



Wrexham CBC School's Attendance Policy

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Introduction

WCBC is committed to ensuring that regular attendance at school is a priority which will in turn provide pupils with the best possible chances in life to succeed and to achieve their goals.

This attendance policy is intended to set out an over-arching statement of appropriate protocols and practices relating to the management of and promotion of school attendance in Wrexham.

This policy template should be read alongside the Wrexham CBC School's Attendance Guidance document which details strategies to improve attendance and contains all template attendance letters. All appendices are included in the guidance document.

Legal Framework

The law outlining attendance is:

The Education Act 1996 which places a legal obligation on:

- the local authority to provide and enforce attendance.
- school to register attendance and notify the local authority of a child's absence.

Section 7 of the above act states that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

Section 444 further states that:

'The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law'.

School Attendance Orders (SAO):

Under the Education Act 1996 section 437- 443 a School Attendance Order applies when a parent of compulsory school age fails to prove that the child is receiving a suitable education and where the authority believes the child should attend school. A School Attendance Order may be used to direct a parent to send their child to a specified school, and should be used when a pupil is not on roll at any school.

The Education (Penalty Notice) Wales Regulations 2013:

This legislation came into force in September 2014 and has given local authorities new powers to issue fixed penalty notices (FPN). A code of conduct has been agreed by Wrexham County Borough Council on the issuing of the FPN which allows Head Teachers to apply for a £60 FPN when they have recorded.

- Minimum of 10 unauthorised absences in the current term which do not have to be consecutive.
- Minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after the close of registration.

- Parents/carers who chose to take their children out of school on holiday during term time without authorisation from the Head teacher for a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions.
- Pupil regularly coming into contact with the North Wales Police or other partners during school hours without a justified reason and where absence is recorded as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers failing to engage with school/ESW but where prosecution has not been instigated.

The Head Teacher will inform the parent by letter that a request for a fixed penalty notice will be completed and sent to the Education Lead (Formerly Education Social Worker Team Manager) for the local authority. The Education Lead will consider the request, taking into account levels of absence, level of parental engagement, any equality implications, history of attendance and also any statement of special educational needs before issuing a FPN of £60.

A penalty notice is £60 if paid within 28 days in receipt of the notice, increasing to £120 if not paid within 28 days. If payment is not received by 42 days then the local authority can prosecute parents for the child's absence.

For further information please see the WCBC website www.wrexham.gov.uk.

Rights of the Child – UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 28 says that “State Parties recognise the right of children to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity”

Article 29 focuses on the aims of education and says that governments agree that “the education of the child shall be directed to:

- The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilisations different from his or her own.
- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.
- The development of respect for the natural environment.

Definitions

Compulsory school age – under section 8 of the Education Act 1996, children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday. A

young person ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have achieved their 16th birthday.

Parents' are defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as:

- All natural parents whether married or not.
- Any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and any person, who although not a natural parent has care of a child or young person.

Role and responsibilities:

Role of Head Teacher/ Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance:

- To be responsible for overall management and implementation of this policy ensuring it is accessible for stakeholders.
- To ensure the collection of accurate statistical data and develop efficient monitoring and evaluation systems.
- To report routinely to the school's governing body.
- Set attendance targets with the SIA's and governors.
- To introduce whole school and individual pupil strategies to promote regular attendance.
- To use discretion when receiving applications for holiday requests and to provide reasons to parents.
- Work closely with the Local Authority's Education Support Manager and nominated school ESW, and other support services such as Health Team, Counsellors and Social Services.
- To notify the local authority when a 'child is missing education' and follow the local authority's CME procedures.
- Ensure pupils are referred to the Education Social Worker when required.
- Support with any legal action brought as required, including either attending in person or nominating a senior member of staff to attend court as a witness in a trial if called.

Governing Body:

- Review and approve the attendance policy as necessary.
- Receive reports from the Head Teacher on a routine basis.
- Ensure a lead governor for attendance is appointed.

Class Teacher/Form Tutors:

- To carry out the statutory role of completing attendance registers twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010. The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately.
- Ensure absences are accounted for by ways of a note provided by parents.
- Follow up unaccounted reasons for absence and concerns raised to the Head of Year.
- To continue to raise the profile of attendance to all pupils.
- Contact attendance administrator with any queries and to employ SIMS messages so that communication is clear.
- Mentoring of pupils with low attendance, having regular discussions with the pupils and parents. Highlighting any issues identified with the Schools Attendance Administrator and Line manager with responsibility for attendance.

