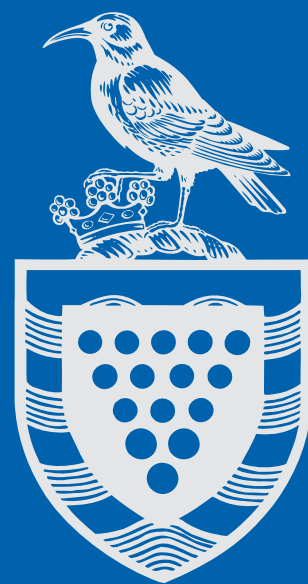


Achieving High Attendance



Guidance for Schools and Pupil Referral Units
2013 Update

Introduction

Children and Young People must attend school full time to benefit from their education. This calls for the co-operation of the Cornwall Council, school governors, school staff, parents, carers, pupils and the local community.

Schools have a special responsibility to encourage full attendance. We have produced this guide to help you with this.

If you have any questions about the guide, please contact, in the first instance, your Local Education Welfare Service Team Manager.



Trevor Doughty

Corporate Director

Children, Schools and Families

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Achieving high attendance: Guidance for Schools and Pupil Referral Units

Section 1: The law

The law defines compulsory school age as between 5 and 16 years old.

Parents

Parents¹ must secure full-time education for children of compulsory school age. The education must be suited to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child has. Parents can secure education for their child by registering the child with a school or in some other way. A child who is registered with a school must attend regularly and punctually.

Children's Services Authority

As a local authority (LA), Cornwall Council must ensure that:

- There are enough school places for the children in its area
- Parents secure full-time education for their children

Schools

Schools must:

- Record attendance at the start of the school day and during the afternoon on a paper or computer register
- Tell the LA if:
 - if a pupil fails to attend regularly
 - a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row. The school should tell the LA why the pupil is absent if it knows.

(Section 7 contains more information about referring attendance problems to the LA.)

- record in the register whether absence is authorised or unauthorised
- publish the percentage and number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the governor's annual report and prospectus
- comment on any unauthorised absence in pupils' annual reports
- allow the Cornwall Council to inspect the register during school hours.

¹ In this guide, we use 'parents' to mean 'parents, parent, carers or carer'
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Legislation

If a child is not receiving full-time education, or if a pupil who is registered with a school repeatedly fails to attend, the Cornwall Council can use:

- the Education Act 1996, sections 437 and 438 (school attendance orders)
- the Education Act 1996, section 443 (offence of failing to comply with school attendance order)
- the Education Act 1996, section 444 (offence of failing to ensure that a child attends school regularly)
- the Children Act 1989, section 36 (education supervision orders)

Section 2: Registers

The register is a legal document. We may need to use it as evidence in court. You must have clear procedures for completing the register. Teachers must fill it in neatly and accurately.

Completing the paper register

Teachers must:

- complete the register in ink
- not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when they call the register
- Not leave any spaces in the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly, distinguishing between the original entry and the correction. Both the original entry and any correction must be preserved
- Not allow pupils to mark the register
- Mark pupils who are present / (*am*) and \ (*pm*)
- Mark pupils who are absent O. Your school can use different colours for authorised and unauthorised absence
- Mark pupils who arrive late but before the register is closed L
- Mark pupils who arrive after the register is closed U (see Section 3 for more information).

You should display instructions for filling in the register on its inside cover.

Legislation

The contents and maintenance of school registers is governed by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 1571/1999).

This can be viewed on the Office of Public Information web site at www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation .

Section 3: Authorised and unauthorised absence

This section covers the different types of absence. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) can provide further advice.

Authorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. You should not automatically class an absence as authorised because it is covered by a note from the parent.

Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
D	Dual Registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
I	Illness (not medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late (after register closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Education Visit or Trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-Compulsory School Age Absence	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Y	Enforced Closure	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
Z	Pupil Not Yet On role	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
#	School Closed To Pupils	Not Counted in Possible Attendances

Approved educational activity

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 confirms the category of registration: approved educational activity. This covers supervised activity that takes place away from the school with the school's approval. We recommend that you record approved educational activity with the codes:

- B Receiving education elsewhere, for example at a pupil referral unit or in secure accommodation
- P Taking part in a licensed public performance or sports event
- V On a field trip or educational visit
- W On work experience

You must record approved educational activities separately. But you should count them as attendance when you work out your statistics for national performance tables and prospectuses.

