



Soham Village College

Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction

At Soham Village College we understand the importance of a student's attendance on their progress and emotional wellbeing. We monitor attendance and punctuality regularly and offer support through our pastoral system for any student who may find attending school a challenge.

Soham Village College aims to:

- ensure that every student, irrespective of their background or educational needs, has access to the education to which they are entitled.
- raise levels of achievement by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance, punctuality and involvement in the school.
- be proactive to address early patterns of absence.
- support students, and their families, so they can achieve an overall attendance above the national average.
- encourage parents to use the Go4Schools system to monitor their child's attendance.

2. Legal and National Context

The law regarding **regular attendance and punctuality**:

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents of a child of compulsory school age are under a legal duty to ensure that their children receives full-time education; and, that they have a legal duty to ensure the regular attendance and punctuality of that child at the school where they are a registered student. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) 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 school, fails without reasonable justification to cause them to attend (Education Act 1996, section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

The following guidance has been taken into consideration when developing this policy:

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance. August 2024.](#)

The school has a safeguarding duty of care to all its pupils. We take the role of ensuring a pupil's good attendance as part of our safeguarding duties.

The law regarding **term time leave (planned absences)**:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 was amended in September 2013. The amendments made clear that Headteachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless 'exceptional circumstances' exist.

To apply for an authorised leave of absence during term time, please complete the '*Term Time Leave Request Form*' which can be found on the school website:

www.sohamvc.org/attendance. This will then be reviewed by the Headteacher, or Senior Lead on Attendance (SLA) who acts on their behalf, and a decision will be made as to whether or not the leave should be authorised. We ask that parents/carers do not make travel arrangements before the planned absence has been authorised.

If unauthorised absences are recorded, a Penalty Notice Fine can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer in respect of each child who is absent from school. **If this is your first penalty notice, then the amount of the penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid within 22 to 28 days. If this is your second penalty notice since 19th August 2024, then the amount of the penalty is £160.** Failure to pay will result in legal proceedings being initiated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Please note if two Penalty Notices have been issued to a named parent in relation to the same child since the 19th August 2024 (over a 3-year period), then prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice fine being issued.

Should a child be absent for term time leave for an extended period during term time (20 days or more) not authorised by the school, prosecution in relation to Section 444 Education Act 1996, may also be considered.

Further guidance for families: When **sporting activities** are likely to be authorised:

Over recent years, the school has seen an upturn in the number of requests from families for students to be absent from school due to sports training camps and competitions. Although each case will be considered individually, we have created the following guidance to give an indication of the likely decision by the school when deciding to authorise or unauthorise the planned absence.

- up to 2 days of absence, due to a student taking part in a major sporting event or special training opportunity, will usually be authorised.
- 3 days or more of absence will usually only be authorised if it is for a major national or international competition, when the dates are set by a recognised governing body. Training camps, whether inside or outside the UK, are usually unauthorised as the dates could have been organised for during a school holiday.
- students attending a sporting event, who are not competing but wish to attend to support a competitor (e.g. sibling), will usually be unauthorised.

Soham Village College recognises the importance of parents/guardians understanding the legal duties surrounding education and what is expected when a child is on a school roll.

More information regarding this can be found at

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/school-attendance.

To translate the County Council information into another language, please scan the following code using a mobile camera. This will automatically translate into the language registered on the mobile phone;



3. Implementation

The school will:

- remind parents of the importance of ensuring their children's regular, uninterrupted school attendance.
- provide attendance data on the termly report and encourage parents to track weekly attendance via Go4Schools.
- ensure that school policy with regard to term-time leave is clearly stated on the school website and is regularly communicated to parents.
- actively discourage parents from arranging term time leave during term-time.
- inform parents that they do not have any right or entitlement to expect term-time leave to be granted and that all leave is granted at the discretion of the Headteacher (or those authorised to exercise discretion on their behalf).
- advise parents that if leave is taken without authorisation it will be recorded in the school attendance register as unauthorised absence.
- advise parents that non-attendance or absence that is unauthorised that is 90% or less could result in legal enforcement including Penalty Notices or prosecution.
- report on attendance to the Advisory Body members.

