



Children & Young People's Service

School Attendance – Every Day Counts

Guidance & Legislation

Revised August 2008

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Children & Young People's Service

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Introduction

This document sets out in one volume current guidance and legislation about school attendance and the role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS). It is intended that this document should be used as a point of reference by Head teachers and other practitioners who may seek to clarify specific issues relating to school attendance.

The EWS is committed to working with schools and other partners to improve school attendance and punctuality across the city. Underpinning this commitment is the knowledge that only if children attend school regularly and punctually will they be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and gain the skills to enable them to participate fully in further education, training or employment.

This document is intended to guide, assist and empower schools to meet their responsibilities with regard to attendance and punctuality and to provide a framework within which consistent practices and procedures can be applied.

Aims

The aim of the Education Welfare Service is to work with schools, parents/carers and young people to ensure equality of access to education. Our work is undertaken within the framework of 'Every Child Matters' and we contribute towards the five outcomes for children in a range of ways.

Principles

The principles upon which this guidance is based is as follows:

1. Regular attendance at school is the key to every child achieving their maximum potential.
2. Patterns of attendance at school can reflect many factors in the community that the school serves, and therefore this needs to be taken into account when planning effective work to promote good attendance.

3. Attendance related targets for the school will be agreed annually between the Governing Body, Head teacher and the LA.
4. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly. Where necessary, parents/carers should be supported and encouraged by schools in continually seeking ways to improve attendance at school.
5. Schools can expect advice and guidance from the LA on the marking and keeping of registers in line with Government guidance.
6. The LA expects each school to develop and publish its own school policy on attendance. The LA will offer advice and guidance on this where required.
7. The LA recognises the need for effective partnerships & multi-agency working across all agencies in managing truancy and disaffection.
8. The LA will take appropriate legal action against parents/carers where they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their children at school, in accordance with current legislation.

Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

The task of raising and promoting attendance is a joint one. By co-operating and communicating we believe that parents/carers, children, schools and agencies can raise achievement by raising attendance. This document is aimed to address roles and responsibilities (also considering the impact and application of current legislation), and seeks to provide clear guidelines on procedures.

Strategies and Good Practice

We aim to provide some practical strategies and ideas to promote a consistent, city-wide approach and range of support. We are aware that schools and communities may vary enormously in ethos and circumstances. By keeping informed of the diversity of provision and initiatives, and promoting 'best practice' we believe that we promote innovation and opportunities that are informed and professional in approach.

This guidance document is underpinned by the LAs attendance policy and strategy.



School Attendance – Every Day Counts

Section 1: Guidance Roles & responsibilities

Revised August 2008

Role of the EWS

The work of the EWS aims to support schools in developing and reviewing their attendance strategies and setting up effective systems and structures to deal with non-attendance at an early stage. They will challenge schools regarding in-school practice that is in contradiction to legislation & guidance and work closely with them to change practice to meet LA expectations and reflect good practice.

The EWS has responsibility for the enforcement of school attendance and all associated matters. Other areas of responsibility include child employment and child licensing.

The EWS will become involved with a pupil once a formal referral form has been completed and accepted as appropriate. This may be as part of a Term 6 review of attendance across the school or during the academic year when a pupil's absence meets the threshold for referral and the school has taken appropriate action to address the absence. The actions expected to be taken by the school are as follows:

- i) Unexplained absence should be followed up by the school using the system they have in place for 'first day contact'.
- ii) Where the pupil's home cannot be contacted by telephone, after 3 days of unexplained absence a letter should be sent requesting an explanation.
- iii) If the first letter elicits no response from the parents/carers, further contact should be made within 3 days, either by telephone, letter or home visit.
- iv) Where specific problems are encountered, eg. language, the school should consider involving appropriate services to assist.
- v) At this stage, the appropriate in-school person should address the attendance pattern of the pupil. Plans for dealing with the problem should be devised with the involvement of parents/carers and any support agencies available to the school.
- vi) When successful contact has been made it is often possible to agree strategies which resolve the attendance pattern without recourse to the EWS. Parents/carers should be encouraged to be involved actively in dealing with attendance problems. They should be kept informed about the use of report systems, curriculum or timetable changes, pastoral counselling, assessment of learning difficulties or other interventions.
- vii) If contact with parents/carers and internal strategies do not resolve the problem the school may consider requesting a penalty notice is issued by the EWS if the pupil meets the criteria. Guidance on this process is available from the EWS.
- viii) Referral to the EWS should be considered if a pupil meets the persistent absence criteria (14+ absences in term 1, 28+ in Term 2, 40+ in Term 3, 52+ in Term 4) or has less than 85% attendance & where the school has recorded unauthorised absences.

Once a written referral has been accepted by the EWS the case will be allocated to a named officer who will arrange to visit the family and undertake a formal assessment of the situation. This will include identifying the reasons for absence, informing parents/carers of their legal responsibilities and agreeing action to resolve the absence where possible. Feedback will be given to the school.

If the assessment indicates that the reasons contributing to the young person's absence from school is not a single agency issue then a CAF will be undertaken and submitted to the multi-agency panel. The school will be advised and included in a decision to undertake a CAF.

With primary school referrals the case will be held open for the academic year and if satisfactory progress is made the case will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure there is no further recurrence of absence. This prevents the need for the school to keep making referrals throughout the academic year to the EWS. In secondary & special schools if the situation is resolved, monitoring will continue for an agreed period of time before the case is closed in agreement with the school. This means the pupil will revert to school monitoring/review and if attendance becomes poor again then a re-referral will need to be made to the EWS.

Should the situation not be resolved, a Parenting Contract Agreement (PCA) meeting will be convened by the EWS. There will be a monitoring period after the meeting to give the pupil & parent/carer the opportunity to meet the agreed targets set at the PCA.

