence of any kind and will:

- i. Endeavour to provide work for students to be completed off-site where appropriate and medical evidence has been received.
- ii. Consider all strategies including liaising with other agencies to encourage the return of students to the School. This may include negotiated timetables and/or gradual reintegration.
- iii. Ensure that there is a positive atmosphere within the School in which students are welcomed back.
- iv. Liaise with the local authority to maintain extra support and guidance for our students.
- v. Encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in re-entry programmes.

13. Roles and Responsibilities in managing attendance and punctuality

We expect that all students will:

- Attend the School regularly
- Attend the School punctually
- Attend the School appropriately prepared for the day.

We expect that all parents/carers who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Ensure regular attendance.
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at the School punctually prepared for the school day.
- Contact the School on the first day of the child's absence and keep in regular contact with the School
- Contact the School promptly whenever a problem occurs that may keep the child away from the School.

We expect that our school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all students, twice daily, including recording students who are late.
- Monitor every student's attendance through Form time, on a weekly basis using an Attendance Tracker.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a student fails to attend where no message has been received to explain the absence.
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain notes which provide a reason for the absence.
- Contact those families whose child's attendance has become a concern and offer support.
- Encourage good attendance.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children, provide a safe learning environment; provide a sympathetic response to any student's concerns.
- Make initial enquiries of parents/carers of students who are not attending regularly, express their concern and clarify the School's and the LEA's expectations with regard to regular school attendance
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of absence to the relevant house group, attendance or safeguarding teams.
- Invite parents/carers to meet in the School to discuss attendance and/or punctuality with parents/carers.
- Involve outside agencies where and when appropriate (Education Support Service, Early Help).
- Rewards students for consistently high attendance and for improved attendance

14. Monitoring attendance

Student's attendance will be monitored weekly by their Form Tutor using our Attendance Tracker. During one Form tutor session every week students will be informed of their current attendance figure and colour. Students will have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their Form tutor. The Form tutor will then relay these concerns back to house group teams and any necessary support will be put in place.

Students whose attendance becomes a concern will be reviewed by School staff and parents/carers will be notified by letter or over the phone. In certain cases we will write a letter to parents/carers and ask that evidence is provided to justify absences. We may also arrange to meet with parents/carers to discuss attendance.

Failure to make an acceptable improvement or where there is an immediate concern further intervention's will be considered.

If difficulties relating to absenteeism cannot be resolved through intervention at School level, then we may refer to the 'Education Support Service, inviting parents/carers to discuss their attendance issues. We will notify parents/carers if we feel this intervention is needed.

Form tutors and students will refer to the Attendance colours in order to monitor and improve attendance for all students. This will be displayed in Form rooms, across the School and in house assemblies. The Attendance Tracker will be used weekly with all students in order to monitor attendance. The tracker is colour coded in order for students and staff to set targets based on improving attendance where appropriate (i.e. less than 100%).

15. Attendance Rewards

Summerhill School actively promotes and rewards students who achieve good attendance and punctuality.

There are a variety of rewards for excellent and improved attendance. For example, a fortnightly year group raffle for all students with 100% attendance and a house group trophy which is handed to the form with the best attendance each week.

Additional rewards are awarded at the end of each term for improved, excellent and 100% attendance. This is celebrated at house group assemblies at the end of each term.

16. Requests for Leave in Term Time (Appendix D)

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider there are** exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents/carers do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Headteachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from the School if the leave is granted.
- The School can only consider applications for Leave in term time which are made by the resident parent/carer. i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made a minimum of 15 days in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave in term time which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent/carer, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.

Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance Dudley Councils Code of Conduct. Each application for a Leave in term time will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

17. Deletion from Register

Students will only be deleted from the register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended in the 2016 Pupil registration regulations.

Summerhill School will follow the Government’s Children Missing Education Protocol when a student’s whereabouts is unknown.

It is important that if families decide to send their child/children to a different school that they inform our School staff as soon as possible. A student will not be removed from our School roll (School to school transfer) until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the student will be leaving our School and starting the next
- The name and address of the new school

The student’s School records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as possible. Failing to notify Summerhill School will result in a referral to Dudley Council’s Children Missing Education Service.

If a family decides to move abroad, no longer lives within a reasonable distance from the school, fails to return from an agreed leave of absence, fails to attend School for 20 or more consecutive school days or decides to be Electively Home Educated, Summerhill School will follow the Dudley Education Support Service procedure.