Pupils:

- Attend regularly and arrive on time to each lesson.
- Inform school staff if there is any issue which may prevent regular or punctual attendance at school.
- To work with school staff and the ESW service to address any issues preventing punctual and regular attendance at school.

Parents:

- Ensure a good home routine is in place to prepare their child for the following school day (for example promoting a good bedtime routine, uniform ready, school bag packed and an early start in the morning including breakfast).
- To ensure their children attends school regularly and punctually.
- To notify the school if their child is unable to attend, on the first day of absence and regularly thereafter. Provide evidence for absences if requested. For example proof of medical appointments, dated prescriptions or a letter from a recognised medical service explaining periods of absence.
- To work with school and partner agencies to address any issues of irregular attendance of their children.

Attendance Administrator: (It is recommended that schools utilise one designated person to manage registers and SIMS management).

- To record absences and late arrivals.
- To contact parent/carer if a pupil is absent to confirm the reasons for absence if the school have not been informed.

- To send out attendance letters.
- To work closely with Education Social Worker and support staff in school.
- To work closely with Senior leader with responsibility for attendance or Head Teacher and produce reports as required.
- To ensure transfer of CTF of pupils are completed in a timely manner and pupils are not removed from roll unnecessarily.

Education Social Work Service

- To complete visits to families and provide support in accordance with the process documented in the All Wales Attendance Framework.
- Facilitate Attendance improvement plans.
- Enforcing the Local Authorities statutory duties in relation to school attendance and taking legal action where appropriate. It is WCBC policy to prosecute all unpaid Fixed Penalty Notices. However the ESW does not take this action lightly and will endeavour to work and support parents, schools and pupils to improve attendance levels until all of these avenues have proved to be ineffective.
- The ESW service has the strategic responsibility for the writing and implementation of policies, operational procedures and codes of conduct in relation to school attendance.
- Will provide support and challenge to schools and families through analysing attendance data and targeting resources as appropriate.
- The ESW team are centrally based and schools referral via the ESW referral form.

Keeping school registers

The school's register is a legal document and under The Education (pupil registration) (Wales) regulations 2010 the school is required to keep an accurate record of attendance. Registers need to be marked twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Registers may be needed in a court of law if deemed appropriate.

Schools Information Management System (SIMS) is used in all schools across WCBC to record all pupils' attendance.

By the end of the school week the schools overall attendance registers will be completed and an overall attendance figure will be calculated by the school.

Types of absences

It is important for parents to understand the definition of the different types of absences. Absences may be classed as either unauthorised absence or authorised absence.

The schools Head Teacher is the only person that should decide on whether an absence should be classed in either one of these categories, parents cannot.

Absences may be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness.
- Religious observance.
- Medical/Dental appointments during school hours.
- Fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- Holiday agreed by the Head Teacher.

Examples of what are classified as unauthorised absence are the following, however they are not limited: Absences may be unauthorised for the following reasons:

- Truancy.
- Late after the close of registration.
- Staying at home for no reason – condoned absence.
- Going shopping.
- Birthdays.
- Holiday not agreed by the Head Teacher.

In addition there are several codes classed as a present mark which include the following:

- Late before the close of register.
- Educated off site, pupils attending vocational courses at college/pupils attending alternative provision agreed by school.
- Sporting activity.
- Educational visit.
- Traveller absence.
- Interview.
- Work experience.
- Where pupils are on roll at school and also at another education establishment.

Appendix 1 details a breakdown of codes set by Welsh Government.

Punctuality

Punctuality is a legal requirement and pupils must attend on time. A Fixed Penalty Notice or a Prosecution can be sought in cases where persistent lateness after registers have closed are recorded as an unauthorised absence. Persistent lateness has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and also disrupts other pupils within the class and throughout the school.

Those parents of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the Class Teacher/Head of Year/Senior Management Team. All pupils who are late must sign the 'late book' in school or the lateness must be recorded on SIMS by school staff and the pupil must enter through the main doors of the school.