The EWO will receive regular supervision by their line manager that will be case work focussed and offer opportunities to review and assess strategies. If no change occurs a decision will be made within an agreed period of time (usually 10 weeks) about sanctions to be applied.

If legal sanctions are not appropriate further consultation will follow and consideration will be given to undertaking a CAF. This may result in continued intervention with a lead professional holding the case, which may or may not be an EWO. Situations where prosecution may not be appropriate include cases where parents are unable to affect change e.g. due to mental health issues.

How to refer to the EWS

Referrals will be agreed with schools as part of the Term 6 meeting. Schools may also make referrals throughout the academic year to the EWS (using the official referral form) once the school have taken action themselves and are clear that the referral meets the EWS criteria. Referrals may be discussed with the EWO at in-school meetings to agree whether the referral is appropriate.

Attendance roles and responsibilities

Parents/carers

- Are responsible for making sure their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Should ensure their child is appropriately dressed and adequately equipped for their lessons which will help build self-esteem and confidence and therefore support attendance.
- Must inform the school on the first day of absence, wherever practically possible, of the reason for their child's absence and the predicted date of their return.
- Must inform the school prior to any planned absence in order to obtain the necessary authorisation.
- Must make every effort to support maximum attendance, by encouraging and supporting their child & working with the school.
- Should keep routine medical and dental appointments to a time outside school hours. Authorisation for absence in these circumstances may only be given when treatment or consultation is on an emergency basis.
- Should try to take holidays during school holiday time. If, however, this is not possible a school may authorise a maximum period of ten school days, dependent on this having been agreed in writing beforehand and a holiday form having been signed by both parents/carers and school. The expectation is that parents/carers will support the provision of any catch-up work resulting from such absence.

Pupils

- Have the right to maximum educational opportunity and therefore are expected to attend school regularly and punctually, with support from parents/carers, school and any agency involved to achieve this.
- They are expected to arrive on time, equipped and ready to engage in learning.
- They are expected to have due regard to the rules and regulations of the school including those relating to behaviour.

School

- Having received reasons from the parent/carer for an absence will decide whether the reason given constitutes an authorised or unauthorised absence. **Only the school can authorise an absence.**
- Will expect pupils to attend, punctually and dressed/equipped ready to take full advantage of the education provided. The expectation is that as far as is possible 100% of pupils will strive to achieve 100% attendance.
- Will encourage and support good attendance, rewarding effort and achievement as appropriate.
- Will make all necessary preliminary investigations as to pupil absence.

- Will make every effort to determine reasons for absence on the first day through the system they have in place to deal with first day contact.
- Will ensure that written confirmation of absence and reasons is received as far as is possible (including issuing letters with tear-off slips to facilitate parental response if no initial correspondence is received within 5 days).
- Will set an exemplary model of personal and organisational punctuality and attendance.
- Will respond to attendance concerns by communicating with parents/carers and pupil and offering support and guidance to address issues arising.
- Will inform parents/carers and pupils of term dates and in-service days as far in advance as is practically possible & will send reminders of these dates.
- Will publicise and adhere to their own attendance policy ensuring it is available to parents/carers, pupils, the local authority and the wider community.
- Will keep parents/carers informed about initiatives, strategies and progress and/or trends through newsletters or similar.
- Will ensure the senior management team are seen to pay special attention to latecomers to demonstrate that being in school and in class on time is important.
- Will conduct regular spot checks and patrols by identified senior teaching staff during the day to detect and deter lesson truancy.
- Will keep and publicise to all interested parties/stakeholders such data as reflects weekly attendance, by whole school and class. By so doing schools place themselves in a position where they may quickly and efficiently determine trends and the effects of any initiatives or change, in order to inform future practice.
- Will ensure staff are trained in attendance protocol and procedures.
- Will welcome back pupils who have been absent for whatever reason with care, devising appropriate re-integration programmes where necessary.
- When making a referral to the EWS will use the official referral form.
- Will follow up unexplained or insufficiently explained absence directly with parents/carers prior to EWS referral.
- Will facilitate regular meetings between EWS/Attendance Officers and key staff members, including Learning Mentors and Connexions Personal Advisors.
- Will keep the EWS/Attendance Officers and CXWE PAs informed of pupil information and general school issues, which may impact on current practice or procedures.
- Will inform the EWS/Attendance Officers and CXWE PAs of children in care.
- Will monitor closely attendance of children in care and report any concerns to the EWS/Attendance Officers according to the agreed guidelines.

Education Welfare Service

- Will support and advise the school in the process of developing and reviewing their attendance policy.
- Will advise the school with regard to effective strategies for promoting attendance and addressing levels of absence.
- Will accept and allocate appropriate referrals from schools to an EWO, should the referral fall within the eligibility criteria and be a valid and appropriate referral. The referrer will be contacted if the EWS are unable to accept the referral.
- Will facilitate 'Parenting Contract Agreements'.
- Will undertake legal action against parents/carers who are seen to be failing in their legal responsibilities.
- Will administer the Penalty Notice system and undertake prosecutions for unpaid fines.
- Will liaise and plan/act with Learning Mentors, Attendance Officers and Personal Advisors as necessary or appropriate.
- Will work closely with social care workers if a child in care has attendance difficulties.
- Will attend/initiate regular meetings with key staff in secondary schools who buy into the EWS, primary and special schools.
- Will liaise between schools and other agencies as appropriate.
- Will engage in multi-agency working to support pupils at schools across the city.
- Will target and address the issues of transition and transfer, including assessing/targeting Year 6 pupils at risk of disaffection or poor attendance. Will communicate details and strategies to those concerned.
- Will develop and implement truancy sweeps across the city, working alongside police, raising awareness of good attendance throughout the community.

Registers

'Registration' refers to the marking twice daily of the register to clearly show whether a pupil is present or absent for the morning or afternoon session. Initially this involves symbols which merely show whether a child is present at the time the register is called. Subsequently this information is added to as reasons for absence are either sought or volunteered and the appropriate symbol must be added to clarify whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school and under which category the absence may be classified.