Unauthorised absences (truancy)

Her Majesty's Inspectors define unauthorised absence as:

“absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence”

(Education Observed, No 13)

Parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- a parent is ill
- a parent is using the child as a childminder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family
- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child attend school
- a parent wants company
- a parent gives in to the pupil who wants to stay at home
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school
- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a pupil is in paid work
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter

Lateness

You must set a point at which you close the class register. The Department for Education and Skills (DCSF) recommends 30 minutes after the start of school. If any child arrives after this point, you must count it as an

unauthorised absence (see Section 2 for information about lateness before the register is closed)

If a child is frequently late, the parent may be failing to ensure that the child is receiving full-time education. We may prosecute the parent under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

Travelling families

You may authorise the absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area if you believe that the family intends to return. You can get further advice from our Traveller Education Service.

Family holidays and extended holidays during term time

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.

But parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised. Appendix 1 contains a model form for applying for absence for a family holiday. Appendix 2 contains notes that go with the form.

You should not allow an absence for a family holiday unless the situation is exceptional. You must not set blanket policies for deciding which situations are exceptional. You must consider each situation individually.

If a pupil goes on holiday during term time without your permission, you should record the absence as unauthorised. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday for a second or subsequent period during term time without consent from the school, in accordance with Cornwall Councils Code of Conduct regarding Penalty Notices. If a parent takes a child on holiday after you have refused the parent's request and warned the parent in writing, the local authority will consider prosecuting.

Changes of address

If you suspect that a pupil's family has moved away from the area without giving you its new address, you must tell the EWS. The school and the EWS must make a reasonable attempt to find out where the pupil has gone. If you are unable to find out where the pupil has gone, you must take the pupil off the school roll after four weeks. You can then record the time since the pupil last attended school as authorised absence.

Missing Children

The EWS provides schools with information from other LA's about missing children. You should tell the EWS if you admit a child who may have been missing.

Section 4: Recording, monitoring and setting targets

Recording attendance

If you record information about attendance effectively, you will be able to:

- report to parents
- report to governors
- provide the LA with the information it needs to monitor your performance
- provide the information required by the DCSF
- find out how you can improve attendance
- set targets for individual pupils, teaching groups, year groups and the school as a whole

Monitoring attendance

To monitor attendance effectively, you should:

- use the same registration procedures throughout your school
- use different codes for authorised and unauthorised absence
- keep track of pupils during the day
- have a system, possibly spot checks, to tackle truancy after registration
- provide guidelines for form tutors on keeping registers and improving attendance
- use senior and experienced teachers as form tutors. You may wish to appoint new teachers as co-form tutors and provide training before they take on the role alone.
- Provide clear information to the EWS so that it can detect patterns of absence quickly and intervene early

Setting targets

The DCSF requires LA's to set targets for cutting absence. In addition, a school must set targets to cut unauthorised absence 'significantly' if

unauthorised absence at the school has been above the national average for the past two years.

We recommend that **all** schools set yearly targets for increasing attendance and cutting unauthorised absence.

We can help you meet your targets by:

- Arranging for the EWS to meet the Headteacher to draw up a plan to increase attendance
- Meeting the Headteacher each year to consider whether the targets have been met
- Involving the schools attached inspector

Section 5: Attendance strategies

We encourage all schools to devise strategies to achieve their attendance targets.

Attendance policies

All schools should publish a policy on attendance. This should involve school staff, the EWS, governors, parents and pupils. The policy should be clear and well publicised. It should set out clear procedures for registration, for following up absences, and for preventing truancy after registration. You should update the policy regularly.

It is essential to have an effective policy on bullying to go with your attendance policy.

Aims of attendance policies

Your policy should aim to:

- Promote a welcoming atmosphere that makes pupils feel safe and valued
- Encourage good relationships between the school and parents
- Stress the importance of good attendance
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and absence followed up quickly
- Ensure that all pupils receive suitable teaching and receive rewards for success.

