Flintshire County Council

Education & Youth

Schools Attendance Policy Template

Updated March 2026

1. Introduction

CYNGOR Sir y Fflint Flintshire COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction	3
Aims	4
Core Principles	5
Legal Framework	5
Roles and Responsibilities of Schools	6
Roles and Responsibilities of Parents, Carers and Leaners	8
Roles and Responsibilities of Education Welfare Service	8
Attendance Monitoring	10
Attendance Improvement Plans (AIP)	10
Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)	11
Education Supervision Orders (ESO)	11
School Attendance Orders (SAO)	12
Prosecution for Non-Attendance	12
Children Missing Education (CME)	12
School-Based Strategies to Promote Attendance	13
Flexi-schooling, Reduced Timetables and Elective Home Education	13
Community Focused Schools (CFS)	14
Team Around the School (TAS)	14
Virtual Learning	14
Holidays in Term-Time	14
Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes	16-17
Appendix 2 – Process Maps	18 – 21
Appendix 3 – Sample Attendance Letters	22 – 25
Privacy Notice - Final Page	26

Introduction

Flintshire County Council (FCC) is committed to ensuring that every child and young person has access to a full-time, suitable education and feels a strong sense of belonging within their school community.

Regular school attendance is essential for all children and young people. Failure to regularly attend can increase the risk of leaving school without any qualifications and can also increase the likelihood of pupils being drawn into criminal and anti-social behaviour. Persistent absence is often a symptom of unmet need and must be addressed through early identification, partnership working and proportionate intervention.

Flintshire County Council Inclusion Services and partner agencies will endeavour to work with parents, and pupils to ensure that all pupils receive appropriate support to enable them attend school regularly.

This policy sets out Flintshire's strategic and operational approach to school attendance and reflects the local authority's School Attendance expectations.

The policy is informed by:

Belonging, Engaging and Participating: Guidance on improving learner engagement and attendance (Welsh Government, 2023)

Welsh Government guidance on school attendance, registration and coding

Welsh Government guidance on Children Missing Education (CME)

The All Wales Attendance Framework

The Education Act 1996

The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013

Flintshire County Council's Code of Conduct for the Issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices

1. Aims

This policy aims to ensure that attendance and punctuality remain a priority for learners, parents/carers, schools, governing bodies, the local authority and partner agencies. Flintshire County Council will support schools to:

- Promote a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment where all learners feel valued and supported
- Raise attainment and wellbeing through high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Embed a whole-school culture that promotes belonging, engagement and participation
- Identify and address barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity
- Ensure attendance data is accurate, timely and effectively monitored
- Safeguard learners through robust Children Missing Education procedures
- Apply statutory interventions fairly, proportionately and consistently where required

2. Core Principles

Flintshire's approach to attendance is underpinned by the following principles:

- Belonging first – learners attend more consistently when they feel safe, respected and included
- Early intervention – attendance concerns should be addressed before patterns become entrenched
- Shared responsibility – improving attendance requires collaboration between schools, families, the local authority and partners
- Graduated response – support is prioritised, with statutory action used only where necessary
- Safeguarding focus – absence and missing education are safeguarding concerns

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Statutory School Age

For the purposes of this policy, compulsory school age is defined in accordance with Section 8 of the Education Act 1996. A child reaches compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term following their fifth birthday and ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

3.2 Parental Responsibility

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any additional learning needs, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Section 444 of the Act states that a parent commits an offence if a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly and the absence is unauthorised.

3.3 All children must have an education. The Education Act 1996 says:

- Parents (or carers) must make sure their children have an ‘efficient’ and ‘suitable’ education that meets their needs.
- Local authorities must make sure all children in their area are receiving a suitable education.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Schools

School should regularly prepare reports to the Governing Body, Senior Management and for appropriate monitoring agencies to ensure that levels of attendance are clear and that attendance codes are accurate. Parents should also be notified through the school’s regular communication channels stated in this policy.