The registration will normally happen in class at the earliest time when all pupils are due to be in place and ready to learn. A time during the afternoon must also be set aside for this purpose. In secondary schools individual teachers will be expected to take a register during each lesson period as well, but this is not used for legal purposes in the same way that the morning and afternoon registration is.

The register must be called and all pupils have a mark made against their name. The legal process of recording presence or absence in the register is the responsibility of the teacher.

Registration marks must be updated on receipt of reasons for absence and verification of whether the school has deemed the reason for absence to be authorised or unauthorised. The parents/carers' written confirmation, when obtained should be signed and kept for a minimum period of 3 years to provide an audit trail to verify the absence code.

Alternatively the class teacher may verify having received the information, noting the date information received and brief description of the reasons, in a separate or attached document. All changes to attendance marks must clearly show the original code, the code it has been changed to, who made the change and when it was made. This is the case for both manual and electronic registers and all electronic systems used by schools must be able to provide this facility.

Requirements and Procedures

All attendance data, whether handwritten or computerised is expected to be held by the school office, within thirty minutes of registration. Any changes to the data may therefore be monitored centrally and also guarantee centralised access in the case of an emergency.

Schools should keep their attendance registers secure and retain them for three years from the last date of entry. This includes electronic registers.

Senior school staff should check registers regularly to ensure that they are being completed in accordance with the legislation and the school's policy. They should also analyse the data to identify any patterns of absence which have not already been picked up.

Computerised registration does not improve attendance but provides accessible data to ensure effective targeting and identification of trends in order that problems and improvements may be recognised and used to inform future practice.

Absence Codes

The DCSF has identified a mandatory range of codes for use nationally to record presence and absence. These codes and guidance on their use are available on the EWS website on the intranet:

<http://intranet.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/welfare/welfare.html>

Authorised Absence

Only the school may authorise an absence

A letter or telephone conversation does not automatically mean an absence may be seen to be authorised. Normally a school must receive written confirmation from the parent or carer. Following this the school will make the decision as to whether they will authorise the absence.

A range of criteria may be considered when a school decides whether to authorise an absence. The following may constitute a part of these acceptable criteria:

- Sickness of the pupil, such as they are unfit to receive education or be present in the educational establishment.
- Unavoidable, emergency medical or dental treatment or consultation.
- Days of religious observance, such as the main religious days of Eid or Diwali. Such days to be agreed beforehand by the Head Teacher, whereupon their observance will be respected.
- Exceptional family circumstances - such as bereavement.
- Visits to other schools, agreed in advance, for the purpose of transfers, interviews or examinations.
- Up to ten school days in total during the academic year for the purpose of family holiday. Such leave is exceptional, rather than to be seen as routine and **must** be agreed prior to the holiday.

The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of absence.

Unauthorised Absence

The following examples are sample reasons given for absence which may constitute unauthorised absence:

- Shopping for school uniform, equipment, shoes, haircuts or any other such items.
- Looking after parent, siblings or other family members who are unwell or require childcare/supervision.
- Looking after the house or property.
- Birthdays, including parties or treats.
- Staying home to see visiting relatives - unless, in certain circumstances, having been agreed and authorised in advance with the school.
- Day trips.
- A family holiday which has not been authorised prior to departure by the school.

Suggested guidance for schools to send to parents/carers

Absence – Parent/Carer’s Guide

We would like to remind you that the school is trying hard to make sure all pupils are in school as often as possible. The list below shows which reasons we are willing to accept and those which we will not accept as important enough to authorise absence.

Authorised circumstances

- Illness - where a pupil is too ill to leave the house
- Illness - when a pupil has an infectious disease and you have phoned the school and agreed when they can return.
- If your child has an emergency medical or dental appointment.
- If you have a religious holiday to observe. The school should have details of the religion on the school information form. Dates must be given to the school by telephone or letter before the relevant dates to be observed.
- Family crisis - eg. death or critical illness of close family member.
- Visit to another school for interview, examination etc. Again, dates to be agreed in advance with the school.
- If no other time is possible ten school days may be allowed for holiday. The school must agree the dates and a holiday form must be signed by you and the school before you go. It will be important for you to work

closely with the school to ensure work missed is made up by your child. Please liaise with the school over dates before booking your holiday to ensure you avoid important school dates, ie SATs week.

Unauthorised circumstances

- Shopping - even if for school uniform or shoes
- Haircuts
- Staying home to look after parents/carers or other members of the family
- Absence due to illness of other member of the family or maternal pregnancy
- Looking after the house
- Birthdays or treats
- Day trips
- Staying at home to see visiting relatives. If unsure check with the school.
- Family holidays which are longer than ten school days or which add up to more than ten days during the year.
- Family holidays which have not been agreed and signed before you go.

If you are not sure, please ring the school to check before you allow your child to stay away from school.

If any absence is not authorised the register will be marked to show this. If unauthorised absence does happen this will affect your child's attendance record and you may be contacted by the LA who may make further investigations or take measures to avoid this happening again.

Unnecessary absence disturbs education, disrupts learning and means your child is not getting the educational help they deserve.

Lateness

Lateness must be addressed as a matter of routine by schools. A pupil who enters a classroom late has often missed the principal objectives for the day and must start to catch up so will start the day from a place of disadvantage. Their late arrival is also likely to disturb the class and delay learning for all.

Lateness in Registers

The time that registers are open is to be regular and consistent. Any pupil who arrives in class after the register is called is marked with code L – present mark. If the pupil arrives after the closure of the registers then code U should be entered – unauthorised absence. In these circumstances the ongoing lateness can be dealt with by legal sanctions and the school should discuss the case with the EWS.

It is good practice for schools to record the time of arrival of all pupils who are late in a 'late book' or equivalent. This means that if the case goes to court then the school can evidence the amount of education missed by the pupil through late arrival. This procedure also allows schools to identify trends and individual pupil patterns of lateness so they can target support appropriately.