4. Promoting Attendance

The school uses opportunities as they arise to remind parents and students of the importance of attendance (e.g. parent information evenings). Attendance is also celebrated through assemblies, certificates and attendance awards. Students and parents are encouraged to use Go4Schools.

In addition, the following personnel have a key role in supporting good attendance.

4.1. Senior Lead on Attendance (SLA)

The SLA will:

- give attendance a high profile at staff briefings and school events.
- monitor whole school absence and persistent absence data and regularly update the Senior Leadership Team.
- meet with the Attendance Officer regularly to review attendance of students at the school and plan interventions for students causing concern. This process of 'regular monitoring' and the system of attendance support and intervention is outlined in Appendix D.
- communicate and support the implementation of these interventions with Year Heads and other stakeholders.
- be the Attendance Champion for our school.

4.2. Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer will:

- oversee administration of the Go4Schools system.
- scrutinise the registers daily, monitoring authorised/unauthorised absence and other reasons provided for pupil absence and lateness. keep parents informed of any unexplained absences before they become unauthorised.

- oversee administration of the 3-letter warning system.
- refer to the Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS) if a student fails to meet an Attendance Target set following an Attendance Contract Meeting.
- collate evidence that may be required by the Local Authority Attendance Service.
- streamline and adjust systems and procedures when necessary.
- liaise with other external organisations in relation to a pupil's attendance/lateness.
- monitor pupil attendance within specific and identified groups (LAC, Young Carers etc).
- monitor and respond to pupil absences for those with additional medical needs.
- monitor pupils and follow procedures for pupils who are 'Pupils Missing in Education'.
- follow reporting procedures for parents who have requested to home educate their child.
- follow statutory procedures when deleting a pupil from roll.
- monitor absences for illness and requests for leave to attend medical appointments.
- report pupils to the Local Authority when they have 10 consecutive 'O' coded (unauthorised absence) sessions in school.
- report pupils with unauthorised term-term leave absences (10 consecutive sessions of 'G' codes) to the Local Authority for issuing of a legal sanction to parents/carers.
- raise pupils with 15 consecutive days of 'I' (illness) codes during the fortnightly inclusion meeting with the school's Education Inclusion officer (EIO).
- support the work of the SLA, Year Heads and Form Tutors by:
 - providing regular attendance information
 - messaging parents/carers on 1st day of absence using IRIS Reach
 - telephone parents when there is no reply received from the IRIS Reach message
 - if the child is absent for 2 days and there is no reply from parents, a MyConcern entry will be completed
 - if the child is absent for 3 days and there is no reply from parents, a home visit will be considered
 - alerting the SLA, Year Heads, or other stakeholders when concerns arise
 - monitor Go4Schools to ensure accuracy of record keeping
 - keeping the SLA informed of inaccurate marking of staff registers as part of an alert system for staff who may not be maintaining accurate recording of registers.

4.3. Year Heads

Year Heads will:

- give attendance a high profile at assemblies and school events.
- monitor year group attendance.
- implement a system of rewards and sanctions.

- support Form Tutors on issues of non-attendance and with internal truancy, remedying causes and applying sanctions.
- review the weekly attendance intervention list generated by the Attendance Officer and SLA and complete any necessary actions within two weeks when possible.
- publish attendance data from Go4Schools in Head of Year weekly bulletins.
- lead on strategies to improve attendance of students who are identified as being a concern through meetings with students and parents.
- co-ordinate work packs when appropriate for excluded students and long-term absentees.
- support the implementation of beneficial 'school actions' identified during parent contract meetings.

4.4. Form Tutors

Form Tutors will:

- be a good role model for students.
- give attendance and punctuality a high profile.
- praise students for arriving on time.
- take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation, recording lateness and referring to Year Head.
- keep an accurate register.
- inform the Year Head and Attendance Officer when absence and/or punctuality is causing concern.