Content of attendance policies

Your policy should ensure that:

- Attendance and punctuality is a high priority
- You meet legal requirements, especially the requirement to identify unauthorised absence
- You keep up-to-date and accurate figures on attendance
- You have procedures to detect and quickly follow up unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and truancy after registration, and you monitor these interventions effectively
- You have procedures to follow up long absences and repeated short absences
- You set short and long-term targets for individual pupils, as well as groups of pupils
- You reward good attendance and punctuality, linked to the school merit system, homework diaries and records of achievement
- You have procedures for helping children settle in after long absences
- You ensure that all pupils benefit from attending school, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language
- Class teachers get to know the pupils and are aware of anything that might affect their attendance
- School staff meet the EWS regularly
- You communicate clearly with other agencies, including the Traveller Education Service, Cornwall Educational Psychology Service, the health service, social services (including the Education Support Service and Inclusion Project officers), the police, the youth offending teams and Connexions
- Staff deal with authorised and unauthorised absence fairly
- There is good liaison when a pupil changes school
- Parents and governors are aware of attendance matters
- You share good practice with other schools.

Appendix 6 contains further advice about attendance policies.

Raising awareness of attendance

You can improve attendance by making parents, pupils and staff aware of its importance and of their responsibilities.

Parents

- Use newsletters and other communications to remind parents how they can help the school to achieve good attendance and punctuality. You should translate these into other languages that parents read.
- Include information in your prospectus about your expectations for attendance.
- Involve parents in meetings about attendance
- Involve parents in initiatives to encourage attendance
- Invite parents to assemblies that focus on attendance and reward good attendance
- Invite the EWS to parent's evenings to give advice on attendance and other welfare matters.

Pupils

- Make it clear that registration is important
- Give rewards for good attendance, such as certificates, mugs and badges, to individual groups and classes (see Appendix 8)
- Use assemblies to discuss attendance, present statistics and reward good and improved attendance
- Arrange displays around the school showing attendance rates and targets
- Use homework or pupil diaries to inform parents of pupils' attendance and any rewards they have earned
- Deal with poor attendance in a way that is effective and fair.

Staff

- Discuss attendance at staff meetings
- Arrange special meetings on attendance
- Make attendance the theme of INSET days and other training for staff. The EWS may be able to attend and share good practice from other schools. This will help staff to understand why pupils do not attend school. It will also train them to deal with different kinds of absence in different ways
- Make attendance the special responsibility of a senior member of staff who can influence the school's decisions.
- Publish the attendance rates of each class in weekly bulletins for staff.

Pupils returning after an absence

You should have procedures to help pupils catch up when they return after an absence. We suggest that:

- Pastoral staff, particularly the form tutor, take special responsibility for encouraging pupils to attend school and helping them settle back in
- Subject departments have procedures to help pupils catch up
- New staff receive training in helping pupils with poor attendance.

Practices for dealing with absence

- If a pupil is absent without explanation, contact the parents as soon as is possible, preferably on the first day
- If a pupil is absent for more than three days without an explanation, write to the parents. Keep a copy of the letter and record the date it was posted.
- If a pupil returns from absence without a letter of explanation, write to the parents asking why the pupil was absent
- Date and initial notes from parents, records of telephone calls and medical certificates. Store these in a secure place, as they may contain sensitive information
- If an explanation for absence is not satisfactory, or if the absence continues, invite the parents to school to discuss any difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending. You should do this as soon as possible, so that the problem is tackled early
- If a child is repeatedly late, contact the parents. Repeated lateness can affect a pupil's education as much as poor attendance
- Update your absence records each week to detect short but frequent absences

Secondary schools

Secondary schools may need to take extra steps, including:

- Taking a register for each lesson, to prevent truancy from individual lessons
- Using the senior management team to deal with pupils who are late.

Head of year or house

In secondary schools, heads of year or house should take special responsibility for attendance. This should involve:

- Checking the registers each week
- Working with tutors to devise and act upon plans to tackle poor attendance
- Contacting the parents of pupils with poor attendance and discussing the problem with the EWS.

The role of parents

It is the parent's responsibility to tell the school as soon as possible why a pupil is absent and to provide any further information that the school needs. Each school should make its own arrangements for parents to report absences. These should take into account the school's policy and of any special situations of individual pupils.

Section 6: Support agencies

The Education Welfare Service

The main role of the Council's EWS is to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. The EWS does so in partnership with school and parents.

The EWS service level statement describes how it works with schools.

The EWS can help you if you cannot find out why a pupil is absent or if you cannot ensure that a pupil attends regularly. An educational welfare officer (EWO) can contact the child's family and can offer advice if a child is absent without good reason.

Initially, schools are responsible for identifying and dealing with absence. You must tell the EWS if a pupil is frequently absent (for example for more than one day a week) or if a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row.

It is important to work in partnership with the EWS. School staff and the EWO should understand each other's role and responsibilities. Staff such as year heads should set aside time to meet the EWO.

