

MAXIMISING ATTENDANCE POLICY

AUGUST 2026



RESPECT AMBITION KINDNESS

Castlehead High School Vision:

We aim to cultivate a community where respect, equity, and kindness fuel ambition, enabling our pupils to thrive and make a positive impact on the world around them.

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At Castlehead High School, we are committed to building a community rooted in kindness, respect and ambition. We know that young people thrive when they feel safe, supported, and valued, and when strong relationships are at the centre of school life. Our policies on Attendance and Nurturing Relationships work hand in hand to promote these values. Together, they set out how we support every learner's right to education, wellbeing and opportunity, and how we work with families in a spirit of partnership, fairness, and compassion to help each young person achieve their full potential.

Engaging in school and in learning is crucial to ensure that children and young people meet their full potential. We have an aspirational target for our learners to attend school 95% of the time.

Attendance Percentage	Number of Days Missed over an Academic Year (190 days)	Impact
95%	9 Days	Attendance at or above this level gives a learner the best chance of success.
90%	19 Days	Attendance at this level leads to less chance of success. Data shows that learners missing this much school could drop a whole grade in secondary
Below 80%	36 Days or more	Attendance at this level has serious implications for learning and progress.

There are a key rights, duties and legal obligations in relation to attendance as outlined in '[Included, Engaged and Involved \(Part 1\)](#)'. These are set out below:

- All children and young people have a right to education; and education authorities have a duty to provide education.
- All children and young people have the right to get the support they need to benefit fully from their education and fulfil their potential.
- All children and young people need to be included, engaged and involved in their learning. Children and young people should be given opportunities to fully engage and participate in the life of their school, in order to encourage good attendance.
- Schools should actively engage with families and partners to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are removed.
- The foundation for schools, learning establishments and education authorities is a focus on positive relationships and an inclusive ethos and culture that promotes good attendance. Attendance should not be considered in isolation.

Our Commitment

At Castlehead High School, we believe that good attendance is essential for academic success, wellbeing, and future opportunities. We also recognise that every learner's circumstances are unique, and we are committed to supporting our young people and their families with compassion and fairness.

Our Expectations

- All learners are expected to attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents/carers are asked to notify the school promptly if a learner is unable to attend.
- We aim for a whole-school attendance rate of 95% or above, while understanding that some learners may face challenges that make this difficult. We will do all we can to remove the barriers which stop our learners attending school.

Compassionate Approach

We understand that absences may sometimes be linked to health, family, or personal challenges. We will:

- Listen first: Each learner's situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Work in partnership: Parents/carers will be invited to discuss any barriers to attendance, with respect and without judgement.
- Support wellbeing: We will liaise with key workers, pastoral staff and external agencies if needed, ensuring that support is in place for both emotional and practical needs.
- Flexible responses: Where appropriate, we will consider phased returns, adjusted timetables, or additional learning support.

Emotionally-based School Avoidance

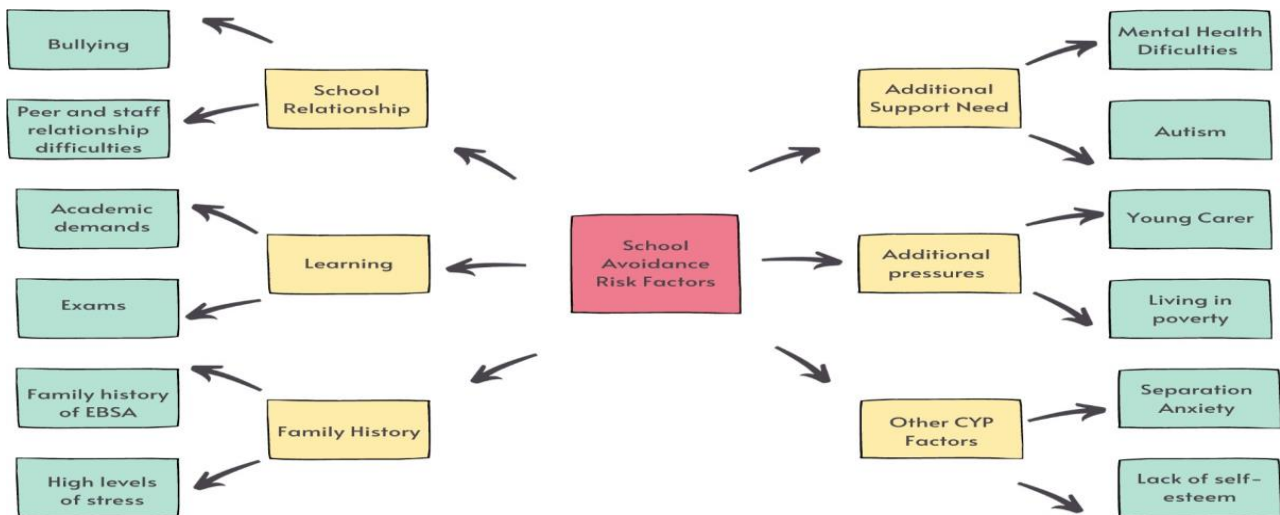
More recently there has been a move to the term 'emotionally based school avoidance' (EBSA). EBSA refers to children and young people who have significant difficulty attending school because of emotional factors, which often results in extended school absences. This definition distinguishes EBSA from truancy. EBSA is the preferred term as 'school refuser' is perceived to position the problem within the child, implying that they have control of the non-attendance, and this ignores environmental or contextual factors.