4.5. Class Teachers

Teachers will:

- praise students for their punctuality to lessons.
- maintain an accurate class register.
- alert the Attendance Officer if there are concerns over student absence.
- send a 'missing student' email if a student is missing from class but has previously been present that day.

4.6. Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- ensure that children leave for school on time every day.
- contact the school every morning a child is absent by 8.30am.
- endeavour not to take children out of school in term time.
- notify the school as soon as problems arise with their child's attendance/punctuality.
- students should attempt to come to school unless they are too unwell to complete basic tasks. Student Services will contact parents/carers if a student needs to return

home. A guide to whether your child is able to attend school with minor illnesses is here: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-call-the-doctor/when-to-call-the-doctor/when-to-call-the-doctor/).

4.7. Students

Students will:

- arrive in time for registration every morning at 8.30am and for afternoon registration as follows;
 - Years 9 - 11, afternoon register starts in period 4 at **12.20pm** and closes at **12.30pm**.
 - Years 7 & 8, afternoon register starts in period 4 at **1.00pm** and closes at **1.10pm**.
- attend appropriately prepared for the day
- be punctual for lessons.
- sign in at Reception if they are late arriving for school.
- sign out at Reception if they leave school during any part of the school day other than 3.00pm.
- tell their Form Tutor or Year Head if they are having any problems attending school.

4.8. Advisory Body Member for Attendance

- Monitor attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

5. The Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS)

- The school and LAAS always endeavour to work with students and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. They will provide support, information and guidance to school by having regular meetings to discuss attendance and will act as a partner with school to support in some cases of persistent absence.
- The LAAS also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance have failed, the LAAS can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court. The LAAS will also be able to identify suitable provision and reasonable adjustments for pupils unable to access education due to prolonged ill health.

6. The Attendance Team

- Attendance Officer
- Senior Lead on Attendance (SLA)
- Year Heads
- Mental Health Lead
- Healthcare Plan Co-ordinator
- Student Services team
- Advisory Body member for Attendance
- Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO)

- Education Inclusion Officer (EIO)

7. Support for Students and Parents

The school provides support for parents and students if they are struggling to attend school, including the following:

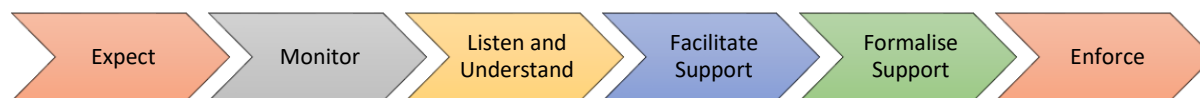
- Accurate attendance reports through Go4Schools, which parents/carers can check daily to ensure they are fully informed of their child's attendance record.
- Informal phone calls and meetings with appropriate staff members to discuss emerging/ongoing issues, with agreed 'school actions' that should help support attendance.
- When appropriate, the school can complete an Early Help Assessment (EHA) that may lead to local authority support, such as a Family Support Worker and/or Young People's Worker.
- We work together with Social Care to identify where pupils need extra support. We will work with families in many different ways to overcome barriers to attendance.
- When appropriate, the school can arrange an Individual Alternative Education Plan (IAEP) for a student. This can lead to a reduced timetable/curriculum if required to support attendance.
- For students with physical or mental health conditions that impact their school attendance, support may be offered to ensure their education is not disadvantaged. Further details of these systems can be found in the 'Supporting Students with Medical Conditions policy' and the 'Children with health needs who cannot attend school' policy available on the school website.
- For students who are Young Carers, we signpost families to appropriate places to reduce the impact that their needs and personal circumstances have on their attendance at school.
- We have a whole-school ethos of promoting and celebrating attendance. This means that we train every staff member in attendance procedures so that everyone understands the processes for attendance and the pastoral structures in school.
- Our whole-school strategy for attendance involves deciding how to allocate resources (both financial and staffing) to manage attendance. Our support and early interventions for attendance are regularly monitored to ensure they are having an impact and are worth the resources allocated to them.

