Forrester High School

Promoting Attendance and Managing Absence

(March 2023:

Updated October 2023)

Procedure and Practice

This document identifies and summarises the key processes in place to record, monitor and improve on attendance at Forrester High School. This document will be key to practice across the school and of particular relevance to Senior Leadership, Office and Pupil Support staff. It highlights the following key areas:

- Aims and Targets
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Procedures
- Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Managing Absence
- Monitoring and Evaluation

'Attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school.' *(Included, Engaged and Involved, Part 1: attendance in Scottish Schools)*

1. Aims and Targets

As an inclusive school, we aim to foster a good climate for learning and to promote attainment and achievement through enabling all learners to engage fully with the curriculum in school. Regular attendance is essential in achieving this. We recognise that a range of factors can create barriers to attendance for some young people. We work in partnership with young people, their families and partner services to promote, support and maintain a high level of attendance for all our young people.

We prioritise attendance across the community through several key actions:

- The Pupil Support Officer monitors the attendance of all young people, ensuring timely responses to emerging concerns, and providing support for young people and their families where required.
- We promote the importance of regular attendance across the Learning Community through our communications with staff, pupils and home, and through appropriate social media outlets (see appendix 5).
- We have processes, detailed throughout this document, to better track and monitor absences, late-coming and truancy. All staff have a role to play within this process.
- We utilise time available in Daily Morning Tutor to ensure that reporting and recording of absences improves.
- We follow our procedures for following up on unexplained absences to ensure more accurate records and to improve overall attendance statistics.

1. Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Improving attendance is a CEC and whole-school priority. Partnership working and effective communication with all stakeholders will increase the likelihood of a collective approach positively impacting on our overall attendance as a school.

Parental responsibilities

- The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parent. Once a child/young person is enrolled at an authority school the law states that the child must attend school unless permission has been given by the authority to withdraw the child / young person from school

'Parents should be encouraged to consider their own role and responsibility in motivating pupils to attend school.' *(Included, Engaged and Involved, Part 1: attendance in Scottish Schools)*

CEC Attendance Policy identifies the role of the school as follows:

School

- Recording in Seemis the attendance of individual pupils on a period by period basis. This ensures a high level of safe-guarding and will help identify pupils who are absent from classes throughout the school day, allowing appropriate action to be taken at the earliest opportunity.

- Maintaining attendance records for all pupils enrolled at the school on behalf of the Director of Communities and Families; these records to be of sufficient accuracy and detail to enable the publication of data required by the SEED, via ScotXed data transfer, and for legal action to be taken where necessary.

- Monitoring attendance of individual pupils at the school. Working collaboratively through our GIRFEC framework with Education Welfare Service and other agencies in improving attendance and preventing patterns of non-attendance from developing.

Forrester High School fulfils this requirement through clearly identified roles and responsibilities as detailed below:

Class Teacher:

- Take a register on Seemis within the first 10 minutes of the lessons
- Use codes TBC or Present - Teaching staff should not override anything already in SEEMIS
- Report anomalies to office staff
- Monitor attendance in classes
- Follow up on class absence when pupil returns e.g. check in on learning at home, update pupil on work missed, provide work to support pupil in catching up
- In liaison with the Curricular Leader, follow up on period truancy within class
- Liaise with support staff in school to support attainment for pupils who are unable to attend (Pupil Support Leaders, Senior Development Officer, Support for Learning)
- In the case of exclusion or long-term absence, teaching staff may be asked to provide class work for a pupil to complete at home

Curricular Leader:

- Ensure staff in faculty can access and use Seemis appropriately
- Support class teachers to follow up on period truancy within faculty

- Support staff and pupils in the faculty to ensure an appropriate level of attainment is reached for pupils who are unable to attend

Daily Morning Tutors

- Take a register on Seemis
- When a pupil returns from absence, follow up on TBCs on register e.g. remind the pupil that a note/phonecall is required and pursue this over the week with regular reminders.
- Pass absence notes to the office for processing
- Inform PSL of absences of more than three days

Office Staff

- Retain responsibility for day-to-day management of Seemis: managing the pupil absence and recording appropriate codes for absence on Seemis
- Robust monitoring of period-by-period attendance.
- Communicate all unexplained absences home through GroupCall.

