

Children's Services: Local Procedure Template

Local Procedure Title	Attendance
Service	Unsted Park School
ACS Policy number and title	ACS 61 Attendance
Local Procedure template reference	ACS LP 61
Local Procedure date	01/09/2024
Local Procedure review date	1/09/2025
Local Procedure Author(s)	Jamie Dowsett
Local Procedure Ratification	Checked and Approved by: Shane Kenny

1. Introduction

At Unsted Park School, we recognise the importance of regular and punctual school attendance for our students. Regular attendance is essential for pupils to fully engage with and benefit from the educational opportunities available to them by law. We are committed to ensuring that all our students are in school as often as possible, allowing them to access learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our attendance procedure applies to all children enrolled at Unsted Park School and is available to all parents and carers of registered pupils through our school website.

This procedure has been developed in line with the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations, and guidance from the Department for Education, as well as advice from the Local Authority. In addition, we follow the principles outlined in the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), which stresses the importance of attendance in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

While parents and carers have the legal responsibility to ensure their child's good attendance, our Head of Pastoral Care and Deputy Head Teacher work closely with other professionals and agencies to support pupils in developing positive attendance habits. We follow a clear set of procedures to promote and maintain good attendance, which also helps ensure that children are safe and protected within the school environment.

We also recognise that children who are persistently absent can quickly fall behind with their learning. Regular absence creates significant gaps in a child's education, which negatively affects their progress and ability to meet academic expectations. Furthermore, consistent absence may be an indicator of other welfare concerns, and we remain vigilant to safeguarding issues, as detailed in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

2. Section – Aims and Objectives

At Unsted Park School, this attendance procedure ensures that all staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in promoting good attendance and addressing attendance-related issues.

Through this procedure, we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 90% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos where good attendance is recognised as the norm and highly valued by the school.
- Raise awareness among parents, carers, and pupils about the importance of uninterrupted attendance throughout every stage of a child's education.

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- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, and staff so that all pupils can realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere where pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage a sense of responsibility among them.
- Establish a consistent approach to monitoring attendance, recognising achievements, and addressing attendance difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, particularly class teachers, in promoting and maintaining good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance by:

- Raising awareness of attendance issues among all staff, parents, and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents understand their responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Maintaining effective communication with parents, pupils, and staff on attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting, and reviewing cases of poor attendance.
- Supporting pupils who are facing difficulties at home or school that may be affecting their attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up on non-attendance and work towards resolving any issues.

By following this procedure, Unsted Park School aims to ensure that all our pupils can benefit from their full educational experience, fostering an environment where attendance is prioritised, and every child is supported in achieving their be

3. Section - Definitions

At Unsted Park School, we follow the guidance set out in the Department for Education (DfE) document *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (29 February 2024) to ensure clarity and consistency in how absences are managed and classified.

Authorised Absence:

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason, and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child is unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence, the absence will be considered authorised.

However, only the school has the authority to authorise an absence. Parents do not have the power to authorise an absence directly. Therefore, not all absences that are supported by parents will be classified as authorised, as the decision ultimately lies with the school, in line with the DfE guidance.

Unauthorised Absence:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. This includes cases where a child is absent without a valid reason, even if the absence is supported by a parent. According to the DfE guidelines, if a child is absent without a legitimate reason, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

This approach aligns with the principles outlined in *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (2024), ensuring that attendance procedures are transparent, and that both parents and carers understand their role in supporting consistent school attendance while respecting the authority of the school in making decisions about authorised and unauthorised absences.

4. Recording Attendance

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At Unsted Park School, we adhere to the statutory requirements outlined in the Department for Education's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (29 February 2024), ensuring that attendance is accurately recorded and managed in compliance with DfE guidance.

Electronic Attendance Register:

Unsted Park School uses an electronic reporting system to record attendance for all pupils. This system ensures that every pupil is placed on the attendance register and that attendance is recorded correctly at all times.

Attendance Registration Process:

In line with the DfE guidelines, attendance is taken at the start of the first session each school day and once during the afternoon session. During both sessions, we utilise the DfE attendance codes, marking whether each pupil is:

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

Amendments to the Attendance Register:

If any amendments are made to the attendance register, we ensure that:

- The original entry is recorded
- The amended entry is noted
- The reason for the amendment is clearly documented
- The date on which the amendment was made is specified
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment are included

Recording Absences and Attendance Status:

Unsted Park School also records whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised for all pupils of compulsory school age. We ensure the reasons for absence are clearly noted, and we track if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity. In cases where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, we document these details in the register.