Medical absences

Where a child is continually absent from school on the grounds of medical reasons, it will be required for the parent to provide medical evidence (e.g. certificate or letter from recognised medical service) to school. This will be initiated by the school and the ESW which will result in the pupil and family receiving the appropriate support to assist and to ensure the pupil is attending school regularly. A referral may be made to the Community Paediatrician for assessment in cases of persistent absences due to illness or medical issues. There may be times where a reintegration / Attendance Improvement Plan may be necessary which will be a partnership agreement between the family, pupil, ESW service and school.

Holidays during term time

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school during the school term for a holiday. Under the Education (pupil registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, Head Teachers have discretion to authorise a holiday of up to 10 days during term time, more than 10 days can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

The Local Authority recommends that no holidays are authorised in term time unless for exceptional circumstances.

All requests for holidays must be completed on the schools holiday request form and completed by the parents/guardians. (See Appendix 2 for model form).

The Head Teacher will make the decision and may include the following contributory factors:

- Time of year.
- Length of time.
- Overall percentage of attendance.
- Impact on the child's learning.
- Whether the holiday meets the criteria for an exceptional circumstance and adequate proof has been provided.

Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances

- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays. This must be supported by documentation from the organisation.
- Service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- To attend religious festivals or services such as the wedding or funeral of an immediate family member. Proof may be requested
- Other compassionate circumstances e.g. family illness or family crisis. Proof may be requested.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issues. Evidence must be provided from a qualified professional such as a doctor.
- Where there are other factors which the Head teacher may consider exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the Local Authority for advice.
- It should be noted that financial consideration are not deemed exceptional circumstances.

School procedures

Parents are expected to contact school on the first day of absence and to provide reasons for their child's absence. This will then need to be followed up by an explanation note that should be handed into the class teacher/form tutor and which will be kept on record by school.

If parents fail to notify school, then the school will make every effort to contact the parents and also other persons listed as a point of contact. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no reason for the absence is provided within two weeks. Failure to receive any contact on the third day of absence may result in the involvement of the ESW Service.

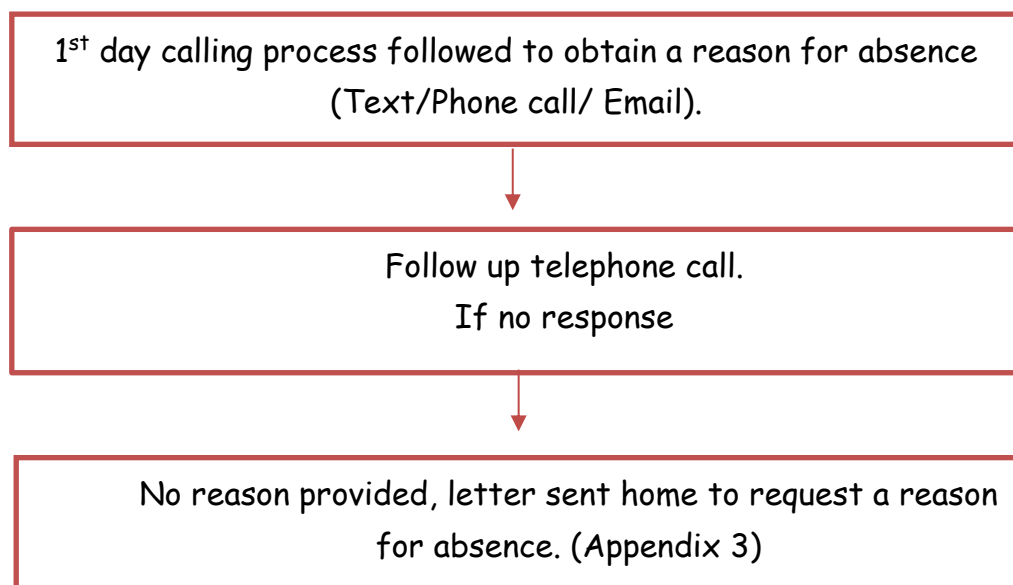
Children Missing Education

Schools have a duty to safeguard all pupils. The Education & Inspections Act 2006, requires the Local Authority to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing within WCBC who are not receiving an education. For example these may be pupils who have not attended school for an excessive amount of time without any contact or reason for the absence. The duty lies with the Local Authority to investigate further. The Common Transfer File will be sent to the forwarding school once they have been notified.

Pupils should not be removed from the school register until the pupil has been admitted to another school/ PRU or until the CME document has been completed and recorded by the LA.