Pupil Support Officer – Attendance and Family Liaison

- Develop positive working relationships with identified young people with attendance below 90%, and their families, to support access to and attendance at school e.g. through visiting the home or supporting the journey to school.
- Develop plans to re-integrate young people and to support their learning and attainment e.g. through reviewing their timetable, arranging soft starts and the ReConnect programme.
- Alert relevant senior staff in school to patterns and on-going issues and engage their supports or refer onto them as appropriate.
- Maintain good communication with office to support day-to-day Seemis record keeping.
- Support well-being focused interventions through activities such as LIAM, ReConnect and Green Team.
- Signpost families to additional supports.
- Liaise with Educational Welfare Service according to their protocols.

Pupil Support Leaders

- Liaise with and support PSO in working with families and planning supports for pupils whose attendance falls below 90% without satisfactory reasons.
- Liaise with teaching staff and, in S3 – 6, the Senior Development Officer, to ensure pupils who are on medium to long-term absence are supported in attainment at home and on their return to school.
- Collaborate with families, PSO and EWS to develop plans which reintegrate young people into school following absence.
- Support PSO, House Heads, Curricular Leaders and class teachers in addressing patterns of period-by-period truancy.
- Alert office staff to planned absences and/or changes to timetables which require recording on Seemis.

CEC partners will support Forrester High School as follows:

Education Welfare responsibilities

- The Education Welfare Service will work with schools and families to identify and address emerging attendance concerns. The welfare officer has a key role in linking between home and school to assist in re-engaging the child and parent/carer with school. The Education Welfare Service will support schools and the local authority in investigating children missing from education. The welfare officer reports to and attends Attendance Committees and meetings with the Children's Panel. The work of Education Welfare will focus on young people whose attendance is below 85%.

Communities and Families

- Reviewing and maintaining a procedure and overall framework for the promotion of attendance at school. Establishing an overall framework of Area Attendance Advisory Groups for the consideration of cases of persistent non-attendance at school which advise the Chief Education Officer of any action required to be taken.
- Monitoring levels of attendance at schools. Publishing data on school attendance and school leaver destinations as required by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Taking legal action where necessary in cases of persistent non-attendance at school
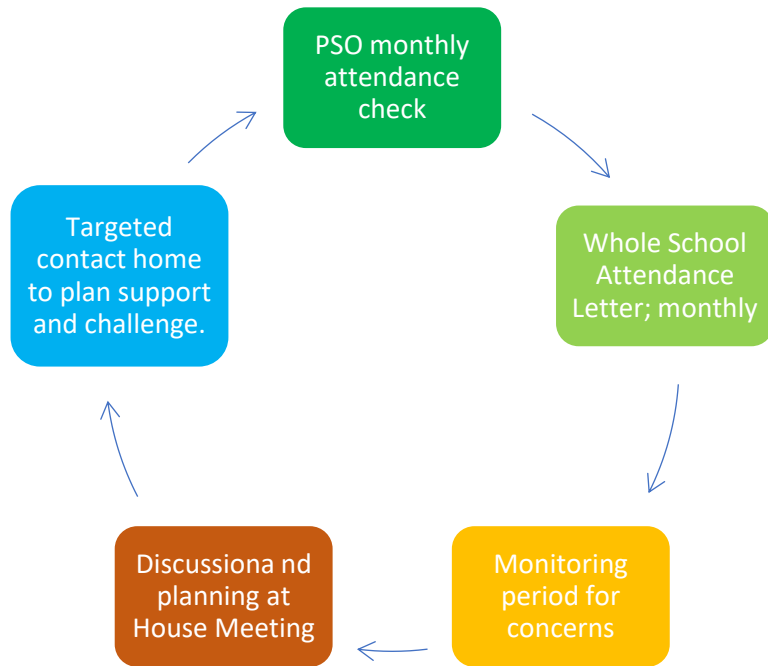
2. Procedures

The flowcharts below summarise the procedures used at key points and make clear who is responsible for each action.

