

CARDINAL HUME CATHOLIC SCHOOL.

ATTENDANCE POLICY.

Cardinal Hume Catholic School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all of its students and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all.

Evidence clearly shows that good attendance brings about improved performance in all areas of school life and has a major impact on the success of students throughout their lives. Good attendance also plays an important role in ensuring that our children are safe.

This policy has been drawn up with input from all areas of the school community and is based on current local authority guidelines and statutory regulations. It takes full account of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Pupil attendance targets.

The school sets a minimum attendance target of 95% over the school year. A pupil who is absent from school for nine days or less will achieve this target.

Schools Roles and Responsibilities.

All staff at Cardinal Hume Catholic School have a key role to play in promoting good attendance for our pupils and will work to provide an environment in which all our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

Categorising Absence.

Absences may be categorised as either authorised or unauthorised.

Absences will usually be authorised in the following circumstances;

- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupil has an urgent medical appointment.
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for absence which is beyond the family's control,
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/pupil's parent belong.
- Other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement).
- Leave of absence has been granted for an exceptional circumstance (see section on leave of absence during term time.)
- A pupil participating in an approved non educational activity.

Examples of absences which will not be authorised are;

- Where no explanation has been given by the parent.
- Where the school is not satisfied with the parental explanation.
- The child is on a family holiday without leave of absence being given.

- Staying at home to mind the house or a younger sibling.
- A shopping trip.
- An unexceptional reason e.g, a pupil's birthday.

The decision whether to authorise or not authorise absence will always rest with the school.

Leave of absence taken during term time.

Government regulations state that “ head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.” While leave of absence may be granted during term time it is entirely at the discretion of the head teacher and is not a parental right.

If a parent wishes to take their child out of school during term time they must apply in writing to the school. Please note the following;

- Parents should fill in an application form requesting leave of absence during term time. As much notice as possible should be given. Forms are available from school.
- The school will consider this request.
- The parent will be informed in writing whether or not the leave of absence has been granted.
- Reasons will be given if leave of absence is not granted.
- If the request is granted the absence from school will be authorised. (This will only be in exceptional circumstances.)
- If the leave of absence is not granted and the parent still takes their child out of school, the absence will not be authorised and the school may refer the matter to the local authority. In such cases a **penalty notice** may be issued by the local authority. This may involve a **fine** being issued.
- Failure to pay any such fine could lead to prosecution in a **Magistrates Court**.
- If a parent removes their child without requesting leave of absence, the school may have to apply to the local authority for a penalty notice to be issued.

Holidays taken in term time are not generally considered to be exceptional circumstances and will not usually be authorised.

Each request for leave of absence will be considered on its merits. The following factors may be taken into consideration;

- The child's stage of education and progress to date.
- The overall attendance pattern of the child.
- The nature of the planned absence.
- Rare and exceptional circumstances.

Punctuality.

The school puts high expectations on its pupils in terms of punctuality. Pupils are expected to be in school by 8.45am. Pupils who arrive in school between 8.45am and 9am should enter by the pupil entrance and will have their name taken in a late book. They should report to their tutor room to get their morning mark before going to period 1.

Pupils who arrive in school after 9am should enter school via the main reception where they should sign the late book. In the interests of safety it is essential that this procedure is followed.

Pupils who arrive in school after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session. This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil being late.

Pupils who are frequently late can expect;

- To be punished in the form of detentions.
- Letters to be sent to parents.
- Parents to be invited into school for interview if no improvement is made.

Post Registration Truancy.

Pupils who leave school without permission after the register has been taken are putting themselves at great risk. Any member of staff who witnesses a pupil leaving school in this way or who is suspicious about why a pupil is not in their lesson, should contact the school attendance officer immediately. The school will contact the parents of the pupil as soon as it is aware a pupil has left school without permission.

Procedures for parents to follow in the event of their child being absent from school.

If their child is going to be absent on a particular day we ask parents to phone the school before 8.30am on the morning of the absence and explain the reason behind the absence. If their child is not in school and no reason has been given by the parent, the school will send a text message on the morning of the absence asking for reasons why the child is not in school. It is very important that parents reply to this text so the school knows the whereabouts of the child. Parents are also asked to send in a note with their child on their return to school.

If the parent knows in advance that their child is not going to be in school, e.g due to a medical appointment which cannot be arranged out of school time, they should inform the school of this prior to the event by a note being sent into school via their child and handed into their tutor.