8. Sanctions for Poor Attendance and Punctuality

The school reserves the right to use any of the following sanctions to fulfil its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Year Head detention.
- Subject department detention for punctuality.
- Use of Exclusion Room for truancy or consistent poor punctuality.
- Other, more serious sanctions, for repeated defiance of school rules.

As a school, we aim to work collaboratively with parents/carers to improve school attendance. This means that we will **listen, empathise and support with attendance**. However, if this is **unsuccessful, legal sanctions will be considered where appropriate**.



When required, support strategies with a monitoring period will be put in place to help improve the attendance or lateness of a pupil. Should a student's attendance or lateness continue to be a concern despite the support strategies in place, with no improvement to the expected level set by school, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team for statutory aged students. This could result in a Penalty Notice/fine, or prosecution being issued by Cambridgeshire County Council, as per section 444 Education Act 1996. This may result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison

Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS) involvement and referral:

- generally, the school will instigate at least 3 interventions, whose purpose is to improve a student's attendance, before referring the case to the LAAS (for example; an attendance phone call or email; a letter from the 3-letter system; an Attendance Contract Meeting).
- before referral to the LAAS, the school will offer the parent(s) an Attendance Contract Meeting in which school actions may be agreed, before an attendance target and monitoring period is set.
 - Follow the use of one of the two LAAS Attendance pathways, if attendance does not improve, school will refer to the Local Authority for legal sanctions. Please see Appendix E for the LAAS Attendance Contract flowchart.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 states that a parent commits an offence if their compulsory school age child who is a registered student fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school offering the parent the opportunity to enter into a parenting contract following a student's truancy or non-attendance, under section 19 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 states that a parent commits an offence if their compulsory school age child who is a registered student fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school instigating a Penalty Notice under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

- parenting orders, Education Supervision Orders or Penalty Notices can also be issued by the Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS).
- prosecution by the Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS).

9. Study Leave

Study leave is for GCSE examinations only and must be agreed between school and the parents/carers who the pupil normally lives with in advance. This does not include internal exams or mocks. Study leave will not be granted by default once tuition of the exam syllabus is complete and will be used sparingly. Provision will still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually. This review may be brought forward as required by the school to reflect changes in supporting advice/guidance.

Appendix A: Procedure for Reporting Absence at School

If a child is absent from school the following procedures are required to ensure the school is fully informed.

1.1. Short term absence

- The school's Attendance Officer is contacted by the parent on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk by 8.30am on every day that the student is absent.
- Information is provided, including the reason for absence, student name and form group.

1.2. Continued absence

- In the case of longer term absence, the Attendance Officer is informed so that appropriate support can be provided.

1.3. Ten days' absence

A student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a "request for a child missing from education investigation". This is a legal requirement. This can be done immediately if a student is vulnerable or open to Social Care. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us. During this 20-day period, school will continue to try and contact you, and will liaise with any other services that your child is open to. The Local Authority will conduct investigations into the location and educational provision of the child.

1.4. Twenty days' absence

- The school is permitted to take action if your child(ren) have been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than 20 school days and;
 - (i) at no time was the absence during that period authorised by the school in accordance with regulation 6 (2);
 - (ii) the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil(s) is/are unable to attend the school by reason of sickness, or any exceptional circumstance.
 - (iii) both the school and the local authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil(s) is/are.

1. If a child needs to be absent during the school day the following procedures are required

- The school attendance officer is contacted by the parent on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk to inform of reason for absence during the day, e.g. dental appointment.
- The student must sign out before they leave the school premises and sign in on their return.

2. School action in the case of student absence

- On the first day of absence, the Attendance Officer will use the 'IRIS Reach' text service to confirm absence with the parent if contact has not already been made.
- In the case of student attendance that is deemed 'at risk', the parent may be contacted by the school, by letter or phone, to discuss absence and actions for improving attendance.
- In the case of a student whose attendance is persistently below the 90% Persistent Absence (PA) level, the parents/carers may be contacted by the school and asked to attend a Parent Contract Meeting, where a formal attendance target and monitoring period will be set.