18. Summerhill School Attendance

Summerhill School's attendance target is 97%, please see Appendix C for the impact on progress when attendance percentage decreases.

19. Monitoring and Review

Achievement against Summerhill School's attendance targets will be reported to the Schools Governors. The Headteacher together with the Strategic Lead will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedures and where necessary make recommendations to the School Governors for improvement. The School will keep accurate records on file for a minimum period of three years.

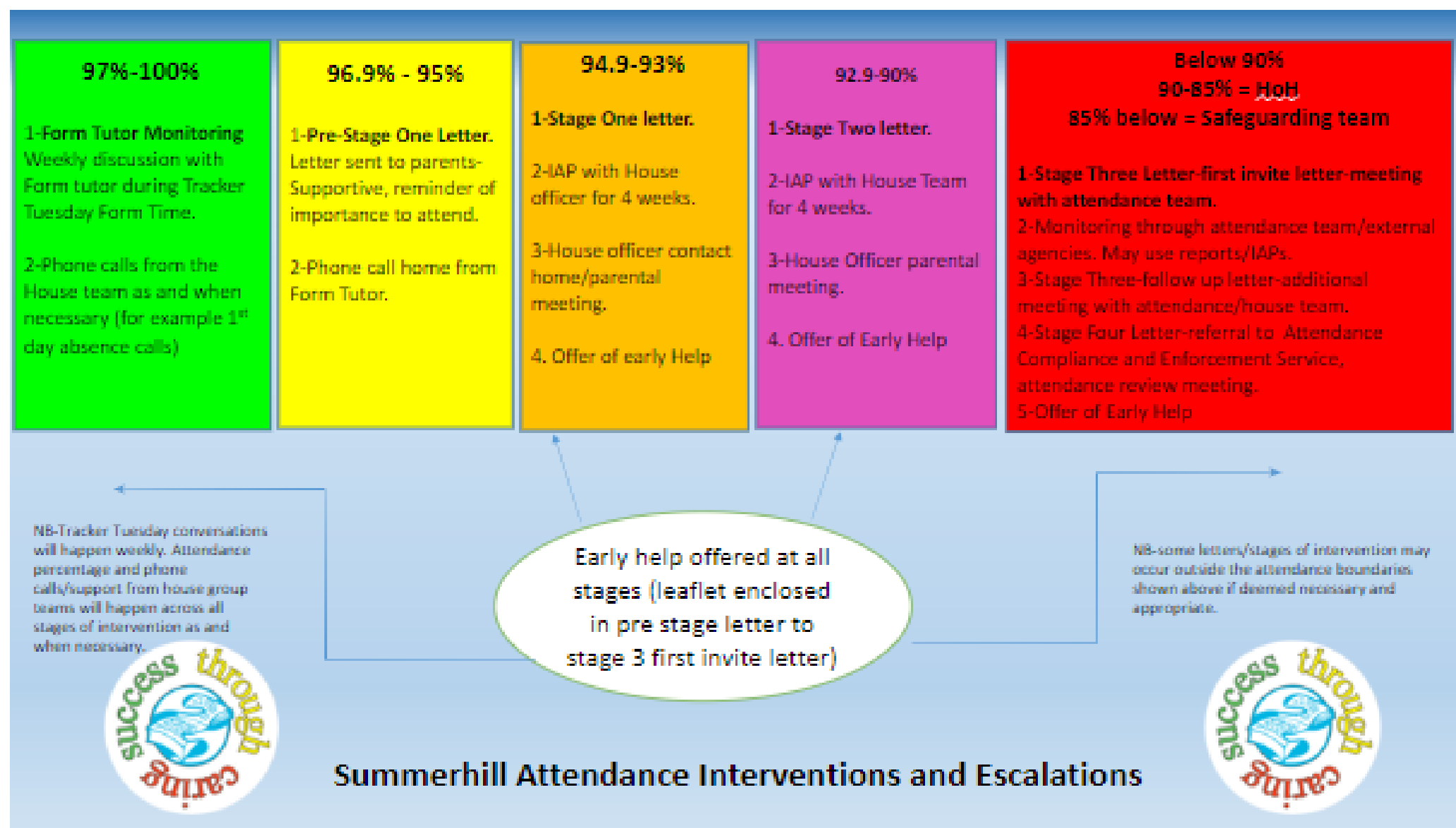
20. Relationship to other Policies

The Attendance policy should be read in conjunction with:

- i. Guidance on admissions (section on website)
- ii. Equality Objectives Policy
- iii. The Safeguarding Policy
- iv. The Behaviour Policy

At Summerhill School we welcome the support from parents/carers and families. We provide a safe and nurturing environment for your child to learn and make friends and parents/carers are welcomed in the School for a variety of events including celebration evenings. In order for our children to feel safe and secure it is important that when visiting the School, parents/carers and family members remain calm when speaking to staff and refrain from confrontational or aggressive behaviour as this can be unsettling. Appointments can be made with the Leadership team to discuss any concerns, any adults displaying behaviour which is deemed to be unacceptable will be asked to leave the School site.