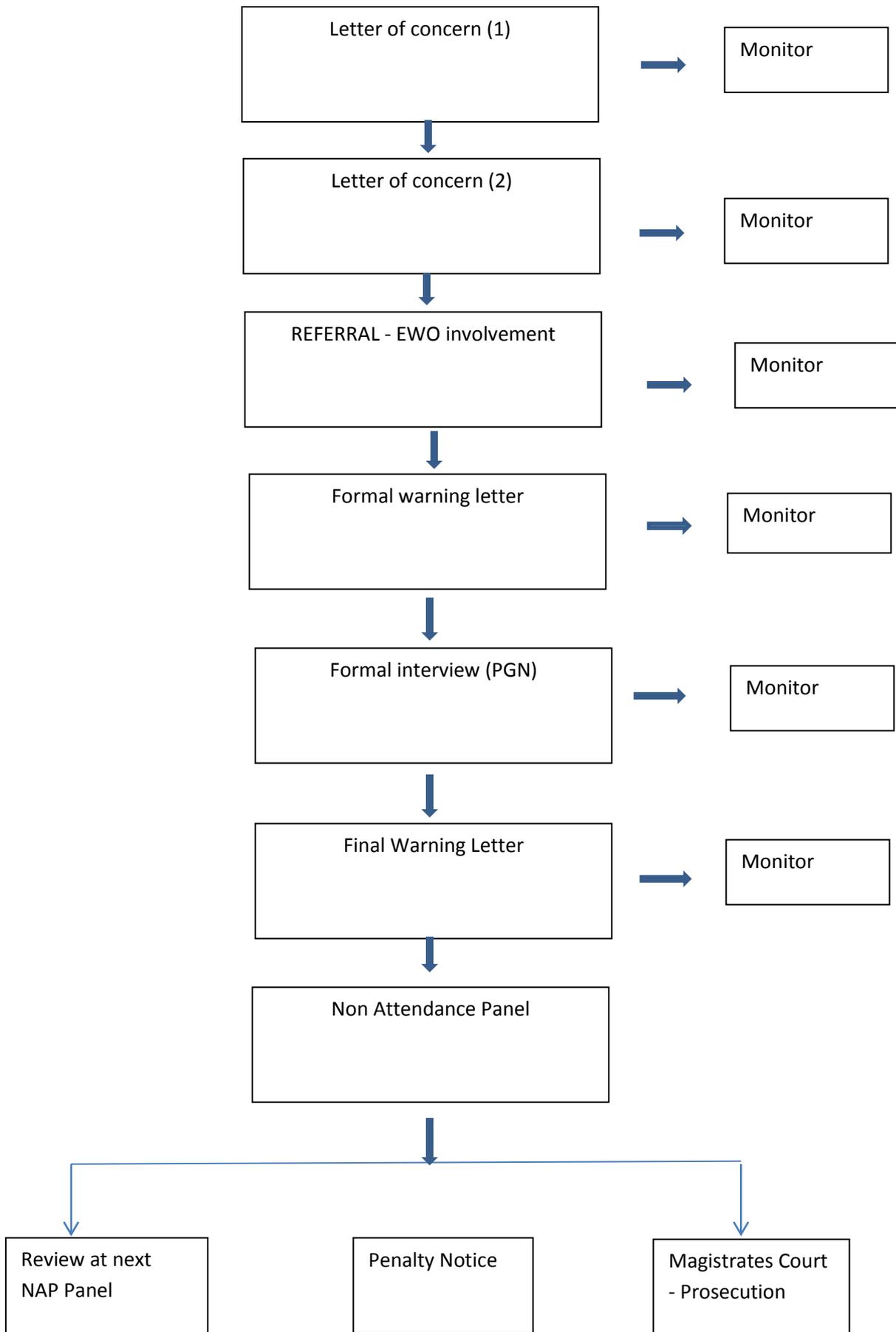
Pupils leaving the site during the school day.

There may be occasions when pupils have to leave the site during the school day, e.g non routine medical appointment (note must be provided), a child falling ill during the school day.

When this happens pupils should leave by the main reception and sign out on leaving. The appropriate information should be passed on immediately to the attendance officer by the member of staff at reception at the time.

Permission to leave the school site on such occasions should only be granted by the pupil's Head of House or a senior member of staff. Other than in exceptional circumstances, pupils will only be allowed to leave if accompanied by their parent or other authorised adult.

Non-Attendance Procedures



Persistent Absence.

Any pupil whose attendance is less than 85% is classed as being a persistent absentee. The school will monitor the attendance of pupils and every pupil whose attendance is less than 85% at the end of each half term will be put on the persistent absence register. Pupil who are still on this register at the end of May will have been absent for more than four weeks of the school year which is clearly unacceptable and will have a detrimental effect on their progress. Such pupils will have been identified via the school's attendance monitoring strategies.

Rewards.

We believe in rewarding pupils who have an excellent attendance record. Examples of some of the rewards we give are;

- Certificates for pupils who have 100% attendance for a term.
- Certificates for pupils with 100% attendance for the school year.
- Draws for vouchers/tokens for pupils with very good attendance over a given period.
- Certificates for pupils with much improved attendance.

Support.

There may be a range of reasons why a pupil may have attendance concerns. The school will offer relevant support to get to the bottom of any issues that affect attendance. Examples of support we can give may come from of some the following;

- School social worker
- School nurse
- Educational welfare officer (e.g home visits)
- School chaplain.
- Other relevant agencies to who we can refer.
- Pastoral mentors
- Peer group mentors.

P Garraghan.

Director of Attendance.