4.1 Headteachers

Headteachers are responsible for:

- Overall implementation of attendance arrangements within school
- Ensuring registers are completed accurately and in line with Welsh Government guidance
- Determining whether absences are authorised or unauthorised
- Leading early intervention and engagement with families
- Working closely with governors, Education Welfare Services (EWS) and Supporting Improvement Advisors
- Referring concerns relating to Children Missing Education in line with FCC CME procedures
- Requesting Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate ensuring evidence thresholds are met

4.2 Governing Bodies

Governing bodies are responsible for:

- Approving and annually reviewing the school attendance policy
- Monitoring attendance data and trends
- Appointing a lead governor for attendance
- Holding school leaders to account for attendance outcomes

4.3 School Staff

All school staff have a role in promoting attendance. Specific responsibilities include:

- Promoting attendance as part of daily school culture
- Completing registers accurately twice daily
- Ensuring consistent application of attendance procedures
- Monitoring attendance data and patterns
- Following up unexplained absences promptly
- Making first-day contact with parents/carers
- Managing registers, late arrivals and attendance records
- Liaising with EWS for advise and support with any attendance concerns

4.5. Keeping School Registers

The school attendance register is a legal document. Under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, schools are required to maintain an accurate record of attendance.

- Mark registers twice daily (morning and afternoon) to support safeguarding
- Record attendance accurately on SIMS, including a reason for absence with a flag/comment and staff initials
- Ensure registers and Registration Certificates are accurate and complete daily, as they may be used as legal evidence by the Education Welfare Service

5. Roles and Responsibilities of Parents, Carers and Leaners

5.1 Parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Notify the school promptly of absence and provide reasons
- Engage with school and support services to address attendance concerns
- Keep contact details up to date

5.2 Learners

Learners are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and on time
- Engage positively with learning and support
- Communicate concerns that may affect attendance

6. Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Authority Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is a statutory service supporting schools to ensure pupils attend school regularly. EWS meet or liaise with a senior member of staff to discuss cases and raise concerns.

Secondary schools have a designated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) or Education Social Worker (ESW) who:

- Liaises regularly during in-school attendance review meetings.
- Accepts direct requests for support via school review meetings, email or telephone.

Primary schools receive initial attendance support from an Education Support Officer (ESO) who:

- Conducts half termly attendance meetings
- Complete initial visits and support with early interventions.
- Transfer cases to an EWO or ESW where further support or legal action is required.

Schools retain responsibility for attendance registers; recording of marks is at the Headteacher's discretion per WG Coding Guidance *Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes.*

The Education Welfare Service uses SIMS data to identify patterns and potential concerns proactively. Regular attendance profiles are also conducted by the Senior Learning Advisor – Engagement to identify patterns and individual learners that may require support.

The EWS operates under a Service Outline Statement and One Page Profile (FCC Education Engagement Services Policy, Dec 2024).

Under the Education Act 1996, Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually. Where parents fail to meet this duty, statutory action may be taken:

- **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)**
- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)**
- **School Attendance Orders (SAO)**
- **Prosecution of Non-Attendance**

Statutory action is only used as a last resort. The EWS works to support parents, schools, and pupils first.

The support and intervention process, including FPN and court procedures, is provided in attached process maps for clarity.

7. Attendance Monitoring

Attendance is monitored continuously at school and local authority level by the Education Welfare Service. Welsh Government defines persistent absence as attendance below 90%. School should regularly profile attendance of students with attendance below 90%.