Instead, this policy uses the term 'school avoidance' to recognise the widest range of factors underpinning the difficulties children and young people have in attending and engaging with school.

School avoidance is associated with many negative outcomes for children and young people. It is a risk factor for self-harm, suicidal ideation, risky behaviour and substance use. It is also predictive of lower academic achievement, school dropout and future under-employment. School avoidance also had a wider impact, increasing stress for families.

The reasons behind school avoidance are complex and often involve multiple factors:

EXAMPLES OF COMMON RISK FACTORS:



Higher rates of absence are found in our young people with Additional Support Needs. There is research which shows higher levels of school avoidance in children who are on the autistic spectrum, have mental health issues, and those with social and emotional needs.

There is also a gap in average attendance rates between the 20% most deprived (83.7%) and 20% least deprived (89.7%) pupils (2024/25). 'Cost of the School Day' is an important factor to consider although it is not the only risk factor associated with children and young people living in poverty. Bullying has also been shown to be correlated with school avoidance so we are working hard to eradicate this through our Equalities Policy which can be found by scanning this QR code:



Whatever the reason, we have a range of supports which can help remove barriers to regular school attendance, so please let us help.

Working Together

We believe that improving attendance is not about blame, but about understanding, encouragement, and teamwork. By working in partnership, we aim to ensure that every young person feels valued, supported, and able to succeed at Castlehead High School.

Coming to school regularly helps you learn, build friendships, and prepare for the future. Every day in school is a chance to grow, but we know that sometimes life gets in the way. At Castlehead, we want to support you and your family with understanding and kindness.

How We Support You

If you're finding it hard to come to school, we will:

- Listen to what's going on without judgement
- Work with families to find solutions that fit your situation
- Offer extra support, such as check-ins with guidance staff, flexible timetables, or wellbeing help
- Make a plan together if attendance drops below 90%, so you feel supported and not singled out

Our Promise

At Castlehead, our attendance policy is about making sure every young person feels safe, supported, and ready to learn. Together with families, we'll do everything we can to help learners succeed.

Care Experienced Learners

All care experienced learners will receive the support, opportunities and a sense of belonging which allows them to thrive at school. Working with other agencies, we will remove every barrier we can to ensure their engagement with education and we know and cherish our care experienced pupils. If any issues arise, we will act quickly and with compassion to resolve them.

Procedures

1. Reporting Absences

- Parents/carers should contact the school office by phone, email or school app before 8:50am on the day of absence.
- If no notification is received, the school will make contact via text message to alert that the young person is not in school.

2. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

- Authorised absences include illness, medical appointments, family emergencies, or religious observances.
- Unauthorised absences include truancy or absences without a valid explanation.

3. Monitoring and Communication

- Attendance will be monitored daily by office staff and the House teams and a text message sent home if your child is absent, and we haven't been notified.
- If a learner's attendance falls below 90%, the Staged Intervention Process begins.
(See Appendices 1,2,3)

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of All staff

- proactively develop respectful and nurturing relationships that support a positive ethos and culture.
- make learning interesting and relevant and support learner engagement using a range of strategies.
- keep SEEMIS accurate for every learner.
- share concerns about a learner's engagement, attendance or wellbeing, at the earliest stage.