As well as advising staff on individual cases, the EWO may:

- Help to explain the importance of attendance to staff, pupils, parents and governors
- Take part in joint initiatives with the school, including personal and social education, group work with poor attenders and liaison between primary and secondary schools.

Cornwall Educational Psychology Service

Our educational psychologists can:

- Help you devise policies and procedures that encourage attendance
- Provide training, for example on bullying and difficult behaviour
- Help to set up educational programmes for individual pupils
- Advise you on working with groups of pupils, parents or school staff.

Cornwall School Improvement Service

When the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) carries out an inspection, it will make further enquiries if:

- Attendance is falling
- Attendance is below 92% overall
- Attendance is below 90% in any one year

Our Inspectors and teacher advisers expect you will be able to tell them whether you are meeting OFSTED's standards. They may also recommend strategies to improve attendance. If a school's attendance is low, our Inspectors will review the situation each year. They may also suggest targets for attendance.

Section 7: Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

All schools should follow the same procedures for involving the EWS. This section explains:

- When you should involve the EWS
- How the EWS deals with persistent absence.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance

Stage 1: referral to the Education Welfare Service

Before making a referral to the EWS, you must try to contact the parent to resolve the problem.

You may choose to make a referral to the EWS if you are concerned about a pupil's absence. You are required to make referral to the EWS if a pupil has had 20 or more unauthorised half-day absences during any 100 half days.

You must make the referral on form EWS1 (see Appendix 3). You must give the EWS details of the pupil's attendance for the past 100 half days.

Stage 2: action plan

On receiving a referral, an EWO will try to contact the pupil's parents within five working days. On contacting the parents, the EWO will normally arrange a home visit to assess the situation. The home visit usually takes place within a further five working days. The home visit should result in a plan setting out actions with timescales and their intended results. The EWO will try to agree the action plan with the family, the school and any other agencies involved and the plan will set out the roles and responsibilities of each. The EWS will produce the action plan within five working days of the home visit and will send a copy to the school as soon as possible, using the form EWS1A (see Appendix 4).

The EWS records information about all referrals for non-attendance, including the pupil's attendance for the most recent 100 half days. This enables the team manager to monitor the effectiveness of the service by comparing attendance before and after the EWS became involved.

Stage 3: internal review of attendance

Starting 10 days after the receipt of the referral, the EWO monitors the pupil's attendance for 100 half days. If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days unauthorised absence during this period, the EWS may close the case. You can refer the case back to the EWS at any time.

If a pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence, the EWS will arrange an internal attendance review as quickly as possible (normally within two weeks). At the review, the EWO will discuss the case with the team manager and consider whether to start legal action. If the EWS decides not to start legal action, it will take some other action. For example it may call a family group conference, which must take place within six weeks of the review (see Appendix 7).

The legal action that the EWS will consider will include:

- Applying for an education supervision order (the Children Act 1989, section 36)
- Prosecuting the parents (the Education act 1996, section 444).

Stage 4: first warning

If the EWS decides to take legal action, it will send a first warning letter within five days of the review. The EWO will then monitor the pupil's attendance at least every two weeks for 10 weeks.

If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days of unauthorised absence in the next 100 half days, the EWS may close the case. You can make another referral to the EWS at any time.

If the pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence during the next 100 half days after the first warning, the EWS will hold an educational planning meeting within two weeks.

Stage 5: final warning

The educational planning meeting will normally involve social services, the pupil, the pupil's family, the school and any other agencies involved. The meeting normally takes place at the pupil's school but it will be arranged and chaired by an EWS team manager or a senior EWO. At the meeting, the EWS will consider the case, consult social services about applying for an education supervision order, and decide whether to take legal action.

In some cases, the EWS will try other ways of improving attendance before serving a final warning. But it will serve a final warning within two weeks if a pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence during the next 100 half days.

Stage 6: prosecution

If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days of unauthorised absence in the 100 half days after the final warning, the EWS may close the case. The school can refer the case back to the EWS at any time.

If the pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence, the EWS will prepare the papers for a prosecution immediately.

If a Parenting Order is recommended or given by the court the EWS will inform Social Services.

Recording and monitoring cases

The EWS will keep a record of each pupil who is referred for poor attendance. The record will include:

- The pupil's personal details
- The pupil's year group
- The date of the referral
- The stage that the case has reached
- The number of unauthorised absences

The Headteacher can ask to see this information on a monthly basis.