Potential strategies to address lateness

It is good practice for schools to make contact with parent/carers when a pupil is late to establish whether there is any change in home circumstances impacting on the pupil e.g. the pupil has become a young carer. If information is gained that leads the school to believe additional support is needed for the child then they should consider undertaking a CAF and referring to the multi-agency locality panel for support.

Strategies to address lateness may include the following:
Additional homework to make up for the time/work lost.

Detentions may be appropriate according to age and circumstances.

Use of a late book, held centrally, which pupil must sign and which can then generate letters home.

Use of punctuality/target cards to raise the profile of punctuality and provide personal targets towards which the pupil should be working.

Working with the school community to develop incentive schemes.

Referral to appropriate outside agency/MALT to access advice and support for family.

Use of Penalty Notices when pupils unauthorised absences meet the criteria.

Prosecution of parents/carers in extreme cases of lateness where education is being seriously affected by the amount of time lost.

Holidays and extended trips abroad

Family holidays during term time

Only in exceptional circumstances may the amount of leave granted for a holiday in term time exceed (in total) more than 2 weeks. Authorised holidays are marked with code H and unauthorised holidays are marked with code G.

This means that the parent/carer must make out a case for taking the child away from school for more than two weeks of the school year, showing why his or her child should be treated differently from the norm. Even in the case of a period of less than 2 weeks – which should not be regarded as an acceptable norm – the parent still must make out a case.

All the circumstances of each individual request should be taken into account: “blanket approval” policies are not acceptable. The following factors may be relevant but this should not be regarded as a comprehensive list:

- i) The nature and purpose of the trip, bearing in mind that the DCSF guidance indicates that the discretionary power is specific to a holiday – a trip to work in the family business would not therefore come within the scope of the regulation;
- ii) the duration of the trip and its impact on the child’s education, particularly in terms of continuity of learning;
- iii) the circumstances of the family and the wishes of the parents/carers;
- iv) the distance being travelled, the expense of such travel and whether the trip is seen by the family as a rare event during the child’s school career;
- v) the overall attendance pattern of the child.

Leave of absence for more than 2 weeks must be seen as exceptional: schools should discuss with parents/carers why such leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned they constitute authorised absences (code H).

Where parents/carers fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed, the extra time should be treated as unauthorised absence (code G). A similar line should be taken where parents/carers take the child away without permission or fail to apply for permission in advance of the holiday.

Extended trips overseas during term time

In making judgements about extended absence for pupils from minority ethnic families, schools should ensure that full account has been taken of the particular circumstances relating to each individual case. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents/carers’ perspective even though the school may not be able to grant the request.

Schools should ensure that all parents/carers are aware of the school’s policy on absence. In the case of minority ethnic parents/carers, special care should be taken to ensure that it has been fully explained and understood.

Interpreters should be used if necessary. Schools with a number of parents/carers from a particular minority community may wish to consider organising a special meeting for these parents/carers.

In discussing absence with parents/carers schools should show that they have taken in account the following:

- A visit involving family overseas has an entirely different significance than the normal associations with 'holiday'.
- Visits may be very important in terms of children's self-identity and self-esteem as they grow up.
- Parents/carers may feel that the reasons for their visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school – maintaining family links (in extended family situations) may involve greater significance and greater pressure in some societies.
- The reasons for parents/carers making a visit may be similar to those for indigenous parents/carers, eg. Family illness, bereavement, family business, maintaining family contacts etc. However, where indigenous parents/carers can make use of weekends and holidays, it is clearly less easy for minority ethnic parents/carers to undertake these normal and necessary activities where huge distances and high costs are involved.

If absence is agreed schools should consider:

- Seeking to establish, and make explicit, if appropriate, the potential educational value in the visit;
- Explaining what work the child will miss in school, how it can be made up on return and how the parents/carers could help the child;
- Whether work can be given for the child to do (with parental support) while s/he is away;
- Preparing a study pack;
- Asking the pupil to make notes/observations in relation to a class topic (current or for the following term)
- Sharing the experience in a positive way with other children and the class teacher on return;
- Going through any work that has been done by the pupil on return.

Schools may also wish to draw up a home/school agreement when families request extended holidays, which indicates the responsibilities of the parents/carers, the work the child will need to catch up and an agreed return date. Extended family holidays that are authorised are marked with code F.

Further guidance is available on the EWS website:

<http://intranet.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/welfare/welfare.html>

Guidance with regard to Traveller children's attendance

<p>If a Traveller child is living on a permanent site or in housing and the family travels off.</p>		<p>Keep child on roll. You are their base school. The child may attend another school during their travelling period before returning to your school¹. Inform your EWO/Attendance Officer who will liaise with Avon Consortium Traveller Education Service (ACTES) regarding tracking. Contact ACTES if you need clarification about your base school status. Absence is recorded as authorised – Code T.</p>
<p>If a Traveller child is living on an unauthorised site or the Bristol Transit site and the family travels off.</p>		<p>Contact the ACTES who will do their best to establish the family's whereabouts². If it is confirmed that the family have moved out of the area you should take the child off roll.</p> <p>If the family have remained within your area the child may be able to return to your school. Keep the child on roll until this has been established (usually within 1 week). Absence is recorded as authorised – Code T.</p>
<p>If a Traveller Child is known to be still living in the area but not attending.</p>		<p>Refer in the first instance as for other pupils. Your EWO/Attendance Officer will contact ACTES to arrange to do a joint visit. The ACTES WLO will then work together with your EWO/Attendance Officer to try to improve the situation. If poor attendance continues to be a problem, non-attendance procedures should be implemented.</p> <p>Absence should be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code.</p>

¹ Dual registration legislation. From 1st January 1998 the law has allowed Traveller children to be dually registered. The school that they normally attend when not travelling will be regarded as their base school. They can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school. Base schools must keep a place open for Traveller pupils who are travelling and record their absence as authorised (code D) during this period.