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

To maintain appropriate registration processes - registers will be marked at the beginning of the morning session and during the afternoon session.

To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, parents and pupils;

To follow up absences if parents and carers have not communicated with the school;

To inform parents and carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;

To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time;

To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance;

All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headship Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance;

To use the correct coding for non-attendance.

School staff will be outside the school with Hi-Viz from 0830 in the morning registering students on the physical sign-in sheet. Any students not on the sheet when the list is handed to reception will be chased up as follows.

1. Check on Engage to see if signed in during tutor / period 1
2. If not on Engage to then call the pastoral team to ascertain if not in school

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3. If pastoral are not available, to call a member of SLT to check if the student is on the school property
4. If student cannot be found on site and no record of registering on site, reception to call home by mid-morning once checks have ascertained and a member of SLT has established the student is not on site.

5. Attendance Procedure

Our attendance procedure at **Unsted Park School** is as follows:

1. **Sign-In Process:** Staff sign students in from 8:45 AM as they arrive in taxis.
2. **Register Submission:** The printed register is then handed over to the receptionist.
3. **Data Entry:** The receptionist enters the attendance data into **Engage**, our record-keeping software. Data entry for morning registration is completed before 10 AM, and for afternoon registration, it is completed before 2 PM.
4. **Absence Tracking:** Any absences are automatically recorded in Engage. If any student's absence is unaccounted for, the receptionist follows up with a phone call to the parent before 10 AM for morning absences or before 2 PM for afternoon absences to confirm the reason.
5. **Class Attendance:** Attendance is taken for each class a student attends throughout the day. If a student is absent from a lesson, pastoral staff are contacted within 5 minutes to support in locating the student.
6. **Missing Persons Procedure:** If a student cannot be located after pastoral support, the school's **Missing Persons Procedure** is immediately followed to ensure the student's safety and well-being.
7. **Sign-In/Sign-Out During the School Day:** If a student needs to leave the site during the school day, they must sign in and out at reception. The receptionist ensures these times are recorded in **Engage** for accurate tracking.
8. **Absence Concerns:** If there are concerns regarding the reasons for a student's absence, these are promptly discussed with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
9. **Escalation to Local Authorities:** If attendance concerns persist or there are safeguarding issues, the school will contact the relevant local authority or MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) team for further support and investigation.

This procedure ensures that attendance is accurately recorded for both arrivals and classes throughout the school day, and that any concerns regarding absences are addressed promptly, with safeguarding and missing persons protocols in place at **Unsted Park School**.

6. Responsibilities

At **Unsted Park School**, all members of staff share responsibility for identifying and addressing trends in attendance. The following outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of individuals:

TUTORS

Tutors at **Unsted Park School** are responsible for:

- Keeping a register and maintaining an overview of class and individual attendance, with particular focus on identifying poor overall attendance, anomalies in attendance patterns, or unusual explanations for absences provided by students and their parents/carers.
- Contacting parents/carers regarding attendance concerns and discussing potential strategies to support the student in improving their attendance.
- Investigating and implementing strategies to support students with attendance issues, in collaboration with other staff and parents/carers.
- Informing the **Assistant Head Pastoral** or **Deputy Head Teacher** where concerns arise, and advising on any steps already taken.
- Providing background information to support referrals when necessary.

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- Monitoring the follow-up actions once interventions have been made to address attendance concerns.

ASSISTANT HEAD PASTORAL / DEPUTY HEAD PASTORAL

The **Assistant Head Pastoral** and **Deputy Head Pastoral** are responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of **Unsted Park School's** attendance trends, including patterns of authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Contacting families when concerns about attendance are raised, including arranging meetings to discuss and resolve attendance issues.
- Contacting local authorities where attendance concerns persist, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance when concerns have been raised by tutors or other staff members.
- Liaising with other professionals to identify any underlying issues affecting a student's attendance and to determine appropriate solutions.

RECEPTIONIST

The **Receptionist** at **Unsted Park School** is responsible for:

- Recording attendance data for all students on **Engage**, our record-keeping software.
- Following up on absences before **10 AM** for morning registration to ensure that all unexplained absences are addressed and the reason for absence is clarified.
- Updating **Engage** attendance records to ensure accurate documentation of actions taken regarding attendance concerns
- Informing the **Assistant Head Pastoral** or **Deputy Head Pastoral** of any attendance concerns or unresolved absences.

PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers of students at **Unsted Park School** are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child attends school regularly unless prevented by illness or a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of their child's absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments during school hours.
- Making requests for authorised absence during term time only if absolutely necessary, as these are not automatically authorised.
- Communicating with the school promptly if their child is reluctant to attend school, so that any potential issues can be identified and addressed quickly.

The Head Teacher/College Lead is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school/college
- Monitoring school/college level absence data and reporting concerns to governance
- Supporting colleagues with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Ensuring that key information pertaining to pupils absent data, and strategies that have worked/failed is passed onto new education providers when a pupil moves on

At **Unsted Park School**, these roles and responsibilities ensure a collaborative approach to managing attendance, addressing concerns early, and supporting students to maintain regular school attendance.

7. Communication with Parents and Homework during times of absence

At **Unsted Park School**, we understand that each student's situation is unique, particularly when they are unable to attend school due to emotional, mental health, or other personal challenges. As part of our commitment to supporting all students, we work closely with families to ensure that education continues during periods of absence, wherever possible. However, this approach

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is always taken with careful consideration of the student's well-being, as the primary goal is to support the student in a way that promotes both their mental health and academic progress.

Liaison with Families

When a student at Unsted Park is unable to attend school for any reason, we maintain open communication with their family. Regular check-ins with parents and carers help us understand the underlying reasons for the absence, and it allows us to develop a tailored plan to support the student during this time. This partnership is vital, as parents and carers are often the first to identify changes in their child's emotional state, and their insights are crucial in determining the best approach.

Work Sent Home

In some cases, it may be appropriate to send work home to ensure that the student remains engaged with their education and does not fall behind. This work can be carefully designed to suit the student's current academic level, providing continuity without overwhelming them. The work might include tasks that are aligned with what the student would have been learning in class, enabling them to keep up with their studies.

However, this is not always the case. **Sending work home is not a one-size-fits-all solution** and depends on several factors, including:

- **The Reason for Absence:** If the absence is related to emotional distress or mental health issues, sending academic work home may exacerbate the student's anxiety or stress, potentially hindering their recovery. In these instances, the priority is often on supporting their emotional well-being before focusing on academics.
- **Student's Current State of Well-being:** If the student is experiencing significant emotional or psychological distress, the expectation to complete academic tasks could feel overwhelming, creating additional pressure. For some students, receiving schoolwork during a period of heightened anxiety can contribute to feelings of inadequacy or failure.
- **Nature of the Absence:** If the student is absent due to temporary illness, such as a mild physical condition or a short-term issue, academic work may be sent home with the aim of keeping the student engaged. However, if the absence is related to more serious emotional or psychological challenges, work may be deferred in favour of a more gradual approach.

Consideration of Well-being

At Unsted Park, we place significant importance on the emotional and psychological health of our students. When determining whether to send work home, we carefully assess the **potential impact on the student's mental health**. If the decision is made that sending work home could be detrimental to their well-being, we may focus instead on providing emotional support and counselling. Our priority is always to ensure that the student's return to school is managed in a way that respects their individual needs.

In situations where work is not immediately sent home, the school will often focus on offering other forms of educational support, such as:

1. **Alternative Learning Approaches:** These might include more flexible learning methods that don't require traditional classroom work, such as interactive activities or online learning platforms, which can be used when the student feels ready.
2. **Therapeutic Support:** Many of our students benefit from therapy or counselling sessions that can help them manage the underlying issues contributing to their absence. This therapeutic support helps them gradually rebuild confidence and emotional resilience, which is crucial for reintegrating into school life.

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3. **Reduced Workload:** In some cases, the school may reduce the workload temporarily to avoid overwhelming the student, allowing them time to focus on their emotional recovery. This approach allows the student to return to their studies without feeling pressured.
4. **Gradual Reintegration:** If a student is ready to return to school but not quite ready for a full academic workload, Unsted Park offers a **gradual reintegration plan**, which might involve partial school days or flexible hours. This allows the student to ease back into the school routine at a pace that feels comfortable and manageable for them.

Collaboration and Flexibility

Throughout this process, **collaboration with families is essential**. We understand that each child and family has unique needs and circumstances, so we are committed to being flexible in our approach. This might involve ongoing discussions about the most suitable academic and emotional support for the student during their absence and upon their return.