Responsibilities of Pupil Support teachers

As the allocated key adult for pupils, Pupil Support Staff will build long lasting positive relationships with all pupils in their case load. Pupil Support staff are central to gathering information about pupils and identifying their additional support needs:

- Be aware of early signs of concern which may cause absence, to allow preventative support to be arranged;
- Develop positive relationships with pupils and parents to ensure difficulties are discussed and resolved;
- Attend weekly House meetings to identify and implement interventions for pupils with declining attendance.
- Further support will be sought from the DHT Pupil Support if additional supports are required through the EST process.
- Use the Staged Intervention process to ensure consistency of actions taken: this includes calling home, attendance meetings with pupils and parents, and sending attendance letters.
- Support reintegration into learning on returning from absence.
- Liaise with the House DHT during weekly Stage One meetings if there are any concerns relating to attendance.

Responsibilities of Senior Leaders

- Promote attendance through policies, meetings, staff CLPL and communications
- Regularly promote good attendance with learners through assemblies, informal and formal conversations, and events.
- Involve learners in all aspects of learning and the life of the school.
- Building relationships and prioritising wellbeing and care.
- Have a curriculum which is relevant, engaging and meets the needs of all learners.

How Will We Review This Policy?

Step 1

Within 6 months, the DHT Pupill Support will create an Attendance Team. This will include member(s) of Senior Leadership Team and relevant school or staff: e.g. Support for Learning, Pupil Support Teacher, Curriculum Principal Teachers, class teacher etc. This team could also include professionals from out with the educational establishment e.g. Family Wellbeing Worker and Educational Psychologist.

Step 2

Gather relevant data and information such as SEEMIS data, GMWP data, and child's planning and assessment data. It is important to consider data for particularly vulnerable groups e.g., care-experienced children and young people, ASN learners and children and young people in SIMD 1 and 2, as well as whole school level data.

Step 3

Initial self-evaluation should be completed using the Forth Valley West Lothian toolkit.

Consideration should be given to the evidence and examples of what 'red, amber and green' would look like. Note that the wording says, 'all staff' but in line with HGIOS this can be interpreted as 'almost all'. It is expected that not all areas will be green or amber and some areas may require authority level or multi-agency work.

Step 4

From the self-evaluation, the Attendance Team should identify areas of focus. Some actions may be short-term, while others may require longer time scales to implement or align with other initiatives. Outline actions to be taken, by whom, the expected timescale and any data/information that can help evaluate the change.

Step 5

The Attendance Team enact actions and meet as needed. After 6 months to a year, revisit the self-evaluation and review progress. This should highlight any improvement and areas which need continued focus. Repeat this process as required.