² Avon Consortium Traveller Education Service (ACTES) contact tel: 01454 862620/21.

Pupil Tracking

Statutory Responsibilities

It is the duty of all who work in the education service to secure the safety of children in their charge.

The maintenance of registers is governed by the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. Deletion from role must follow strict guidelines and procedures - details available on the EWS website:

<http://intranet.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/welfare/welfare.html>

Where a child is known to be moving, the existing school should contact the school the child is moving to so they can confirm the date the pupil will be put onto their register (agreed admission date, NOT the date the child arrives at school). The existing school should remove the pupil from roll on the previous school day to the date the child is put on the register at the new school.

If a child stops attending school and usual procedures to contact the parent/carer get no response, the school should contact their EWO/Attendance officer as a matter of urgency for pupil tracking procedures to be implemented.

If any professional has good reason to suspect that a crime against a child may have been committed they should immediately contact the police.

The local authority has responsibilities for **Children Missing Education** (which relates to young people resident in Bristol but who do not have a school place). Guidance regarding these procedures can be found on the intranet under Children Missing education.

Multi-Agency responsibilities

Where a child is withdrawn or “disappears”, Head Teachers and agencies involved with the school or young person must make every effort to gain information at the earliest opportunity. This may include EWS, Social care, CXWE PA, Learning Mentor etc. Factors in assessing risk are length of absence, level of concern and level of perceived risk to the pupil.

Even without specific concerns liaison must be sought between school and agencies who may have contact or information. These may include Social care, CXWE PA, local Housing Offices and Education Welfare Offices in area of absence and possible destination. All cases must automatically be considered for referral to Social care (who may refer on to the police), the Education Welfare Service or CXWE.

It may be appropriate for agencies to approach possible sources of information such as relatives or neighbours. In cases where concern is specific, action to gain information and alert agencies and/or police must be swift in order to protect vulnerable parties.

Such concerns may include:

- A record of poor attendance
- Evidence of poor or inappropriate parenting
- Child's health/general development
- Certain categories of special educational need
- Child and/or siblings on the Child Protection Register.

Unexplained, continued absence of any child on the Child Protection Register must automatically be treated as high priority and procedures set out in the multi-agency Procedures for Working with Children in Need must be followed.

Pupils who disappear, stop attending or have gone 'missing' should not be deleted from the school registers until all avenues have been followed and it is confirmed that the child has left the area and cannot be traced. Investigations must be undertaken by both the school and the local authority (EWS) to try and trace the child. If the child is not found the EWS will advise the school to delete the pupils name from their registers and upload the pupils common transfer file (CTF) to the Lost Pupil Database/s2s site. See 'Deletions from Registers' on EWS website: <http://intranet.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/welfare/welfare.html>

Children in Care

Local authorities have been set targets following government recognition of underachievement amongst children in care. These targets are reflected in the planning and action of the local authority.

The attendance of children in care must be given high priority, with schools, support staff, partner agencies and EWOs giving priority to monitoring the attendance data of children in care. Flexible and creative approaches, with particular attention to transitional phases are of the utmost importance.

Early intervention is vital to resolve attendance difficulties at the earliest stage. Schools should respond by swift information-seeking, planning and action.

Concerns must be passed on, with action plans to ensure ongoing communication and a unified response. Regular communication with the home placement at the earliest stage may also assist improvement.

The use of rewards and congratulations cannot be over-emphasised.

Where exclusion occurs schools have a responsibility under social inclusion guidance to ensure that all parties are fully aware of appropriate procedures, rights and responsibilities.

Guidance for supporting the school attendance of children in care

The Education Welfare Service maintains high expectations for the attendance at school of all children in care. Our corporate responsibilities include raising the profile of school attendance of children in care with schools and other partners who share the attendance agenda with us.

We expect schools, support staff, partner agencies and EWOs to give priority to monitoring the attendance of children in care, intervening where necessary to resolve attendance issues at the earliest stage and working together with schools, carers and social workers to provide effective programmes of reintegration to school for children in care. Any actions regarding the attendance of children in care should be incorporated into the child's Personal Education Plan.

EWOs role

- ▶ to monitor the attendance of pupils identified as being children in care
- ▶ to identify any unauthorised absences of a child in care and establish with the school what action they have taken and agree any necessary follow up
- ▶ to inform the designated teacher for children in care of all concerns regarding attendance patterns for individual pupils
- ▶ to ensure names of children in care are not removed inappropriately from school roll, and to prioritise follow up of any child in care who

disappears, ensuring the pupil tracking system is adhered to and all appropriate agencies notified

- ▶ to develop and maintain good communication between the EWO, school, home/care situation and social worker to ensure attendance issues are known about and dealt with quickly and in line with guidance
- ▶ to prioritise action on referrals from school of children in care
- ▶ to develop and negotiate an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) for young people who are either not attending school or whose attendance is causing concern and to inform Education of Children Looked After Service (ECLAS) of the IAP arrangements as teacher support may be available
- ▶ agree appropriate targets and strategies for the IAP with the young person, school, parent/carer, social worker and any other relevant agency
- ▶ to work together to develop a programme of intervention that will lead to maximum reintegration at school (or other educational provision) over an agreed period of time
- ▶ to seek to identify specific causes of absence and to actively work with schools, young people, parents/carers and other agencies to eradicate such causes
- ▶ to provide strategies/support to school/carer/social worker for any child in care where attendance is highlighted as a concern on their PEP
- ▶ to acknowledge on a termly basis improvement in attendance of children in care by providing EWS attendance certificates to those young people who have made a significant effort to improve their attendance
- ▶ to discuss the attendance and monitoring of looked after children at their schools with the Senior EWO or Team Manager in supervision
- ▶ to liaise with ECLAS