In cases where work is sent home, we ensure that the workload is manageable, and we continue to provide **regular check-ins** to monitor progress. For some students, it may be more beneficial to focus on recovery and emotional support first, before reintroducing academic work at a pace that suits the student's needs.

8. Attendance Concerns

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the Deputy Head Teacher to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. Initially, concerns about attendance are raised with parents via a phone call. There will be opportunities for the parent and carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance.

9. Monitoring Attendance

Attendance monitoring is an essential part of ensuring students are present and engaged in their education. The process you've described involves a multi-layered approach where different methods are used to track, review, and address student attendance. Here's how each element functions in practice:

1. Daily Absence Reviews

Daily absence reviews typically involve a close look at student attendance data on a day-to-day basis. This is often conducted by administrative staff or attendance officers who check for any students who were absent or tardy. Here's how it works:

- **Absence Recording:** Every student's attendance is recorded in a system or log, which immediately tracks if they were absent or present.
- **Immediate Follow-up:** If a student is absent, a follow-up process usually occurs, such as contacting the student's guardian to confirm the reason for the absence.
- **Flagging:** Any patterns or unusual occurrences (e.g., multiple consecutive days of absence or unexplained absences) are flagged for further investigation. This helps in identifying any underlying issues affecting attendance.

2. Weekly Attendance Tracking

Weekly attendance tracking involves reviewing student attendance over the course of a week to observe patterns and trends. This often occurs in the following manner:

- **Weekly Review:** At the end of each week, a summary report is generated that shows the attendance for each student over the past week. This is reviewed by SLT.
- **Data Analysis:** A deeper dive is made into students who may have higher-than-average absenteeism or who have missed several classes. These students can be flagged for further attention.

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- **Communication:** Teachers, therapy or SLT may communicate with parents or guardians to discuss attendance trends or concerns. This is often done via phone calls, emails, or meetings.

3. Students of Concern Discussed in Safeguarding or Therapy Meetings

When a student's attendance becomes a recurring issue or a concern, especially if it's linked to emotional, mental, or behavioural challenges, the student is typically discussed in safeguarding or therapy meetings.

- **Safeguarding Meetings:** They discuss students whose attendance is a red flag for potential safeguarding issues, such as neglect, abuse, or mental health struggles. During these meetings, the team assesses whether additional interventions are necessary (e.g., referrals to outside services, extra support in school, etc.).
- **Therapy Meetings:** If a student's absence is connected to mental health or behavioural issues, therapy meetings may take place involving school therapists, counselors, and possibly the student's family. These meetings focus on identifying the root causes of absenteeism, which may include anxiety, depression, trauma, or other mental health concerns. A plan of action is then created to support the student and address barriers to regular attendance.
- **Action Plans:** A coordinated plan is developed in both safeguarding and therapy settings, which may involve school-based interventions, referral to external agencies, or specific accommodations for the student to address their needs and improve attendance.

In summary, this layered approach ensures that student attendance is closely monitored from a daily to weekly basis, with a system in place to identify and intervene when attendance issues arise. The discussions in safeguarding or therapy meetings ensure that underlying personal or familial issues affecting attendance are addressed in a comprehensive, supportive manner.

10. Absences Informing the School)

Parents and carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents and carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. Preferably before 9am.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head Teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

11. SEND and EBSNA

At **Unsted Park School**, the support for students experiencing **Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)** is tailored to address the unique emotional, psychological, and behavioural challenges that these students face. EBSNA is a term used to describe difficulties in attending school due to emotional reasons, such as anxiety, stress, and feeling overwhelmed. Unsted Park is particularly well-positioned to provide individualised support for students affected by EBSNA due to its specialised nature and focus on addressing the emotional well-being of young people.

What is EBSNA?

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) can lead to long periods of school absence, with children and young people experiencing heightened anxiety or distress about attending school. At Unsted Park, we understand that this is different from physical illness or truancy, and that the young person's distress can often occur despite their desire to return to school.

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For students at Unsted Park School, EBSNA support plans are designed to create a structured and understanding environment, where students feel safe and supported to gradually reintegrate into school life. Our focus is on providing emotional and psychological support to help manage the anxiety and stress that contributes to school avoidance.