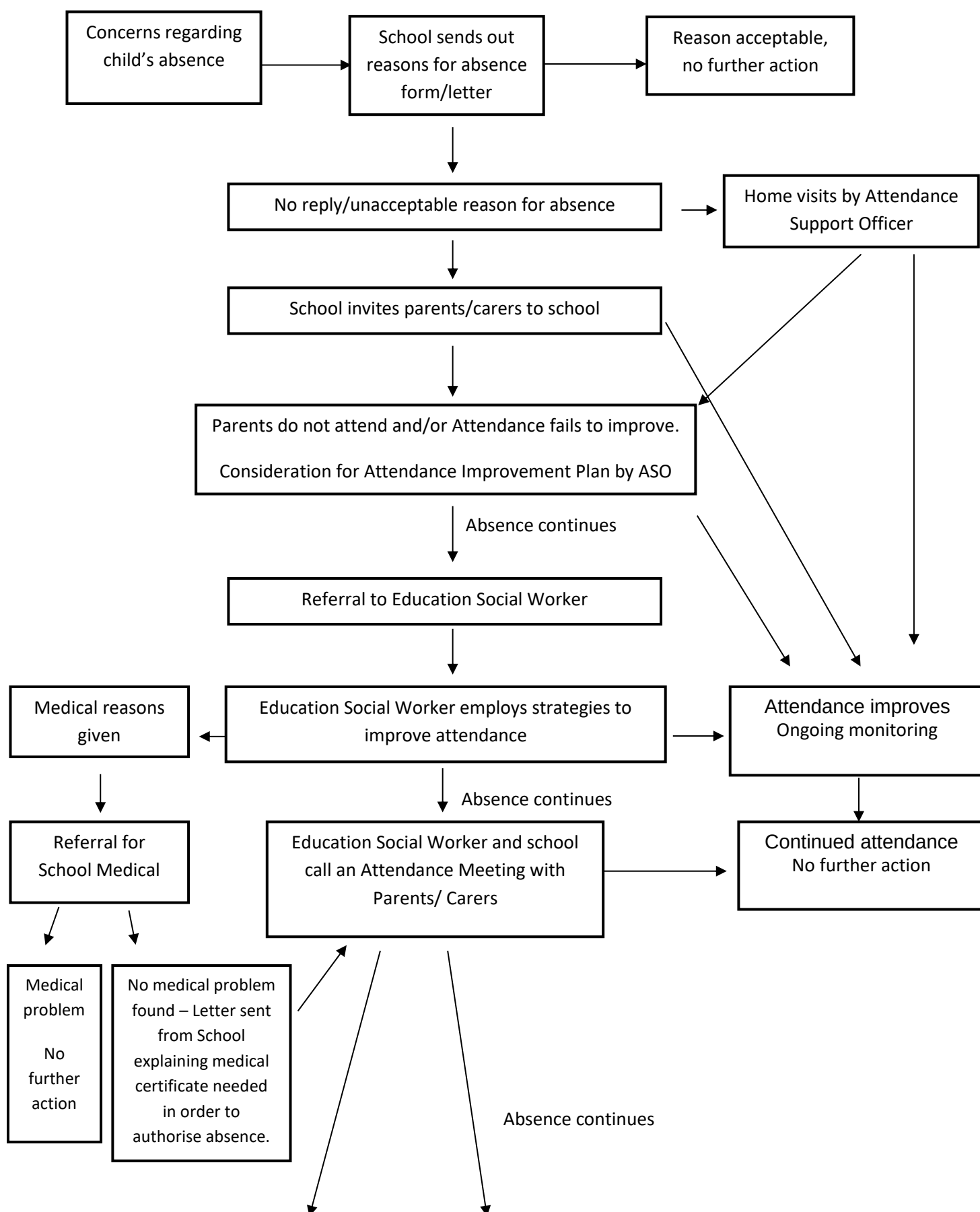
For further information either email cme@wrexham.gov.uk or visit www.wrexham.gov.uk (CME document).