Staged Intervention Process

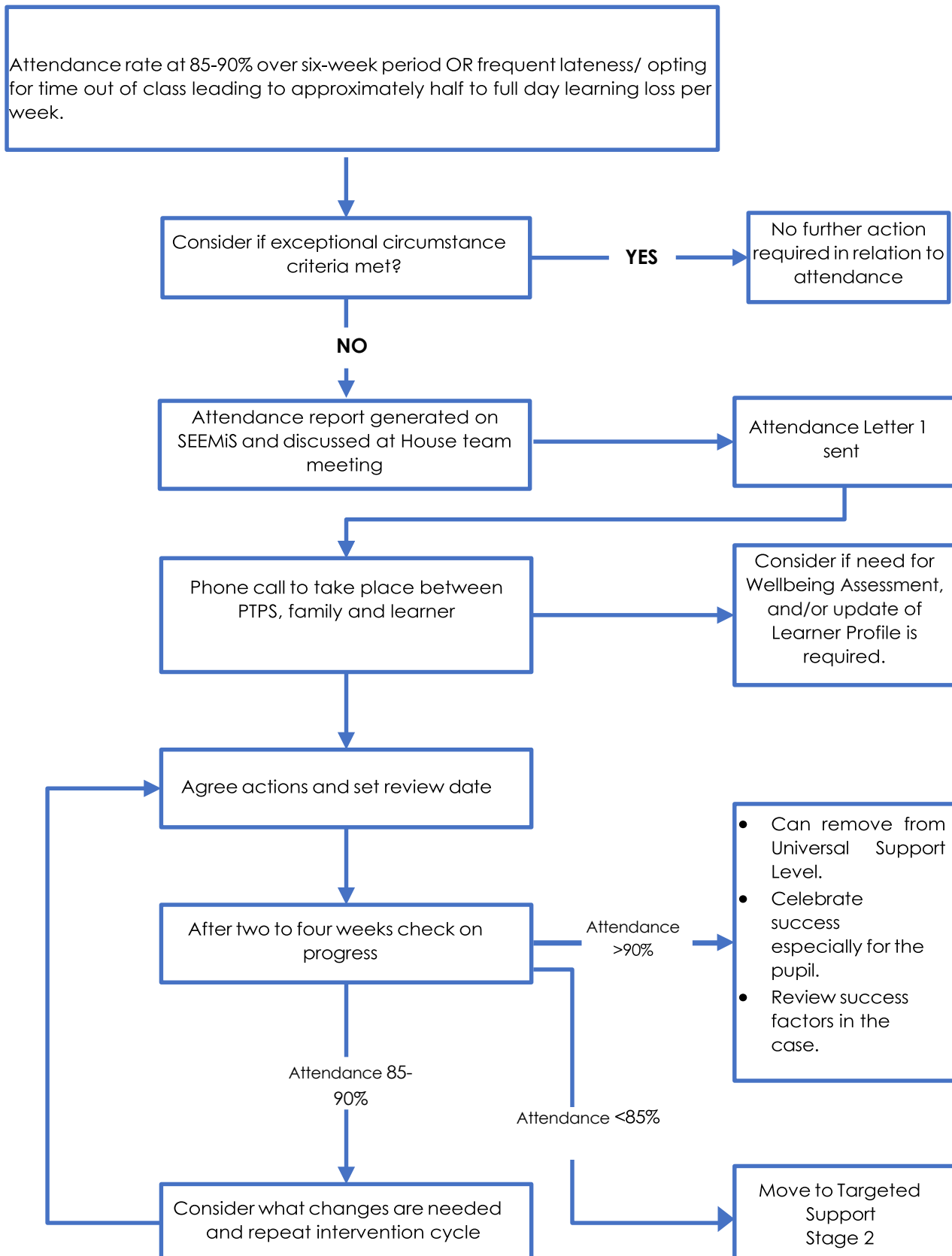
If attendance concerns persist, we follow a staged approach to address the issue:

1. **Stage 1:** Initial concerns lead to communication with parents, via a text message, phone call or letter.
2. **Stage 2:** If attendance does not improve, further support and interventions, including meetings with parents and external agencies, may be necessary.
3. **Stage 3:** In severe cases, a multi-agency meeting or referral to the Children's Reporter may be held to identify and resolve barriers to attendance.

Although every case is different, the following criteria will be used for guiding staged interventions and supports:

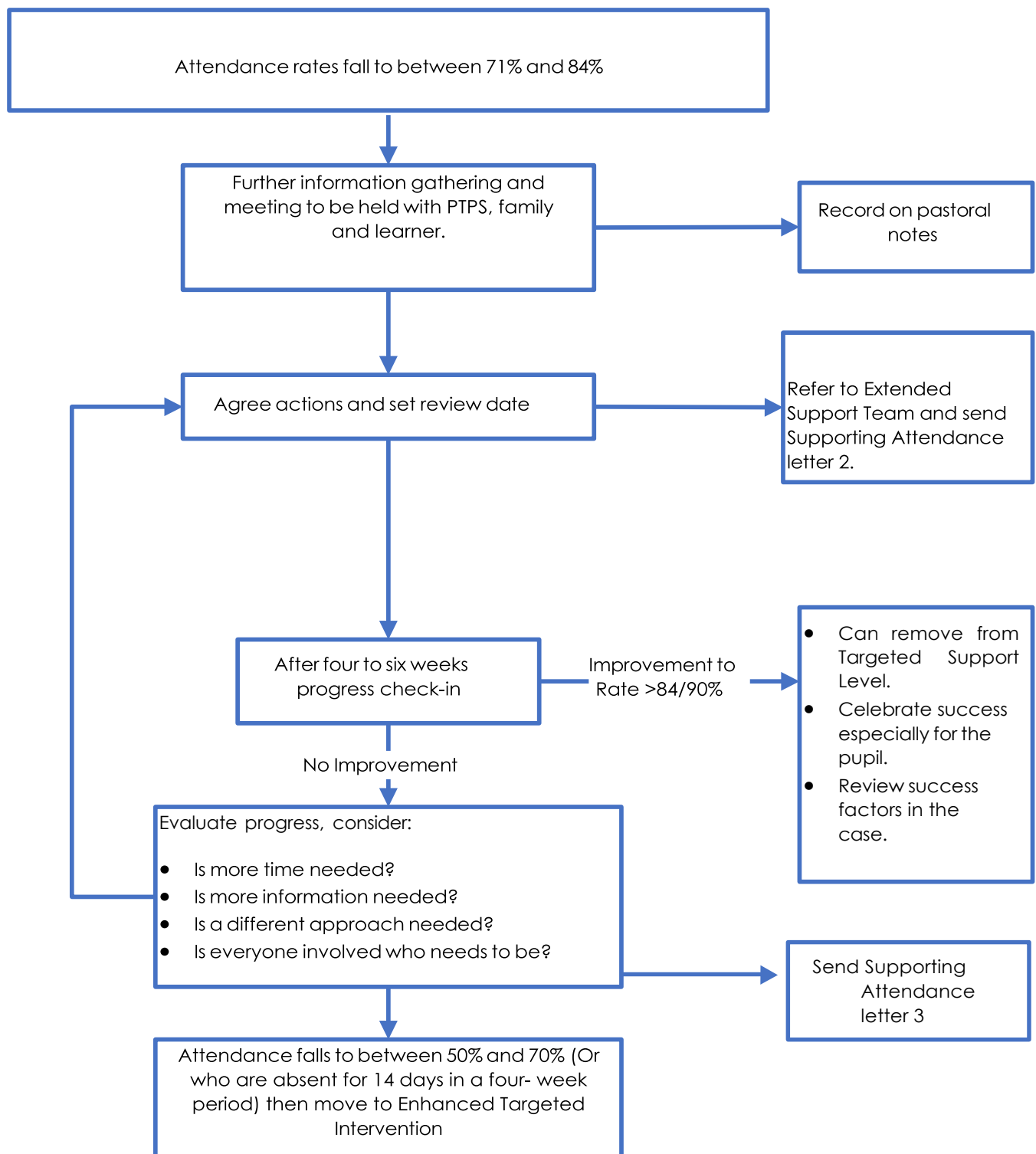
STAGED INTERVENTION APPROACH

STAGE 1 - UNIVERSAL



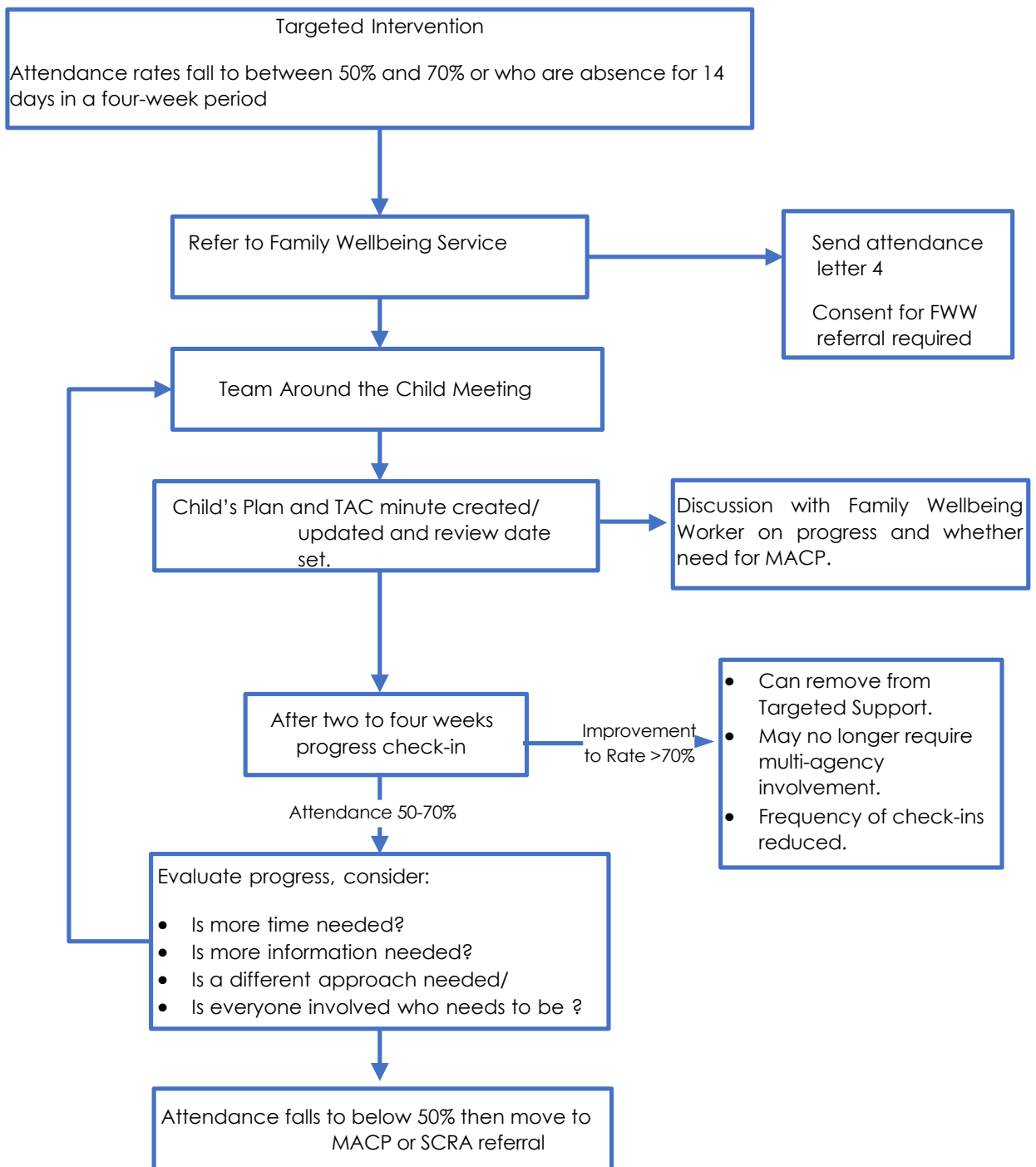
STAGED INTERVENTION APPROACH

STAGE 2 - TARGETTED



STAGED INTERVENTION APPROACH

STAGE 3 – ENHANCED TARGETTED



General Compassionate Attendance Concern Letter 1

Subject: Concern for [Learner Name]'s Attendance and Wellbeing

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

I hope you and your family are doing well. I am reaching out to express concern about [Learner Name]'s recent attendance at school. I have noticed a pattern of absences over the past few weeks, and we wanted to check in to see if there are any circumstances affecting their ability to attend regularly.

I understand that sometimes challenges at home, health issues, or other personal matters can make consistent attendance difficult. My goal is to support [Learner Name] so that they can stay engaged and achieve success at school.

If there is anything the school can do to help—such as academic support, wellbeing services, or flexible arrangements—please let me know. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet or speak with you to discuss how we can work together to support [Learner Name].

Thank you for your time and understanding.

With care,

[Your Name]

Principal Teacher of Pupil Support
Castlehead High School
03003001300

Compassionate Attendance with Support Options Listed Letter 2

Subject: Support for [Learner Name]'s School Attendance

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

We are reaching out with concern for [Learner Name]'s recent pattern of absences from school. We know that attendance is often linked to a learner's overall wellbeing, and our first priority is to make sure [Learner Name] is safe, supported, and able to succeed.

If there are any issues impacting their attendance—such as health concerns, family challenges, or emotional stress—please don't hesitate to contact us. The school can offer:

- Access to our school counsellor
- Access to our Inclusion Support and Nurture Key Workers
- Academic support to catch up on missed work
- Flexible learning arrangements where appropriate
- Referrals to Family and Community Wellbeing support services

We value your partnership in helping [Learner Name] re-engage with learning and school life. Please contact your child's Pupil Support teacher at [contact info] to arrange a time to talk.

With understanding,
[Your Name]

Principal Teacher of Pupil Support
Castlehead High School
03003001300

Compassionate Attendance Concern (Nurturing) Letter 3

Subject: Checking in on [Learner Name] – Attendance and Wellbeing

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

I hope this message finds you and your family well. I'm writing because we've noticed that [Learner Name] has missed several days of school recently, and we wanted to reach out with care and concern. We understand that there are often personal, family, or health-related reasons that can make attending school regularly more difficult, and our main priority is to ensure that [Learner Name] is doing okay.