Appendix A – Summary of attendance welfare procedures





Early Help... How can we help you?



At Summerhill School we take your child's happiness, wellbeing and mental health very seriously. We know there are many things that can influence your child's success, attendance and behaviour at school. We are here to help and this can come in many forms, from very informal day to day support in school, helping you to access community based services or a referral for you to obtain more structured family support. For example – a student that is anxious about attending school could come in early for breakfast and take some time out before school starts or we can arrange meetings with your child's pastoral team to offer support around any worries your child has academically or socially.

Sometimes we know things are more complex than this so we would work with you as a family to establish the best route we can to make family life and school life a little easier.

We work with both the Dudley Local Authority, the attendance team, pastoral team and teaching staff are all here to support your child and get the best possible outcomes from their time here at Summerhill School.

What is early help?

Extract from - <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/care-and-health/children-and-family-care/early-help-for-children-and-families/>

'Early Help is taking action early to provide support where problems are emerging for children, young people and their families. Early help support may be provided at any point in a child or young person's life. The sooner the family receives the support, the sooner they are able to improve their situation and prevent the need for prolonged support.'

Early Help is here to find out what is working well for families and what areas they might be worried about; it can help to build on families' strengths and identify any needs where support might be needed. It is an approach that brings people together from different teams and services who work together with the whole family. The main focus is to improve outcomes for children.'

The type of things that Early Help can support you with include:

- *Worries about your child's health development or behaviour*
- *You might be worried about how they are doing at school*
- *You might have worries about money or housing and how that is affecting you*
- *Your child and family may be affected by domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol, ill health or crime*

Early Help can give you the tools to solve challenges or problems you are experiencing with help from others where needed.

What exactly is available?

Sometimes children and their families might need some extra help, this might come from a range of different organisations, all working together.

An Early Help Assessment is a way of noting down what is going well in your family, what the worries are and what needs to happen to help things improve. Together we will then agree the best way to make this happen.

You might need help in one or more of the following areas:

- School, education or training
- Home and life relationships
- Health and emotional wellbeing
- Work, finances or housing
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Crime or anti-Social behaviour

Your child can speak to their form tutor, trusted teacher or pastoral staff at any time. As a parent/carer we encourage you to contact us at any time too.