If the case is active, the EWO will monitor attendance at least once every fortnight.

Referring a case back to the Education Welfare Service

If a school has to refer a closed case back to the EWS within 100 half days, the EWS will return to the stage at which the case was closed.

Termly register checks

At least once each term the EWO must check the registers and give the team manager details of any pupils who have taken 20 or more unauthorised absences in any 10-week period.

Prosecution of parents of Year 11 pupils

The LA can take legal action against the parents of any child of compulsory school age who is not attending school regularly. But it does not have to take legal action.

If the attendance of a Year 11 pupil has not improved after a final warning, the EWS will look at the individual situation, taking advice from the school and the Cornwall Council's Legal Department.

If a Year 11 pupil has less than one and a half terms of school left the EWS is unlikely to start a prosecution.

Applications for education supervision orders

You can get a copy of our procedures for applying for education supervision orders from the EWS.

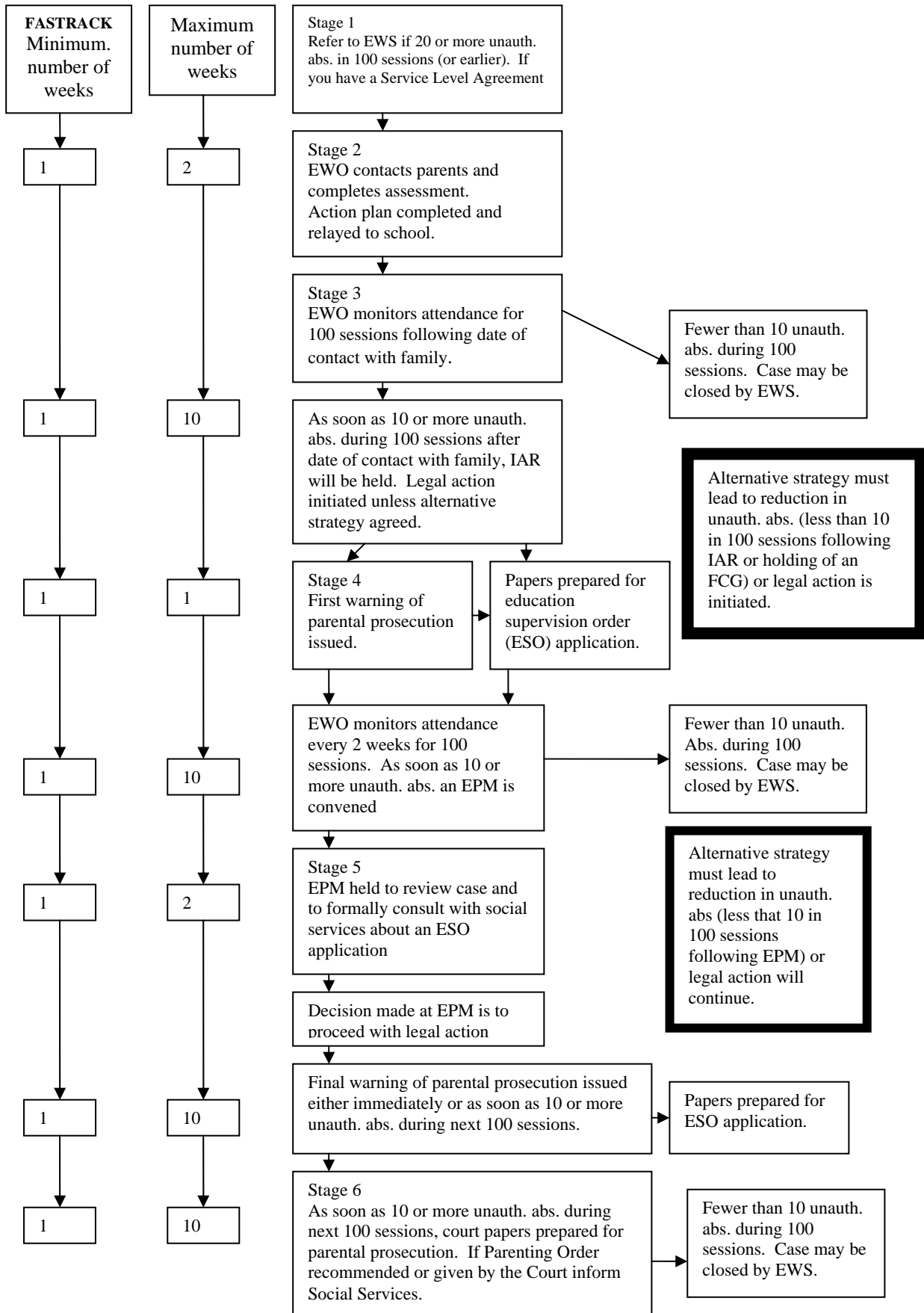
School attendance orders and failure to comply with them

We may issue a school attendance order if a child is not on the roll of any school and is not receiving suitable education elsewhere. We may prosecute parents who do not comply with a school attendance order.