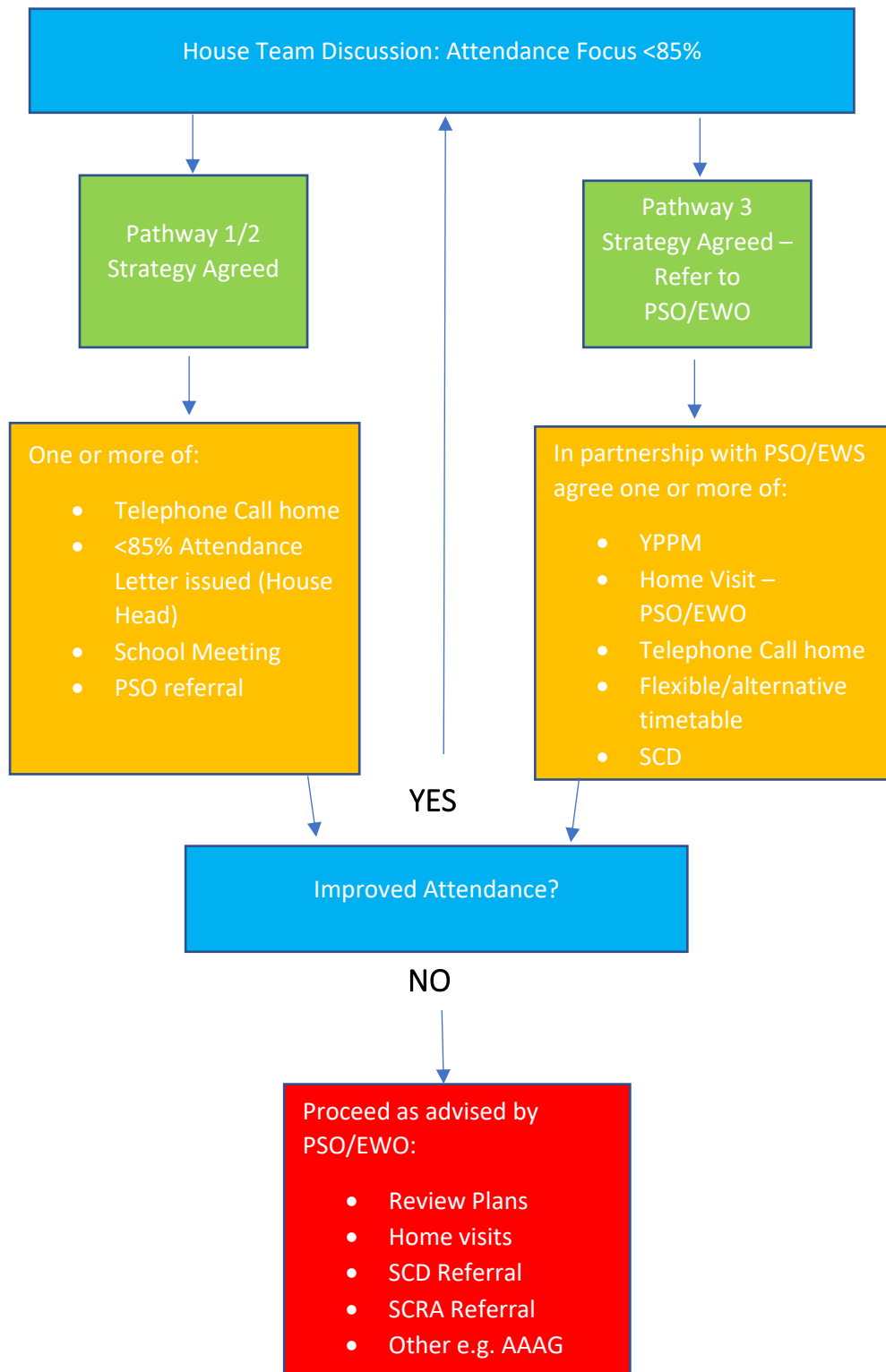### Monitoring Period by Period Attendance – Office to lead
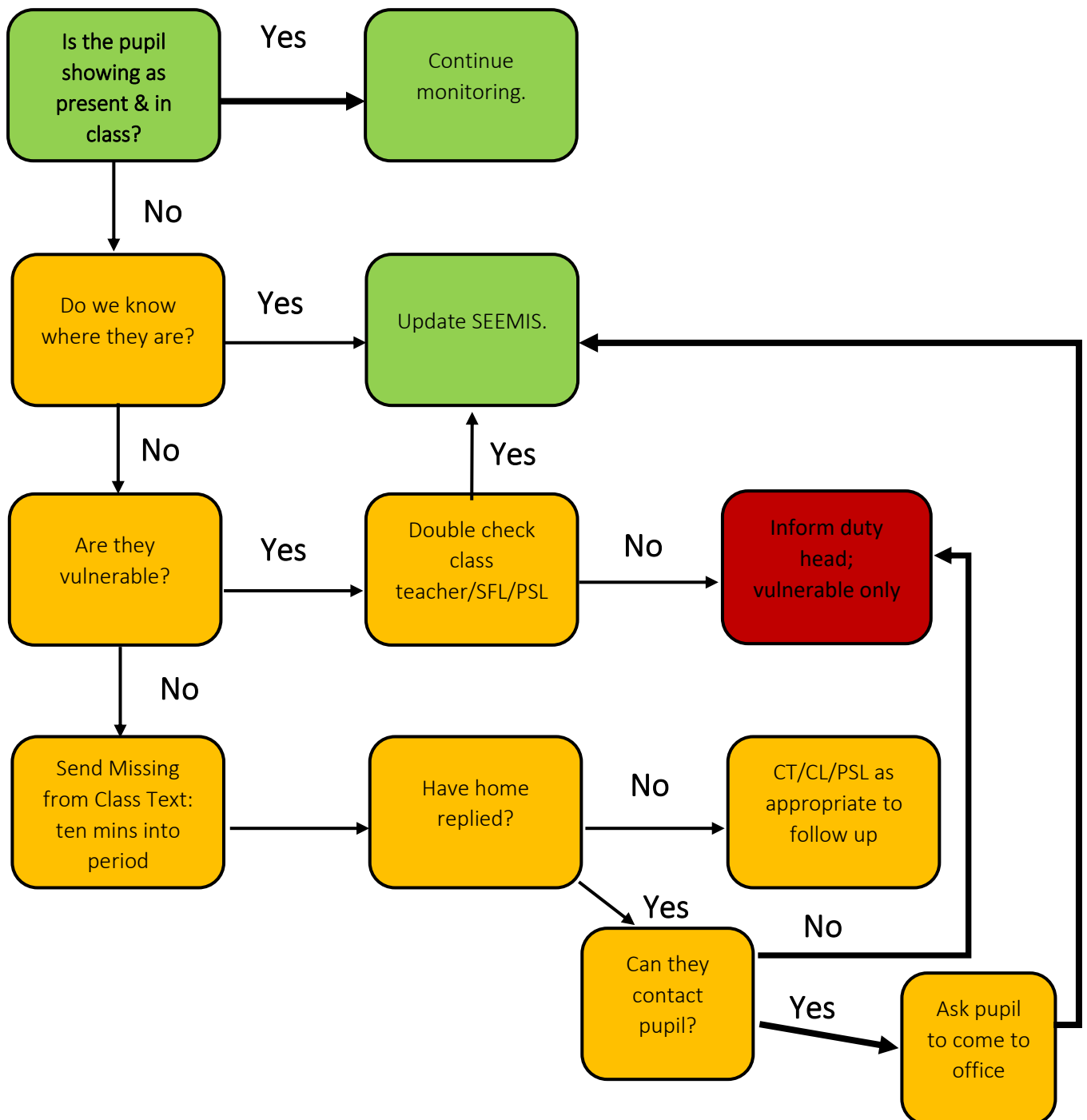
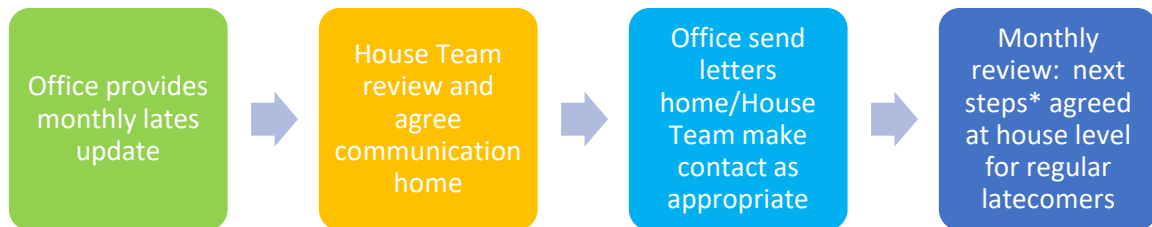# Stage 1: Monitoring Attendance Below 90% - House Teams to Lead