Flintshire operates a graduated response to address persistent absence:

- Attendance Letter 1 – Informs parents/carers attendance is <90% and is being monitored
- Attendance Letter 2 – Attendance has not improved, letter informs parents/carers that medical evidence IS now required to authorise absences. Home visits to be completed by allocated member of EWS
- Attendance Letter 3 - meeting to be arranged with parent/carer and EWO/ESW to be present. Attendance Improvement Plan can be discussed and implemented at this stage
- Attendance Letter 4 – No improvements and letter issued to parents/carers that a Fixed Penalty Notice is being applied for

Wherever possible, schools should send all attendance letters out to parents/carers via email. Good practice would be to add read and receipt as this will provide evidence that the email has been received and read. Sample attendance letters *Appendix 3* included in the policy.

8. Attendance Improvement Plans (AIP)

Parents and carers should be invited to attend school as part of the graduated response to their child's attendance (Attendance Letter 3). These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss attendance concerns and to develop an

Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP), which can be completed and signed during the meeting.

If a parent or carer is unable to attend, a further letter should be issued offering an additional opportunity to participate. Failure to attend without providing notification may result in any absences remaining unauthorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.

9. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered under the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 where unauthorised absence persists despite supportive intervention.

Flintshire County Council operates FPNs in accordance with the FCC Code of Conduct, which sets out:

- Thresholds for unauthorised absence or lateness
- Evidence requirements and prior interventions
- Processes for issuing, monitoring and escalation

The decision to request an FPN rests with the Headteacher. Non-payment may result in prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure regular school attendance. This may lead to an appearance in the Magistrates court and result in a fine up to £1,000 per child.

10. Education Supervision Orders (ESO)

Education Supervision Orders are provided for under the Children Act 1989 and may be considered where a child of compulsory school age is not being properly educated and where supervision by the local authority is necessary to ensure the child's educational needs are met.

An Education Supervision Order places the child under the supervision of the local authority and enables an Education Welfare Officer to advise, assist and, where appropriate, give directions to the child and their parents in relation to education. Education Supervision Orders are intended to be supportive rather

than punitive and may be used where sustained non-attendance persists despite early intervention and partnership working, but where prosecution is not considered the most appropriate course of action.

11. School Attendance Orders (SAO)

School Attendance Orders are issued under Sections 437–443 of the Education Act 1996. A School Attendance Order may be considered where a parent has failed to demonstrate that a child of compulsory school age is receiving a suitable education and where the local authority believes that the child should attend a specified school.

School Attendance Orders are most commonly used where a child is not registered at any school and the local authority is not satisfied that suitable education is being provided, including in circumstances where Elective Home Education arrangements are considered unsuitable.

Failure to comply with a School Attendance Order may result in legal proceedings.

12. Prosecution for Non-Attendance

If there is evidence that parents or carers knew their child was not attending school and failed to take action, they may be prosecuted under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

Upon conviction, parents or carers can face up to three months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £2,500.

13. Children Missing Education (CME)

Children Missing Education represent a significant safeguarding risk. Schools must:

- Notify the local authority where a pupil's whereabouts or educational provision is unclear
- Follow FCC CME procedures before removing a pupil from roll
- Maintain accurate registers and transfer records promptly
- No pupil should be removed from roll until a confirmed destination is established or the CME process is completed

14. School-Based Strategies to Promote Attendance

Schools are encouraged to adopt inclusive, evidence-informed strategies including:

- Positive school environments and strong relationships
- Effective transition planning
- Engagement with families through regular communication
- Breakfast clubs and wellbeing-focused provision

15. Flexi-schooling, Reduced Timetables and Elective Home Education

Flexi-schooling and reduced timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances and must be time-limited, planned and subject to regular review. They must not be used as a long-term response to attendance difficulties or as a means of managing behaviour.

Any arrangement that results in a pupil attending school on a reduced basis must be formally agreed, clearly documented and include a plan for reintegration to full-time education. Parents retain responsibility for ensuring suitable education during any period not spent in school.

Elective Home Education (EHE) is a lawful choice under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Where parents choose to educate their child at home,

Flintshire County Council will act in accordance with Welsh Government Elective Home Education

16. Community Focused Schools (CFS)

CFS play an active role in supporting school attendance through the service provided in published CFS Strategy and service delivery booklet

17. Team Around the School (TAS)

Team Around the school is a new project for 25/26 and is currently based within the Flint Community.