Appendix B: Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable at Soham Village College. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss vital work and information. Lateness is also disruptive to lessons.

1. The school day

The school starts with a form registration at **8.30am**. Any student who arrives after this time is registered as late.

Form registers are closed by **9.00am**. A student who is late after this time should sign in at Reception, where they will be given a mark to show they are on site. However, this will be counted as an unauthorised absence for the morning session (coded as 'U' on the register) unless they have a genuine reason for lateness **provided by the parent** i.e. illness, medical. 'U' unauthorised late codes will impact on a student's overall attendance level.

For Years 9 - 11, afternoon register starts in period 4 at **12.20pm** and closes at **12.30pm**.

For Years 7 & 8, afternoon register starts in period 4 at **1.00pm** and closes at **1.10pm**.

If a child arrives late to school, for example due to a dental appointment, a note from a parent/carers must accompany the child on their return when they sign in at Lodeside Reception. In this case the absence will be recorded as authorised. If the student does not have a note or a parent/carers hasn't messaged the school, this will be recorded as unauthorised.

2. Lesson monitor

Every lesson is registered through the school internal system. Teachers are expected to ensure that the register is taken as promptly as possible. The reason for this is to track punctuality and in-school truancy. It is essential that registers are recorded accurately, using the internal system. On the rare occasion that the register is not accessible on the system, a paper copy of the register should be used. In this case the teacher is expected to complete the register, not the students, and return it to the Attendance Officer, promptly.

If a student is late in arriving to lesson, the teacher will record lateness on the system. In this case, an N should be changed to an L.

The Year Head has the overview of punctuality and will follow up lateness with individual students, who will be expected to make up the time lost. In cases of persistent lateness, parents/carers will be contacted by the school to remind them of their legal obligation to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. If lateness fails to improve, then a formal attendance target and monitoring period may be put in place following a Parent Contract Meeting.

Appendix C: Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, either as authorised or unauthorised absence.

1. Authorised absences

Authorised absences are approved by the Year Head, SLA or Attendance Officer on behalf of the Head teacher. An example of an authorised absence that may be approved would be a student observing a religious event or a morning or afternoon away from school for a reason such as illness or medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall within the school day. We do ask that families organise medical/dental appointments outside of the school day whenever possible.

All absence must be communicated by direct communication with the Attendance Officer on 01353 724100 or email attendance@soham-college.org.uk

2. Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which permission has not been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- students who regularly arrive late, after registration has closed.
- truancy before or during the school day.
- unexplained absence.
- holidays/days off school.
- students staying off school for invalid reasons i.e. shopping, caring for siblings.

This type of absence can lead to the LAAS using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. The school reserve the right to unauthorise absence if given a reason to dispute authenticity of the reason provided, for example; the student has a history of truancy or unusual patterns of absence.