(See Appendix 1: whole school attendance letter/email)

Stage 2: Monitoring Attendance Below 85% - PSL/PSO to Lead

House Team Discussion: Attendance Focus <85%

Pathway 1/2
Strategy Agreed

Pathway 3
Strategy Agreed –
Refer to
PSO/EWO

One or more of:

- Telephone Call home
- <85% Attendance Letter issued (House Head)
- School Meeting
- PSO referral

In partnership with PSO/EWS agree one or more of:

- YPPM
- Home Visit – PSO/EWO
- Telephone Call home
- Flexible/alternative timetable
- SCD

YES

Improved Attendance?

NO

Proceed as advised by PSO/EWO:

- Review Plans
- Home visits
- SCD Referral
- SCRA Referral
- Other e.g. AAAG

(See Appendix 2: Below 85% House Head Letter/Email)

Monitoring and improving late-coming

| Office provides monthly lates update | → | House Team review and agree communication home | → | Office send letters home/House Team make contact as appropriate | → | Monthly review: next steps* agreed at house level for regular latecomers |

* Next steps may include a Home-School meeting, implementing processes to make up lost learning at another time, a review of timetable/curriculum as appropriate to year stage or other as appropriate to the individual.

(See Appendices 3 & 4, Lates Letter/Email PSL and Lates Letter/Email House Head)

3. Strategies for promoting attendance and managing absence

Care must be taken to acknowledge circumstances outwith a young person's control which may affect attendance. Consideration must be given to ensuring that these young people do not feel penalised.

Reintegration

The school will access a range of supports to help young people to improve their attendance. These include but are not limited to:

- Soft Starts
- ReConnect
- Well-being Hub
- Flexible Timetables
- Alternative Curriculum
- ASL Team Support
- EPS Support
- Counselling
- Referral to partner agencies e.g. CAMHS

Building Relationships

Forrester High School actively promotes relationships through excellent learning and teaching, promotion of equalities across the community, and restorative, solution focused approaches to resolving difficulties. We work in partnership with families and the Team Around the Child to ensure appropriate, timely and effective support for all young people and we encourage young people and families to work with us in ensuring the best possible outcomes for their child.

Where relationships encounter difficulty, the work of the PSO Attendance and Family Liaison is key to bridging the gap. The PSO will support families to work in collaboration with the school and will support the school in understanding individual needs and barriers.

A Community Approach

We actively promote the importance of attendance and the responsibilities of individuals and groups across the Learning Community. Using shared visuals, through DMT, SE, Twitter and the Head Teacher's Update, we share information regarding the impact of days missed at school and actively encourage young people to take ownership of their learning during and post-absence. We work with all families to improve reporting of absence on a day to day basis alongside our work with those who are not attending well.

Curriculum

All staff continue to develop appropriate and engaging curricular opportunities in and out of the classroom to ensure all pupils have opportunities for success. Development of the curriculum in S3, in particular, aims to tackle the reduction in attendance at this stage.

<u>APPENDICES</u>

<u>Appendix 1: Monthly Update Letter</u>

Dear Parent/Carer,

Monthly Attendance Update

This report provides you with an overview of _____'s attendance for this session. We are also sharing with you details of their timekeeping from the start of the session. While we understand that there are times when lateness and/or absence are unavoidable, we also want to support all young people to develop habits which will support them in life beyond school. Additionally, both absence and late-coming result in missed learning which can prevent young people from achieving their potential.   The attached infographic might be helpful in explaining the impact of the attendance percentage in terms of days missed.