You can get a copy of our procedures for school attendance orders from the EWS.

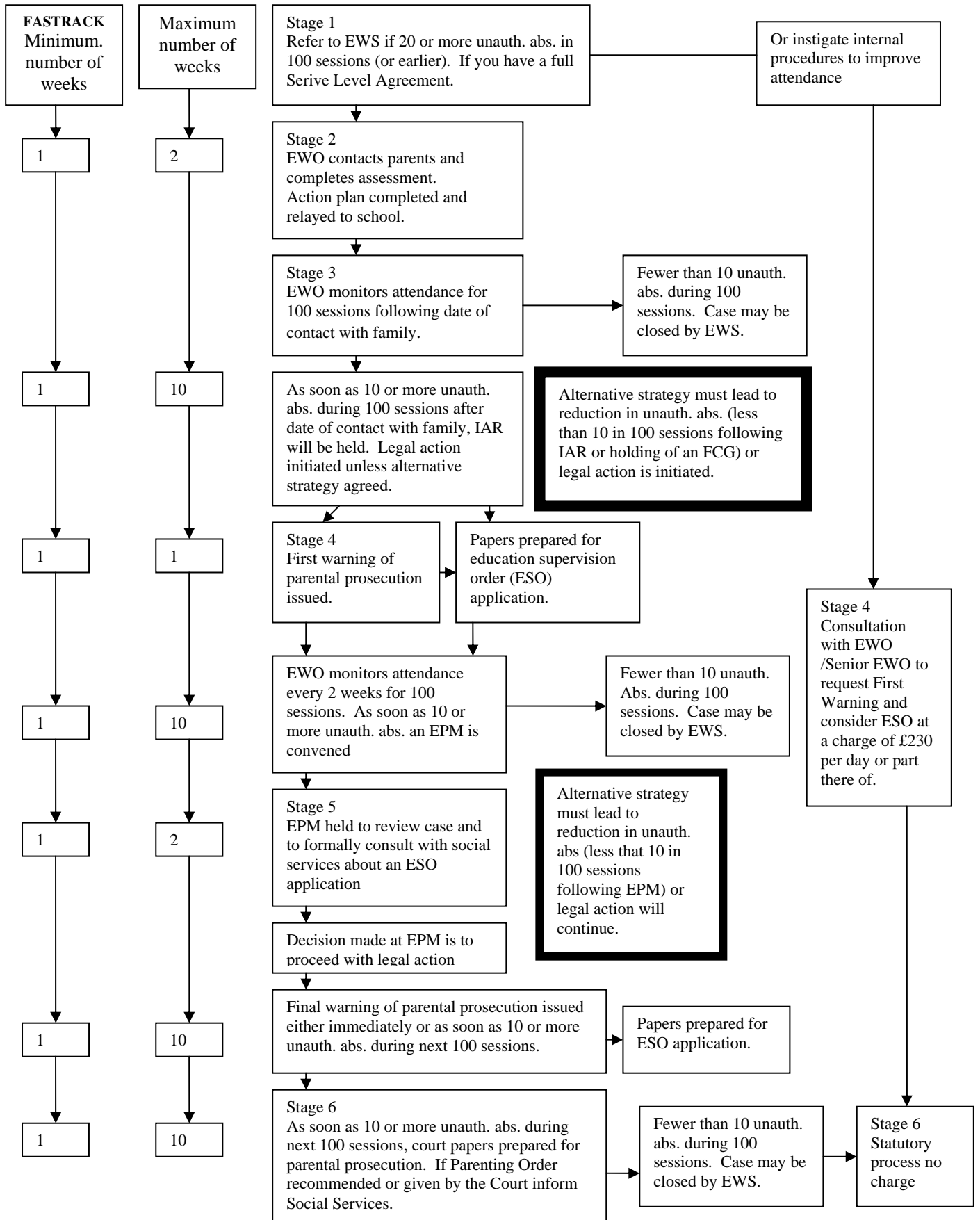
Local Authority Maintained Schools

A framework for managing attendance referrals and persistent non-attendance



Academy Schools

A framework for managing attendance referrals and persistent non-attendance



Appendix 1: Model family holiday application form

Request for a child to go on a family holiday during term time

(Please read the notes on the back of this form before you fill it in.)