TAS Guidance and booklet is available to provide further details of this approach and its role is supporting with school attendance matters.

18. Virtual Learning

Local information suggests that schools are utilising virtual learning to address a range of education and engagement issues on occasion. The AV 1 robot is also another means by which schools can support pupils with anxiety or EBSA.

The LA is working to improve the range of means by which virtual learning opportunities can be employed.

19. Holidays in Term-Time

Parents and carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, Headteachers have the discretion to authorise term-time holidays of up to 10 school days. Any holiday request exceeding 10 school days should only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

All requests for term-time holidays must be submitted using the school's holiday request form and completed by the parent(s) or guardian(s). The Headteacher will determine whether the request is authorised, taking into account the following contributory factors:

- Time of year.
- Length of time.
- Overall percentage of attendance.
- Impact on the child's learning.

Green	100%	Not missing any lessons.
	99%	Missing about 10 lessons.
	98%	Missing about 20 lessons.
	97%	Missing about 30 lessons.
Amber	96% from	Missing about 8 days of school. It will be difficult to catch up on the lost learning about 40 lessons.
	95%	Missing about 2 weeks of school.
	93%	Missing 14 days of school. This is almost three weeks of Education lost
Red	92% and below Missing more than 3 weeks of Education. A serious loss of learning that may have a detrimental effect on achievement.	

Appendix 1 WG Attendance Codes

Code	Meaning	Statistical meaning
/ \	**Present at registration**	**Present**
L	**Late (arrived before register closed)**	**Present**
B	**Educated off-site**	**Approved educational activity**
D	**Dual registered**	**Approved educational activity**
P	**Approved sporting activity**	**Approved educational activity**
V	**Educational trip or visit**	**Approved educational activity**
J	**Interview**	**Approved educational activity**
W	**Work experience (not work based learning)**	**Approved educational activity**
C	**Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another code)**	**Authorised absence**
F	**Agreed extended family holiday**	**Authorised absence**
H	**Agreed family holiday**	**Authorised absence**
I	**Illness**	**Authorised absence**
M	**Medical/dental appointment**	**Authorised absence**
S	**Study leave**	**Authorised absence**
E	**Exclusion**	**Authorised absence**
R	**Religious observance**	**Authorised absence**
T	**Traveller Absence**	**Authorised absence**

N	**No reason provided for absence**	**Unauthorised absence**
O	**Other unauthorised absence (no explanation provided)**	**Unauthorised absence**
G	**Family Holiday (not agreed)**	**Unauthorised absence**
U	**Late arrival after the close of registration**	**Unauthorised absence**
X	**Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age**	**Not required to attend**
Y	**Partial and forced closure**	**Not required to attend**
Z	**Pupil not yet on roll**	**Not required to attend**
#	**School closed to all pupils**	**Not required to attend**