Our expectations of schools

- ▶ that key school staff are aware of which pupils are children in care so that effective monitoring and prompt intervention can be undertaken, in line with information sharing guidelines
- ▶ that unauthorised absences of children in care will be followed up on the first day of absence, notifying appropriate staff if an unacceptable (or no) reason for absence is provided
- ▶ that school staff will follow agreed procedures to investigate and

resolve the reason for absence, including arranging an in-school meeting with the young person, parent/carer and social worker where appropriate

- ▶ that school will refer the ongoing absence of a child in care to the EWO identifying that the pupil is a child in care, the actions taken by the school and the outcome of school interventions
- ▶ that school staff will co-operate fully with reasonable arrangements made by the EWO and other partner agencies to support the reintegration to school of a child in care
- ▶ that schools will utilise resources available to them to support the attendance of children in care (ie; allocating a Learning mentor, referral to PA, short term support in appropriate base/unit)
- ▶ that designated teachers for children in care will ensure they receive regular training and keep themselves updated on changes in policy, practice or legislation regarding children in care
- ▶ that school staff will have adequate time dedicated to following up absence of children in care and attending meetings to resolve issues

Our expectations of carers/social workers

- ▶ that contact will be made with school to advise them on the first day of absence of a child in care
- ▶ that school attendance will be seen as a priority to enable young people to reach their maximum educational potential
- ▶ that information regarding potentially volatile, aggressive or abusive behaviour by the young person is shared with schools before the pupil arrives to enable schools to make adequate health & safety arrangements
- ▶ that schools are kept informed about significant changes affecting a young persons life
- ▶ that advice and guidance is available from social workers on individual children to enable schools to deliver appropriate educational programmes for each child
- ▶ that carers and social workers readily engage in school meetings to enhance the education being provided for the young person
- ▶ that carers and social workers work with schools to find creative solutions to problems presented by the young person in school



School Attendance – Every day counts

Section 2: Good Practice

Revised August 2008

Good Practice and Strategies Available

Key Principles of Good Practice

Establishing good habits early – nursery and primary schools need to help pupils and parent/carers to establish regular and punctual attendance.

Early intervention - to ensure issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity - avoiding persistent poor habits, improving communication and a united approach to problem-solving. This is a key area to establishing parental support and avoiding patterns of unexplained absence.

Rewarding achievements - positive recognition of individual pupils, classes and year groups should happen according to established routines. Focus areas may include assemblies, certificates, prizes and public displays of positive change - such as newsletter items or attendance boards in school entrance halls and corridors.

Working with parents/carers - schools must be aware of the adults with parental responsibility. Communications may include parent meetings, newsletters and home-school agreements.

Working with pupils - class discussions are a key to pupil independence, peer involvement and thus encouragement and support within school.

Underlying academic or self-esteem issues - it must be recognised that learning or personal difficulties may be primary factors leading to poor attendance. The effects of literacy or numeracy difficulties and lack of academic understanding cannot be overemphasised.

Working in partnership with other agencies to promote good attendance and resolve absenteeism is key to maximising outcomes. This will involve information sharing on a regular basis to allow agencies to identify appropriate interventions they can offer to schools.

School brochures and attendance publications are expected to state school policy. Attendance should be highlighted positively and not just statistically. Procedures for contacting and informing school should be consistent and clear, with parents/carers regularly reminded of their responsibilities.

Attendance leaflets/information should be given to local social care offices for social workers to pass to carers and residential units. Schools should actively seek to promote attendance for children in care in partnership with all agencies.

School Response to Absence

- 1 All schools should operate a 'first day absence' system to ensure contact is made with the pupils home if there has been no advance notification of absence and no communication is received by 9.30am.
- 2 A pupil not present at registration should have an absence symbol entered in the register which may be amended later as appropriate.
- 3 Pupils should be welcomed back in to the classroom positively on their return.
- 4 If the reason given for absence is acceptable and is received by telephone or letter then the register should be marked as authorised absence and the written evidence (office memo or letter) stored in an agreed format for the academic year on the child's file.
- 2 Routine letters should be sent at earliest opportunity to chase absence reasons - these should reflect importance of attendance and be in simple format to allow for literacy problems that may exist within the family.
- 3 The late book should be regularly checked to ascertain regular or sudden lateness issues for pupils. Communication with home should be made where issues are identified.
- 4 If absence continues and no communication from home is received by day 3, a letter should be sent to the parental home asking for urgent communication.
- 5 If the family have English as a second language then consideration needs to be given to using an external agency or home link teacher to make contact with the home.
- 6 Where attendance concerns exist a meeting should be arranged by the school to discuss issues and assess implications. If appropriate a referral to EWS will be made once in-school communications have failed to effect a positive change or engage the family/pupil.
- 7 Parents/carers should be kept fully informed of school response to attendance problems. Other relevant issues e.g. curriculum, staffing and learning, should also be shared.
- 8 If problems are recognised parents/carers may be asked to accompany pupil until a routine of punctual attendance is established.
- 9 In certain cases it may be appropriate to liaise with Learning mentors to support re-integration and for children in care with ECLAS.
- 10 Meetings in school between parents/carers, pupil and key staff should have action plans drawn up as a result. These plans should be copied to all involved, whether they were present at the meeting or not..

Re-integration of pupils who have been absent

Successful re-integration requires planned strategies and informed staff.

At home:

Both pupil and family must be prepared for their return (including from a planned absence).

Support may be necessary to re-establish routines.

Parents/carers must be reassured that the return is a positive move that will help Learning.

Parents/carers are useful allies to ensure attendance improves – are they well-informed of procedures for reporting absence?

Are parents/carers receiving advice and information in a language which enables them to comprehend and participate?

It may be appropriate to consider parental presence in school as a short term measure to facilitate re-integration (e.g. just present to support or as an SMSA or reading helper or Learning support assistant).