If necessary, please discuss the information below with your child and contact us if you have any questions or would like support to improve their attendance. Please do remember to call the school if your child is unavoidably absent or late.

Yours sincerely,

Forrester High School

<u>Appendix 2: Below 85% House Head Letter/Email</u>

Dear Parent/Carer,

Attendance Concern

I am writing to alert you to the fact that _____'s attendance is currently _____%. I am aware that you have previously received communication from their Pupil Support Leader regarding this. We are very concerned at the impact this low attendance is having on _____'s attainment in progress in school and seek your support in addressing this.

Please note that, as this is an ongoing concern, we will also seek advice from the Educational Welfare Service.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me directly.

Yours faithfully,

<u>Appendix 3: Lates Letter/Email (PSL)</u>

Dear Parent/Carer,

Late-Coming

We note from our records that your child has been late to school on _____ occasions over the past month.

As you will be aware, by arriving late to school your child is missing out on valuable lesson time. They are also causing disruption to the learning of others by entering the class when the teaching has started.

Good time-keeping is also an important skill to develop for the future and one which employers, college and universities expect to see demonstrated through school.

We write to seek your support in ensuring that your child arrives at school on time each day. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact your child's Pupil Support Leader directly.

Yours faithfully,

<u>Appendix 4: Lates Letter/Email (House Head)</u>

Dear Parent/Carer,

Persistent Late-coming

I am aware that your child's Pupil Support Leader contacted you previously as _____ had been late to school on a number of occasions. I am disappointed to inform you that _____ has again been late to school on several occasions, as shown in the attached attendance summary.

We would appreciate your support in ensuring that your child arrives in school. We will also speak with your child to put in place strategies which both support and challenge your child to improve this vital skill.
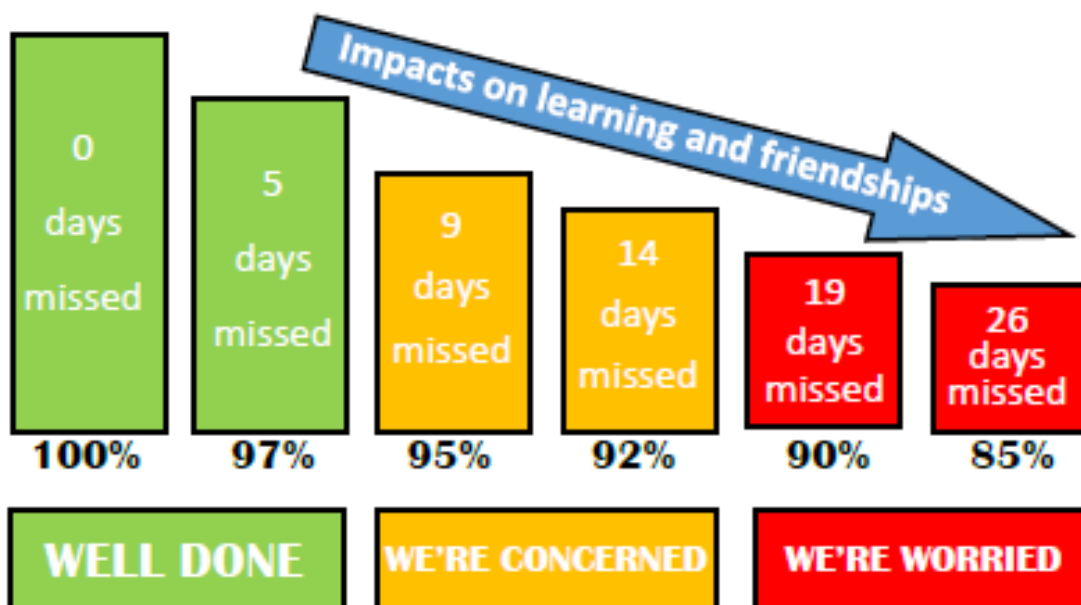
Yours faithfully,

Appendix 5: Learning Community Every Day Counts Poster