Appendix 2 – Process Maps

Process Maps

1 Process Map 1 – Attendance Monitoring Process Map 2025.

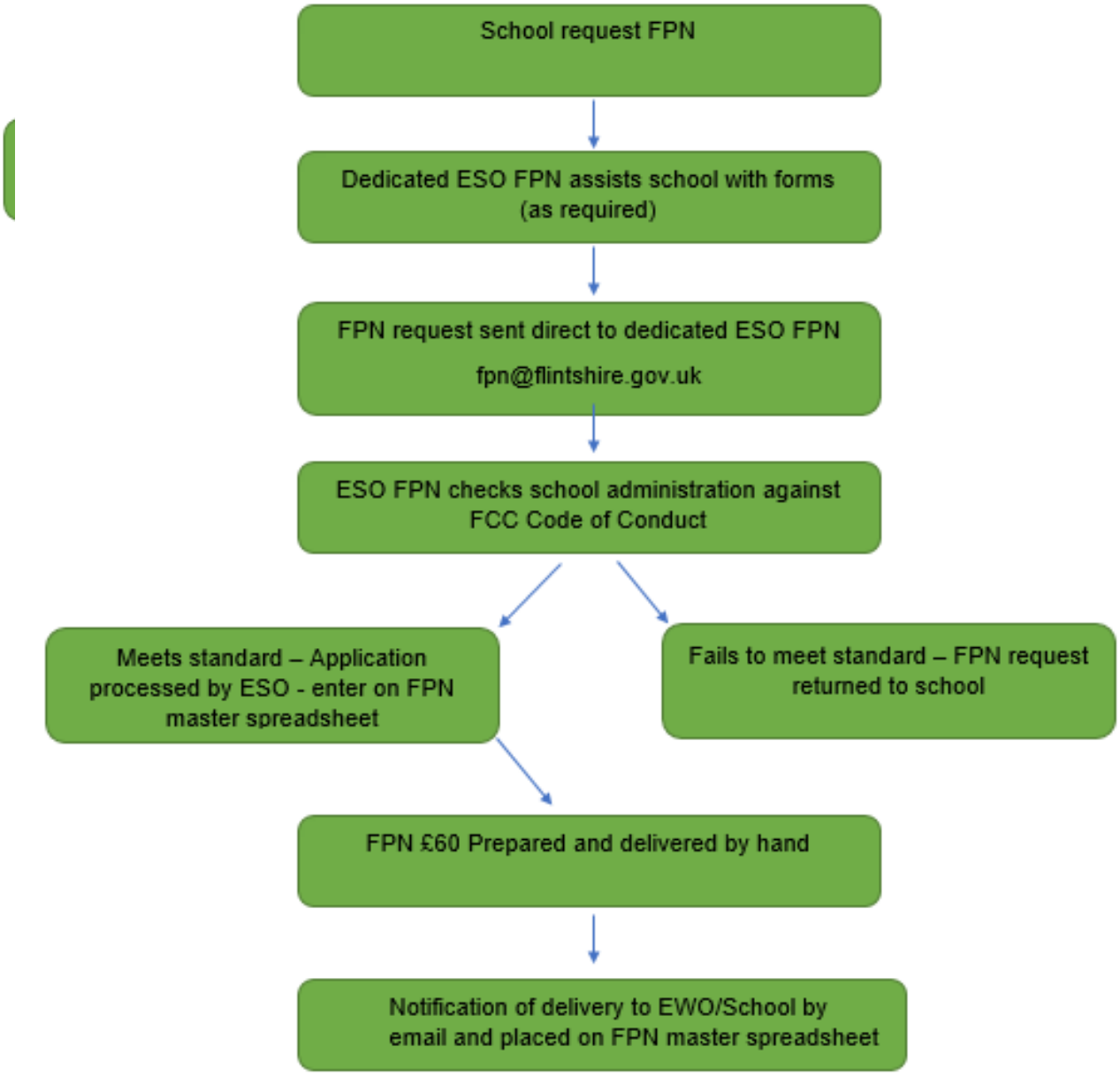
2 Process Map 2 – Fixed Penalty Notice £60 Process Map.