Involve parents/carers in target-setting so that their own objectives are also reflected and supported by them in an ongoing process.

In school:

Where ever practicable it is best practice for the adult who has been working with the child to meet them and take them to their tutor group. This may be the Attendance Officer, Home School Link Worker, Learning Mentor etc.

Each teacher who will deal with the pupil should have a copy of their timetable provided for them asking that they keep an eye on the pupil and offer support and encouragement. It is also essential that key staff are informed as soon as the pupil fails to turn up and that this is communicated to parent/carer and other support worker.

Staff and peers should be encouraged to greet the pupil warmly.

Missed learning should be detailed and presented in a clear and positive manner, in order to avoid it feeling overwhelming and contributing to a lack of confidence.

Someone should be in charge of co-ordinating the re-integration and communicating necessary information to involved parties.

Someone should be available to discuss/listen to the pupil and access appropriate support. Regular contact times are helpful.

Where appropriate teaching and non-teaching staff should be aware of the strategies to support the re-integration.

Set realistic academic and attendance targets which have taken consideration of absence.

Ensure any part time timetable is only in place for a minimum period of time.

Identify priorities for Learning.

Provide safe areas when re-integration is difficult/overwhelming.

Help provide student with strategies for difficult moments/lessons.

Where absence is due to exclusion senior managers must acknowledge the difficulties teachers may have following the pupils previous behaviour and ensure staff feel supported. It may be appropriate to change key personnel.

Pupil:

May benefit from peer mentoring

May benefit from diary to log achievements/progress/change

May benefit from timetabled meetings to assess feelings/progress

Will need clear guidance about support to ensure reintegration works.

Will need to know who they can access for support if the plan seems to be breaking down.

Should receive support from the EWO, Attendance officer, Home School Link Worker, CX PA or Learning Mentor to ensure the reintegration programme is working successfully.

Will need pro-active support from parents/carers.

It is important to remember that successful re-integration to school for a pupil who has either had a lengthy absence (illness, exclusion, truancy) will ensure the best chance of re-engagement with education for the young person.

All staff need to be informed of the programme and their role clearly explained to them. Tutors need to be aware of the date a pupil is expected to return and to ensure the pupil is welcomed back in to school from the outset.

Effective strategies to reduce unauthorised absence

Ensure your Attendance Policy is up to date and has been reviewed in the last 12 months.

Audit your attendance practices to ensure you have a whole school approach that is understood by all staff, that is followed daily and that has sufficient impact to make a difference. Ensure there is a consistent approach across the school.

First day phone contact to all parents/carers whose child is absent without school's knowledge.

Plan regular 'blitz' weeks for specific year groups.

Log pupils movement in and out of school.

Provide an 'attendance folder' for staff, which incorporates all the necessary information required to comply with the schools arrangements for attendance.

Provide a laminated information sheet for supply staff so that they are aware of the school's procedures with regard to registration, pupil absence and follow up.

Make 'attendance' a fixed agenda item on all school meetings.

Ensure there is regular liaison between tutor (pastoral staff) and subject teachers so that relevant attendance information can be shared.

Establish supportive re-integration programmes for students who have been out of school for a period of time.

Run a 'catch up' club for truants to make up the work they missed.

Display attendance charts in class rooms, year areas, noticeboards as an incentive to combat truancy.

Weekly newsletter publishing 'league tables' for individual form groups. Have attendance competitions between tutor/year groups.

Each half term display the names of all pupils with 90% plus attendance. All names displayed are entered into a prize draw which is held during assembly and the overall winner receives a prize. This could be done in year groups, Key Stage or whole school. Funding for prizes could come from business sponsorship.

Present awards for good attendance - bronze for two terms, silver for four

terms and gold for six terms. (This could be changed into terms, months or weeks depending on your requirements.)

After school activities involving Learning Mentors and SENCO.

Working with outside agency (YMCA) to develop attendance projects for targeted year groups.

Use Learning Mentors to support specific pupils with advice regarding meeting attendance targets.

Regular emphasis on the connection between attendance and attainment.
Projecting a safer and friendlier image of the school to the community.

Weekly information to parents/carers whose child's attendance drops below 90 %.

Agree individual attendance targets with pupils and their parents/carers - Individual Attendance Plan.

Send reminders to parents/carers who fail to provide a reason for absence. Constantly review until a reply is received.

Install a dedicated 'attendance' telephone line which is specifically for parents/carers to inform school of absences.

Provide pagers to supportive parents/carers of regular non-attenders.

Use e-mail or mobile phone texting to inform parents of pupil's absence & lateness.

Interviews in school with parents/carers to challenge unsatisfactory explanations.

Involve Governors in meetings with parents/carers where a student's attendance has fallen below a certain level.

Introduce a 'buddy' system, where a poor attender is paired with another pupil living close by. 'Buddies' call for the poor attender every day and escort them to school.

Arrange timetables to ensure favourite activities are placed at critical times with regard to attendance - first thing, end of morning or end of day.

Review KS4 curriculum - introducing new projects and courses that are vocational or work related for specific Yr 11 students.

Include attendance and truancy in PHSE modules. Develop an 'I can do it'

culture to raise values and standards.

Make use of college link courses for specific students.

Develop an 'Attendance Unit' led by a member of school staff and staffed by administration personnel. The aim is to oversee all matters relating to pupil attendance and absence and to promote the importance of good attendance. Also used to deploy a Pupil Support Officer who is pro-active in the community, visits parents/carers, patrols local shops, helps the pastoral team collate information and works closely with the EWO.

Appoint an Attendance Manager to deal with all attendance issues, including the analysis of data from the electronic registration system.

Carry out daily, random, post-registration truancy checks.

Ensure staff regularly patrol the school building and surrounding areas to ensure pupils are not truanting in the vicinity of the school.

Ensure attendance is mentioned in the Annual Report to parents/carers.

Provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance and what to do if your child is absent in the school prospectus. Put reminders in the school newsletter.

Remind parents/carers in the newsletter about their responsibilities in relation to the home/school agreement.

Ensure parents/carers are aware of the guidance regarding holidays in term time - and the impact this can have on their child's overall attendance figure and academic achievement.

Fantasy 5-a-side Attendance league. This emphasises the use of competitiveness in tackling truancy. Pupils are split into teams of 5. The team with the highest half termly attendance wins the league and receives the prize/cup.

Managing attendance in school - best practice framework

The following framework has been developed to clearly identify best practice with managing attendance in school.

Greatest impact	Some impact	No impact
The headteacher has attendance on the SLT agenda at every meeting and has a report each week	The headteacher raises attendance at termly intervals with SLT	The headteacher asks about attendance at irregular intervals
A member of SLT has direct responsibility for attendance	A member of SLT has an overview of attendance	SLT is not involved in managing attendance
A well structured policy is shared with <u>all</u> staff and each person, including supply staff, understands their role	The policy is sound overall & makes reasonably clear the respective responsibilities	The policy lacks clarity over respective roles for improving attendance or is not followed appropriately
All key players are aware of their roles and responsibilities for attendance and absence follow up and implement actions efficiently and this is monitored effectively at appropriate times	Key players are aware of roles and responsibilities but do not fully implement actions swiftly or consistently	Key players are not fully aware of the roles and responsibilities and do not consistently follow actions through
All attendance responsibilities are fully met & there is consistent & robust use of attendance data to inform school practices & policies	Adequate steps are taken to meet all attendance responsibilities	Not all attendance responsibilities are met
The school has an effective strategy for promoting attendance which is understood and well integrated into all relevant key plans	The school strategy for promoting attendance is sound and specific actions are incorporated into key plans	There is no clear strategy for improving attendance
Specific consideration is given to improving attendance of certain vulnerable groups e.g. children in public care, traveller children and resources are targeted	The targeting of specific vulnerable groups is not comprehensive	Improving the attendance of specific groups is not addressed
Specific causes of absence are identified and tackled e.g. bullying, harassment, sickness, holidays	Specific causes of absence are identified but there is not a comprehensive strategy in place to resolve the issues	Specific causes of absence are not identified

Greatest impact	Some impact	No impact
The school's overall targets for improving attendance are based on a thorough audit. There are explicit & realistic strategies, including use of statutory powers, for meeting these targets. Targets are regularly monitored by SMT & Governors	Targets for improving attendance have been set. A reasonable range of strategies is used, but the range is neither comprehensive nor applied consistently nor monitored	Specific targets and/or actions to achieve these targets are not adequately reflected in school policy and practice. A limited range of strategies and initiatives are used to raise rates of attendance
Deployment of schools resources to deal with attendance is well targeted, based on clear analysis of need and effective prioritisation and monitored	Deployment based on clear criteria but is not always well targeted, monitored or focused on school priorities	It is unclear what criteria has been used for prioritisation and deployment of resources to attendance and there is no monitoring
Good practice is effectively disseminated across the whole school	Good practice is sometimes disseminated, but not necessarily across the whole school	Good practice is not identified
The school fosters effective liaison and co-ordination between all relevant services and maintains good working relationships with partners	There is liaison and co-ordination between services and partners, but it is not co-ordinated or managed by the school	Liaison between services and partners is poor
Data on attendance is effectively monitored on a frequent basis, the analysis is shared with all partners and effective strategies implemented to resolve any weaknesses identified	Data is monitored regularly but there is insufficient attention paid to the information this provides. Data is shared on an ad hoc basis with key partners	Procedures for monitoring and analysing data are in place, but not consistently or regularly followed up. Data is not shared with key partners



School Attendance – Every day counts

Section 3: Legislation

Revised August 2008

Legislation

Current legislation to be considered includes:

The Education Act 1996
The Education Act 2002
Children Act 1989
Crime and Disorder Act 1998
Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations (England) 2007
The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The use of legal procedures to support, inform and address attendance is crucial. Current practice and procedures must recognise and comply with legislation. Legislation clearly states that responsibility for regular attendance lies with the parent.

The relevant legislation is taken from The Education Act 1996, Section 444, (1) and (1a) which relates to parental responsibility for ensuring their child's attendance at school.

The EWS has a regularly reviewed procedure for legal sanctions for referrals where case work intervention has been unsuccessful. There are a range of legal sanctions that can be administered and decisions regarding this are made according to the assessment undertaken and evidence provided by the EWO or Attendance officer. Legal sanctions imposed may be a formal caution, a Penalty Notice (if the pupil meets the criteria), prosecution of the parent in magistrate's court (444, (1) or 444, (1a)) or completion of a CAF and referral to the multi-agency panel.

Due regard must also be given to relevant sections of The Human Rights Act:

'Appendix 7: Human Rights Act 1998

1998 Chapter 42 - *continued*

Schedule 1, THE ARTICLES - ***continued***

PART I THE CONVENTION

RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

ARTICLE 8

RIGHT TO RESPECT FOR PRIVATE AND FAMILY LIFE

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a

democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

PART II
THE FIRST PROTOCOL

ARTICLE 2

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents/carers to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.'

Further Information

Please see the following DCSF website for current legislation and regulations regarding school attendance and associated issues:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolattendance/legislation/index.cfm>

The site contains access to the following:

School Attendance Legislation

2006 Pupil Registration Regulations

Keeping Pupil Registers guidance

Absence and Attendance Codes guidance

Guidance on what codes schools should use where a pupil does not arrive on the expected start date

Statutory Instruments

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (School Leaving Date) Order 1997

The Education (School performance Information) (England) Regulations 2001

The Education Development Plans (England) Regulations 2001

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations (England) 2007

Acts

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984

Children Act 1989

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

Crime & Disorder Act 1998

School Standards & Framework Act 1998

Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

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