Signs of EBSNA at Unsted Park

At Unsted Park School, our staff are trained to spot the signs of EBSNA early, allowing us to intervene in a timely manner and provide the support necessary to help the child re-engage with their education. The behaviours exhibited by students with EBSNA can vary, but parents and carers have reported the following signs:

- **Frequently feeling unwell** (e.g., stomach aches, headaches)
- **Separation anxiety** (difficulty leaving home or caregivers)
- **Frequent minor absences** (patterns of frequent, unexplained absence)
- **Tearfulness and irritability** (emotional outbursts or difficulty controlling emotions)
- **Sleep difficulties** (trouble sleeping or nightmares)
- **Emotional volatility** (mood swings or heightened emotional responses)
- **Lack of appetite** (changes in eating habits)
- **Friendship issues** (difficulty socialising or feeling left out)
- **Changes in personality** (withdrawal, loss of interest in activities)
- **Poor academic attainment** (struggling to keep up with schoolwork)

These behaviours are often interconnected and may signal that a student at Unsted Park is struggling with EBSNA. Our staff work closely with families to identify these signs and develop strategies to address the emotional and mental health needs of the student.

The Impact of EBSNA on Children

The impact of EBSNA on a student at Unsted Park can be profound, affecting both academic progress and social development. Students experiencing EBSNA may face:

- **Poor academic attainment:** Absenteeism or difficulty engaging with the curriculum can impact learning and academic success.
- **Reduced social opportunities:** School absence limits students' opportunities to form friendships and develop social skills.
- **Limited employment opportunities:** Persistent absenteeism can affect a student's future prospects by creating gaps in their education.
- **Association with poor mental health in adulthood:** EBSNA can contribute to ongoing mental health challenges if not addressed effectively.

At Unsted Park, we aim to minimise these negative impacts by providing a supportive environment and focusing on the emotional and psychological well-being of each student. We take a personalised approach to help students manage their anxiety and re-engage with their learning.

How Unsted Park Supports Students with EBSNA

Unsted Park School uses **EBSNA support plans** that are specifically tailored to each student's individual needs. These plans are collaborative, involving students, families, and staff, to create a supportive framework that helps the student gradually return to school in a way that is manageable for them.

Strategies for EBSNA Support at Unsted Park:

1. **Personalised Support Plans:** Each student with EBSNA receives a personalised support plan that takes into account their specific emotional challenges, triggers, and needs.

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2. **Gradual Reintegration:** We work closely with families to establish a phased return to school, which may involve flexible attendance, reduced hours, or alternative methods of engagement at first, until the student feels ready to reintegrate fully.
3. **Therapeutic Support:** Many students with EBSNA benefit from therapeutic support. At Unsted Park, we offer counselling and therapy options to help students address underlying emotional issues such as anxiety or trauma.
4. **Specialist Staff:** Our staff are trained to recognise the signs of EBSNA and to provide a calm, supportive environment where students can feel comfortable and understood.
5. **Frequent Check-ins:** We maintain open communication with families to monitor the student's progress and adjust the support plan as needed. This includes regular check-ins and updates to ensure that the student's needs are being met.
6. **Holistic Approach:** We recognise that EBSNA is complex and requires a holistic approach. Alongside emotional support, we also focus on the student's academic progress, social integration, and life skills development to ensure they thrive both in and outside of school.

Family and External Support

Unsted Park also understands the importance of engaging with external services when necessary. We work with a range of agencies, including mental health professionals, social services, and other community organisations, to ensure that students and their families receive the support they need.

PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school must

- Alert parents early on with the school's concerns
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence,
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school,
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

If the school is unhappy with the reasons provided by parents or if the school is unable to contact parents, then the DSL will be informed. The DSL will consult with the head teacher and a decision will be made to escalate to local authorities or LA safeguarding services.

Unsted Park school will liaise with families to ensure work is sent home and education is offered. This is dependent on the reason for absence and takes into consideration the students well-being. There are times when sending work home may be detrimental to a student's well-being. Refer to section 7. **Communication with Parents and Homework during times of absence**

Unsted Park school will notify the Local Authority of any pupils who are regularly absent from school, have irregular attendance, or have missed 10 school days or more without the school's permission.

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Local Procedure Review History:

Date Reviewed	Reviewer	Summary of revisions
8/7/24	Jamie Dowsett	Deputy Head teacher / Pastoral to responsibilities. Included SEND and EBSNA Changed Integris to Engage Persistent absence added
7/11/24	Jamie Dowsett	Detailed examples of procedure and responsibilities / work sent home explained