Please know that this message comes from a place of support, not judgment. [Learner Name] is a valued member of our school community, and we want to make sure that [he/she/they] feels safe, connected, and encouraged to re-engage with learning.

If there's anything happening that the school should be aware of—whether related to wellbeing, family circumstances, or something else—we'd really appreciate the opportunity to listen and work together to find a positive way forward. We can offer support such as:

- Wellbeing or counselling services
- Flexible learning arrangements
- Academic catch-up plans
- Access to external support agencies if helpful

Would you be available for a brief chat or meeting to talk about how we can best support [Learner Name]? Please let me know a time that suits you, or feel free to call me directly at [phone number] or email [email address].

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and for all that you do to support [Learner Name]. We truly believe that with the right supports in place, [he/she/they] can regain confidence and feel reconnected with school life.

Kind regards,
[Your Name]

Principal Teacher of Pupil Support
Castlehead High School
03003001300

Compassionate Attendance – Disengagement and School Avoidance Letter 4

Subject: Checking in on [Learner Name] – We'd Like to Offer Our Support

Dear [Parent/Carer Name],

I hope you and your family are doing well. I wanted to reach out because we've noticed that [Learner Name] has been away from school quite often recently, and we're concerned that [he/she/they] might be finding it difficult to feel connected or motivated about coming to school.

We completely understand that at times, school can feel overwhelming — whether it's due to social pressures, learning challenges, or just feeling a bit "stuck." These feelings are more common than many realise, and we want [Learner Name] to know that they're not alone.

Our goal is to work *with you and [Learner Name]* to find ways to make school feel like a more positive and supportive space again. We'd really value the chance to talk together about what might help. This could include:

- Checking in with a trusted staff member each morning
- Adjusting the workload or timetable to ease the pressure
- Accessing support from our wellbeing or counselling team
- Exploring interests or subjects that help [Learner Name] feel more engaged

Please let us know a time that would suit you for a chat or meeting — either in person or over the phone. We'd love to listen, understand what's going on, and build a plan that supports [Learner Name]'s wellbeing and confidence moving forward.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message, and for everything you're doing to support [Learner Name]. We know that small steps, taken together, can make a big difference — and we're here every step of the way.

With warm regards

[Your Name]

Principal Teacher of Pupil Support

Castlehead High School

03003001300

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

- [Parent Line Scotland](#)
At some point, all parents/carers find that parenting can be difficult or stressful. Parent Line Scotland is the free, confidential, telephone helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small. Phone: 0808 800 2222 or [online](#).
- [My Rights, My Say](#)
My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 have the rights to be more involved in the decisions that affect them. It's independent, confidential and easy to use, and here to make sure the voices of children with additional support needs are heard.
- Scottish Child Law Centre
The Centre helps children and young people, their families and carers, and professionals working for and with children by providing advice and information through their advice line, email and text services. E-mail: enquiries@sclc.org.uk
- [Govan Law Centre](#)
The centre has a national specialist Law Unit on Education. It provides legal representation in appropriate education law cases to families or pupils. You can make an enquiry email advice@edlaw.org.uk.
- [The Scottish Legal Aid Board](#)
The Board provides a list of lawyers and information about whether you might qualify for legal aid. The Financial Assessment Unit can assist with enquiries on eligibility. Phone: 0131 560 2164 or [online](#).
- [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)
Your local CAB can provide information and support about rights and responsibilities when it comes to schools and education. There is information about a range of education issues in Scotland [online](#).
- [Enquire](#)
Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. It operates as a helpline for families, carers and practitioners. Publications include 'A Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning'. An interpreter can be arranged upon request. Telephone helpline Phone: 0845 123 2303 E-mail: info@enquire.org.uk or [online](#).
- [asl-guide-parents-carers.pdf](#) This is a leaflet which provides information about the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*.
- [RESOLVE: ASL](#) ASL is an independent mediation service available in Scotland as an option to resolve conflict throughout additional support needs issues in education. More information and contact details can be found on their [website](#).
- [Home educated children](#)
There is guidance on this [here](#).

- [Scottish Traveller Education Programme \(STEP\)](#)
STEP mainly works with educators of Traveller children and young people in Scotland. STEP helps support education with and for Traveller families.