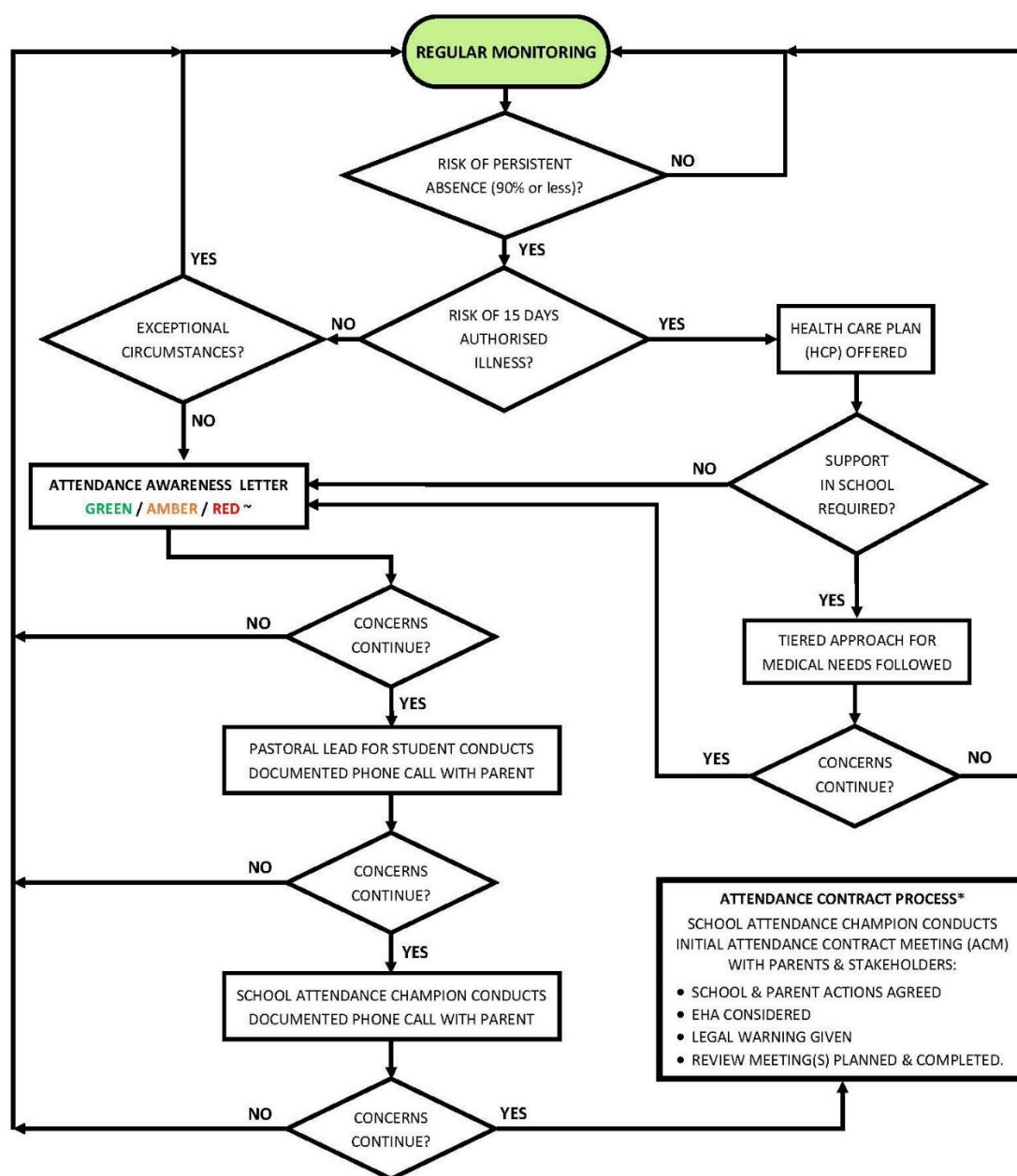
3. Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is likely to have a significant negative impact to a child's educational progress. The school monitors all absence thoroughly. If a child's absence is deemed to be 'at risk' of PA, the parent will be informed of this by the school.

Appendix D: Soham Village College Attendance System Flowchart

Although we would never wish for a parent/carer to face legal action, the school may need to refer a case to the Local Authority if a student has too many absences from school. This can result in a Penalty Notice or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of a child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**.

To avoid such action, Soham Village College attempts to support families and students who are finding regular attendance challenging. We follow an established system, that is approved by the Local Authority, to regularly monitor the attendance of all students and communicate with families if concerns arise. This is outlined in the flowchart below. Further details of certain stages can be found in associated school policies and upon request.



~ GREEN = Students with no history of persistent absence. AMBER = Students with a history of persistent absence (90% or less in previous academic year).
Red = Students with unauthorised absences in the current academic year.

* A flowchart outlining the Cambridgeshire County Council Attendance Contract Process can be found in Appendix E of the Soham Village College Attendance policy.

Appendix E: Local Authority Attendance Service (LAAS) Attendance Contract flowchart