Section A

Child's name:

Class or tutor group:

First day of absence from school:

Last day of absence from school:

Total number of days absent:

Is this your only family holiday this year? Yes / No

Why are you planning your holiday during term time? Please include any information you would like us to consider.

Section B – please fill in this section if it is difficult for you to take time off work during the school holidays. Otherwise, go to Section C.

Name of parent or carer whose job affects when you go on holiday:

Name and address of employer:

Job title:

Please explain why it is difficult for you to take time off work during school holidays or attach your conditions of employment.

Section C

I have read the attached notes. The information I have given on this form is correct:

Signature of parent of carer:

Date:

Section D – for school use only

Request approved/not approved:

Date:

Headteacher's signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: Model notes on application for a family holiday

Notes on family holidays

Planning your holiday

We publish the dates of school terms well ahead. This is to help you plan your holidays. When you book your holiday, please check that it does not clash with the school term.

The value of regular attendance

Your child must attend school regularly, especially to gain qualifications for their future employment. Research shows that pupils perform better if their parents or carers emphasise the importance of attending school.

Your legal responsibilities

You have a legal duty to make sure your child attends school regularly and punctually. The school and the Local Authority monitor your child's attendance and will take action if it is poor.

Absence for a family holiday

The Government recommends that family holidays are taken outside school terms. Headteachers will sometimes give permission for a pupil to go on holiday during term time. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the holiday, the pupil's past attendance, and the effects the absence will have on the pupil's learning. The Headteacher will not normally give permission simply because holidays cost less during term time.

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school

Applying for absence because of a family holiday

If you have to take your family holiday during school term, please fill in the form over the page. Please do not assume that you will automatically get permission for the absence because you have filled in the form. Please wait to hear if the Headteacher agrees to your request.

Warning

If you take your child out of school without permission you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may decide to prosecute. A conviction may result in a fine of up to £2,500, a prison sentence of up to three months or both. Alternatively, a penalty notice may be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice will result in Court action.

Appendix 3: Form for referring a case to the EWS

EDUCATION

Education Welfare Service (Child and Family Services) – Referral

School:

Name of pupil:

M/F:

Date of birth:

Year Group:

Full name of parent/carer:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Tel No:

Work Tel No:

Others with Parental Responsibility:

Other agencies involved:

Is pupil cared for by Local Authority (CIC): Yes No

Is pupil a 'young carer' (YC): Yes No:

Statement of Special Educational Needs: Yes No Pending

Stage on Code of Practice:

School Action/Action Plus IEP IBP PSP PEP

Reason For Referral and Any Other Relevant Information

Prior Action Taken by Referrer (include details of contact with parents):

Please attach attendance certificate to this referral form

Please confirm that the parents have been informed of this referral to the EWS

Referred by:

Title:

Date:

ICS No:

NB The information contained in this referral may be shared with the family

Office use only – referral code (please circle)

attend

pastor

preatt

cme

cnis

parent

ehe

info

excl

mmove

sao

Appendix 4: Report from the EWS

CONFIDENTIAL

Report by Education Welfare Officer

White copy to referrer, green copy to be retained on EWS file

Name of pupil:

Name of School :

Date of referral (EWSI) Received:

Date of visit / contact:

Type of contact with family: *a.* Telephone *b.* Home visit *c.* In School
d. Other (please specify)

Initial report: (including assessment)

Action plan: (by whom and when)

(a) School to provide updated details of attendance (printout) weekly and after 10 weeks (FORMAL REVIEW)

Signed by:

EWO

Date:

S.E.W.O:

Date:

Appendix 5: Initiatives to improve school attendance

Truancy Schemes

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 16, introduces truancy schemes. A truancy scheme can be requested by the school, the EWS or the police but it must have the support of a police officer ranked superintendent or higher. The superintendent will specify the area and the hours in which the scheme will operate. A truancy scheme allows uniformed police to remove children found truanting in a public place. They must take the children to school or to another place specified by the Local Authority (LA). This requires co-operation between the police, the LA (in particular the EWS) and schools.