3 Process Map 3 – Fixed Penalty Notice £120 Process Map.

4 Process Map 4 – FPN Unpaid Court Statement Process.

School complete graduated steps as stated in Attendance Policy

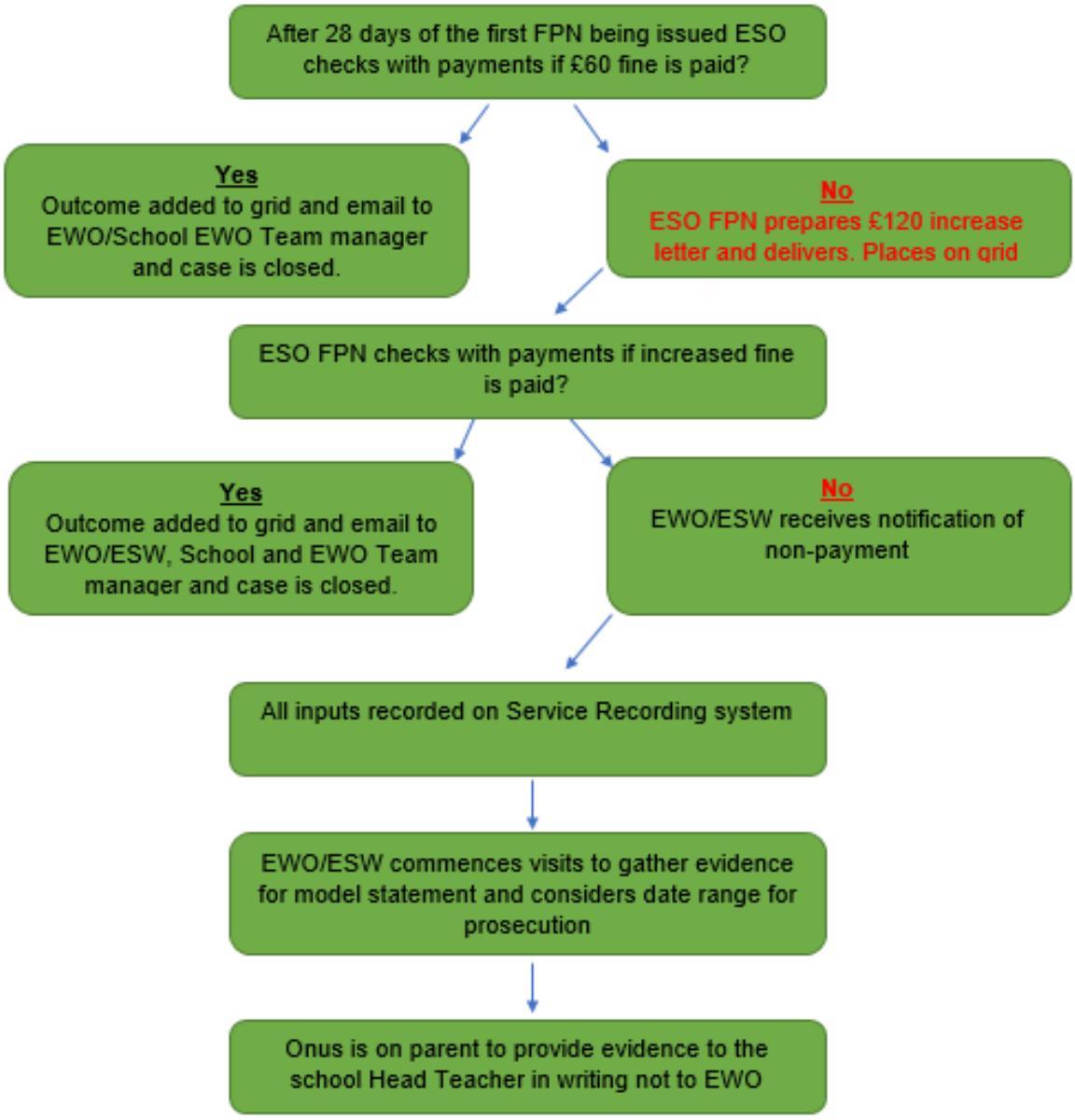
Fixed Penalty Notice £60 Process Map



FPN Allocation Stages and Legal Proceedings

EWO Service Steps 2025

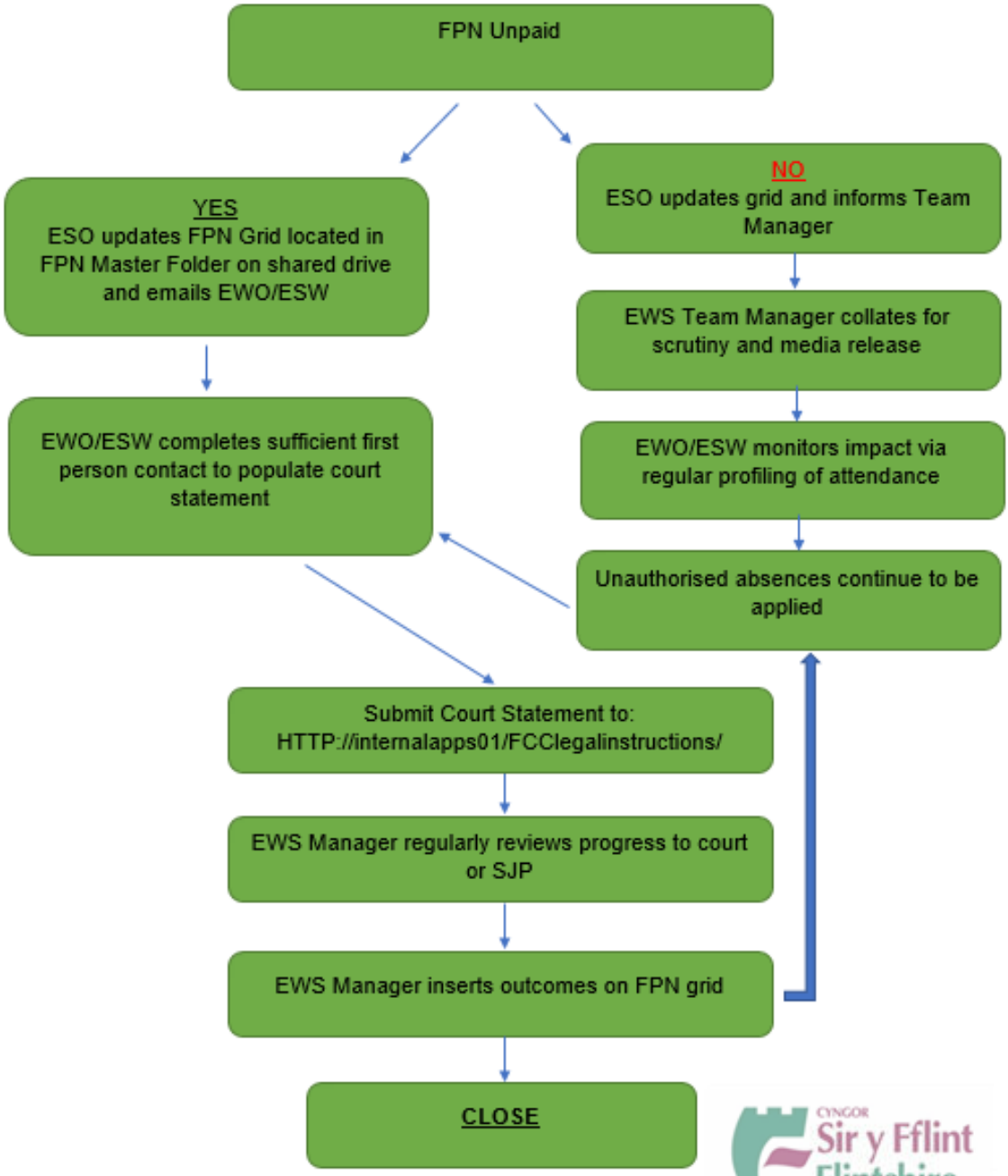
Fixed Penalty Notice £120 Process Map



FPN Allocation Stages and Legal Proceedings

EWS Service Steps 2025

FPN Unpaid Court Statement Process



Sample Attendance Letters

Letter 1 – Monitoring

«date_of_printing»
«salutation»
«address_block»

Dear «salutation»

Re: «full_name» - «year_reg»

The expectation of Schools, is that pupil attendance should not fall below …..%.