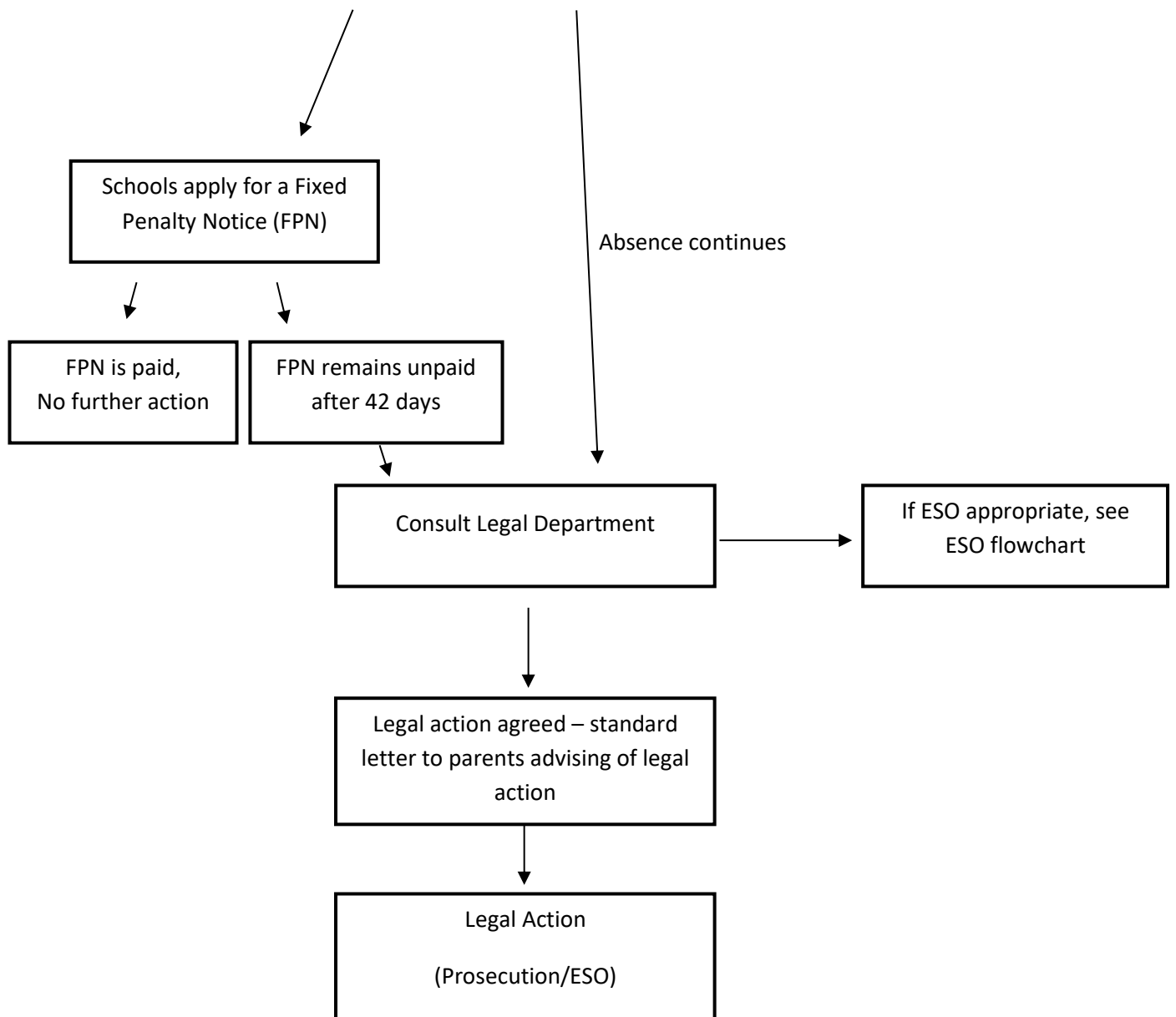
Wrexham Attendance Procedure:



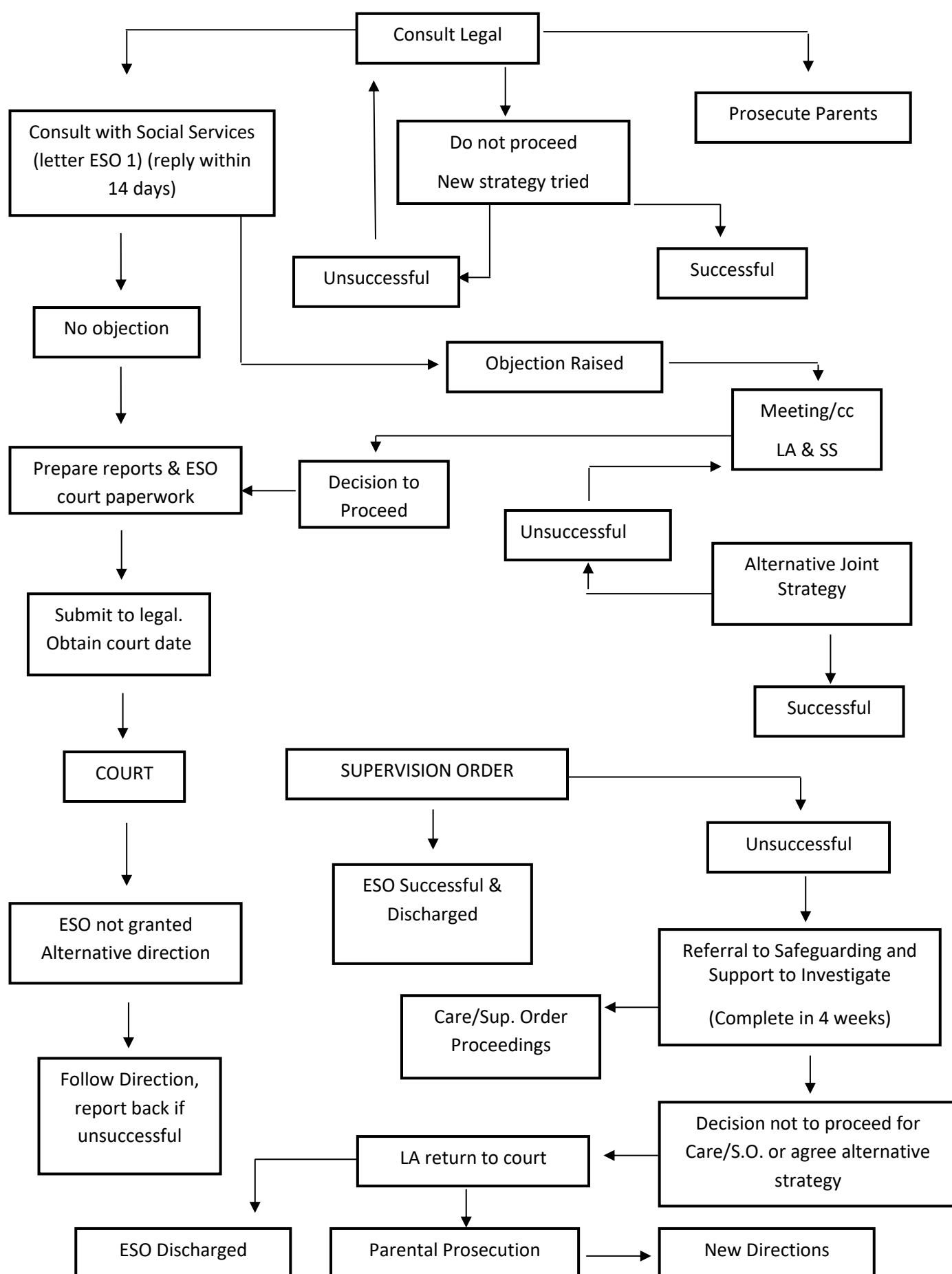
- Once a pupil hits **10 sessions** absence whether authorised or unauthorised **Attendance Letter 1** to be sent (appendix 4).
- Once a pupil hits **16 sessions** absence whether authorised or unauthorised **Attendance letter 2** to be sent (appendix 5).
- Once a pupil hits **22 sessions** absence authorised or unauthorised a **phone call** is made to the parent/carer by a member of school staff to discuss the attendance concerns. This should be Head of Year or person with responsibility for attendance in school. Record of conversation is kept (appendix 6).
- Once a pupil hits **26 sessions** absence whether authorised or unauthorised **Attendance letter 3** to be sent. This requests medical proof for all future absences to be authorised (appendix 7).
- Once a pupils hits **26 sessions Unauthorised** absence, a letter is sent arranging a meeting with the parent/carer, School representative and Education Social Worker for an attendance meeting to take place (appendix 8). Referral to ESW made to attend meeting (appendix 11). Consideration to be given to attendance improvement strategies, including the introduction of an Attendance Improvement Plan.
- If attendance continues to deteriorate, consideration to be given to implementing legal action – FPN or Prosecution depending on attendance history, level of absence and past compliance.

Procedures for Non-Attendance





Application for Education Supervision Order (ESO)



Flowchart -Fixed Penalty Notice.