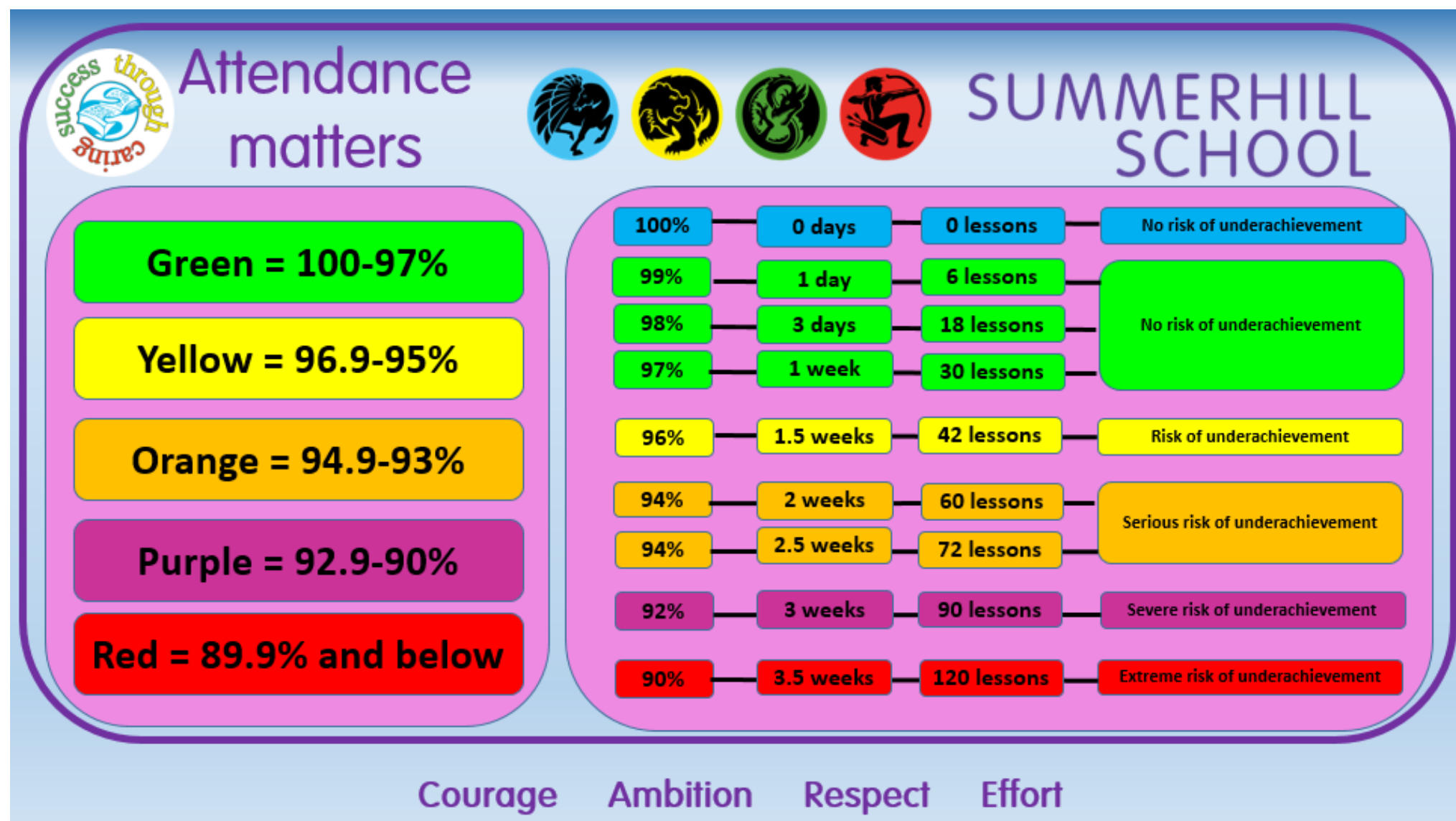
What will happen?

1. We will talk about what is going well in your family, what the worries are, and what needs to happen to improve the situation. This, with your consent will be written into the Early Help Assessment form.
2. Your support worker will get a team of people together, or make a plan of action to support your family.

Please get in touch with the school if you feel any form of early help may be useful to you your child or family.

The whole process will take a little time, and we can only do it with your permission.





Appendix D – Summerhill School Leave of absence form

Name of child/ children who require leave of absence :

Name: _____ Yr Grp _____ House _____

Name: _____ Yr Grp _____ House _____

Name: _____ Yr Grp _____ House _____

Dates of absence :

1st day _____ Last day _____

Total number of school days: _____

Reason for request:

(Please attach any supporting evidence/information and read the guidance overleaf)

Please state whether you have children at other schools:

Name: _____ Age _____ School _____

Name: _____ Age _____ School _____

Signed (Parent/Carer 1) _____ Printed Name _____

Date _____ Relationship to child/young person _____

Signed (Parent/Carer 1) _____ Printed Name _____

Date _____ Relationship to child/young person _____



Guidance – Leave in Term Time

In exceptional circumstances, when leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child or young person can be away from school.

Parents should not plan for their child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement. Requests for a planned leave of absence under exceptional circumstances should be made at least 15 school days in advance of the start date of the requested absence, by completing the Leave of Absence Request Form. The Headteacher cannot retrospectively authorise a planned absence.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Overlap with the beginning or end of a term or a half term

In deciding whether to allow parents/carers to take children out of school in term time, the Headteacher will consider factors such as:

- Purpose of absence
- Circumstances of the request
- Amount of time requested
- Nearness of examinations or tests
- Overall attendance record
- Any previous term time holiday absences

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not take children away in school time.

There is no entitlement in law to time off school during term time to go on holiday.

Support and guidance on attendance is always available if you have any questions about this, or if you need to help to achieve an improvement, then please contact the school to discuss this.

We advise that you do not plan for your child to be absent from school without gaining prior agreement from their school first. Headteachers cannot retrospectively authorise absence from school under any circumstance.