I regret to inform you that a check of attendance records reveals that «forename»'s average attendance for this school year is just «percentage_attendance»%.

I enclose a copy of «forename»'s attendance certificate for your information.

I would appreciate it if you could work with school staff to ensure that your child attends school regularly. However, if there are any particular difficulties as to why «forename» is unable to attend school, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely/Yn gywir

Headteacher/Pennaeth

Letter 2 – Medical Evidence

«date_of_printing»
«salutation»
«address_block»

Dear «salutation»

Re: «full_name» - «year_reg»

I recently wrote to you expressing my concerns regarding «forename»'s school attendance and informed you of the expectations of Schools, Local Authorities, Inspectors and the National Assembly for Wales.

I regret to inform you that a check of attendance records reveals that «forename»'s attendance is «percentage_attendance»% with no improvement.

I enclose a copy of «forename»'s attendance certificate for your information.

Any further absences will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical/other written evidence is provided.

I would appreciate it if you could work with school staff to ensure that your child attends school regularly. However, if there are any particular difficulties as to why «forename» is unable to attend school, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely/Yn gywir

Headteacher/Pennaeth

Letter 3 – Invite to Meeting

«date_of_printing»
«salutation»
«address_block»
Dear «salutation»
Re: «full_name» - «year_reg»

I am concerned to note that «chosen_forename» has been absent from school again. As you will appreciate «chosen_forename»'s attendance is a serious concern and every day they are absent from school has a detrimental impact on their learning and achievement.

«chosen_forename»'s attendance is a serious issue and the expectation of Schools, Local Education Authorities, Inspectors and the National Assembly for Wales, is that «chosen_forename»'s attendance should not fall below 95% during any part of the academic year. The school has no choice but to pursue any absenteeism and report any pupils who fall below 90% attendance to the Local Education Authority, «chosen_forename»'s attendance is currently only «percentage_attendance»%.

I enclose a copy of their attendance certificate for your information. Please note that some of these absences are unauthorised and unexplained and we would appreciate you attending a meeting at school with me on **DATE** at **TIME** to discuss «chosen_forename»'s continued poor attendance and hopefully put in place strategies to assist them in improving their attendance.

I would also like to inform you that in line with the schools attendance policy; I will be informing the Local Education Authority via the Educational Welfare Officer about «chosen_forename»'s continued absence this academic year.

If you would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me at the school and I look forward to meeting with you. If you are unable to attend this meeting please contact me at your earliest opportunity to arrange an alternative date or time as it is very important we meet.

Yours sincerely/Yn gywir

Headteacher/Pennaeth

Letter 4 – FPN Application

«date_of_printing»
«salutation»
«address_block»

Dear «salutation»

Re: «full_name» - «year_reg»

Attendance: «percentage_attendance»%

I am writing to you to inform you that I will be applying to the Local Authority to request a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60.

The School staff have written to you and arranged a meeting to discuss the concerns that exist with regard to the unauthorised absence that is recorded on our schools attendance register. These matters remain unresolved to date and no evidence has been received to enable me to authorise the absences.

Yours sincerely/Yn gywir

Headteacher/Pennaeth
Cc: EWO

Privacy notice

Your data will be processed by Flintshire County Council only for the specific purposes of assessing your enquiry. Flintshire County Council may share pupil data with other local authorities, the NHS, Police and agencies for the purpose of performing background checks. This may involve transferring your data outside of the European Economic Area if you have resided in any country outside the EEA.

Flintshire County Council will retain information for 10 years. If you feel that Flintshire County Council has mishandled your personal data at any time you can make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office by visiting their website or by calling their helpline on 0303 123 1113.

For further information about how Flintshire County Council processes personal data and your rights please see our privacy notice on our website - http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Contact-Us/Privacy-Notice.aspx