Cornwall and Devon Constabulary and Cornwall Council have agreed that both uniformed police officers and EWO's will take part in truancy schemes. These officers stop and speak to children who appear to be of compulsory school age and ask them why they are not in school. They may remove:

- Any child who is not with an adult
- Any child who is not with an adult that they consider at risk.

The police and the EWS record the details of all the children that they stop and pass them on to the relevant school. This information will include the reason given for not being in school. The school and the EWS will then decide what action to take.

Many parents of the children stopped so far have known that they were not in school, although the reasons given for the absence have often been unsatisfactory. We expect truancy schemes to improve attendance by making parents and children aware of its importance.

Family Group Conferences (FGC)

FGC's are arranged by an independent co-ordinator. They usually take place at a neutral place and at a time that is convenient for the child's family. They involve the child, the child's immediate and extended family, and important family friends. Professionals attend for part of the meeting and give the family advice about the choices available to them and services that can help them. The family will have some time on its own to suggest a plan to tackle the child's poor attendance.

Decision to call a family group conference

FGC's can be called for any child whose education is at risk. This may be because of poor attendance or because the child is at risk of exclusion because of behaviour problems. FGC's are preventive. Therefore they are normally for children in Years 1 to 8. But older pupils can also benefit from FGC's, especially those who agree to take part.

How family group conferences are called

Any educational professional who works for the LA or the school can request an FGC. But they can only do so if the pupil and the pupil's family agree. Referral forms are available in schools, local education offices and the Council's Education Department.

Advantages of family group conferences


- The pupil and family are more involved in the decisions. This makes them more likely to carry out actions that they agree to.
- The wider family shares responsibility for helping the pupil.
- The FGC is arranged and paid for by the FGC Service.
- The FGC can lead to better relationships between the school and the family.
- Over the of FGC's result in permanent higher attendance, better behaviour or both.

Further information about family group conferences

For more information, contact:

Michael Allen

Resources Manager West

 01872 327093

mallen@cornwall.gov.uk

Location: Front Office

Social Services Office

The White House

24 Basset Road

Camborne TR14 8SL

Appendix 6: Devising an attendance policy

A written school policy is essential for improving attendance. The policy should be approved by your governing body.

Identifying current practice

Many schools already have effective practices. These can form the basis of a good attendance policy. We recommend that you:

- Make a member of your senior management team responsible for identifying current practice.
- Involve all staff in identifying current practice. This will draw attention to practices that differ between years, house and tutor groups. You can involve staff by:
 - 1) Holding an INSET day
 - 2) Calling a staff meeting or setting up a working group
- Involve the EWO. The EWO can help the school to devise an attendance policy and set targets to improve attendance.

Questions to ask

We suggest:

Liaison with primary schools

- How do we liaise with primary schools about pupils' attendance? Who liaises with whom and how often?
- Do our feeder schools know about our attendance procedures? Do we know about theirs?

Registers

- When do we take registers?
- How do we take registers?
- Do we all understand and use the DCSF's definitions of authorised and unauthorised absence? Do we explain them clearly to all staff and pupils? (See Section 3)
- What codes do we use for different kinds of absence? (See Section 3)
- Who is responsible for checking that registers are accurate?

Statistics

- Where do we record information about attendance?
- How do we break down the statistics on attendance? Do we break them down by years, houses and tutor groups?
- How do we use statistics on attendance?
- How do we communicate the statistics to staff, pupils, parents and governors?

Form tutor's role

- What is the form tutor's role?
- Does the form tutor discuss attendance at tutor group meetings?
- How does the form tutor deal with poor attenders?
- How does the form tutor encourage good attendance?

Education Welfare Service

- How do we refer cases to the EWO? (See Section 7)
- Do all staff understand how referrals work?
- Do all staff know who the EWO is?
- Do we invite the EWO to pastoral meetings or parents' evenings to raise awareness of attendance?

Parents

- How do we tell parents about our policies and procedures?
- How do we tell parents about their child's attendance and about any concerns we have about absence?

Pupils

- How do we explain our procedures and expectations to new pupils and current pupils?
- Do we discuss attendance at assemblies or tutor group meetings?
- How do we reward improvements in attendance?
- How do we help pupils settle back in when they have been absent?

Governors

- How do we involve governors in attendance?
- Is there a governor with special responsibility for attendance?

Tackling poor attendance

- Do we act quickly when there are problems with attendance?
- Who contacts parents?
- When do we contact parents?
- What information do we give parents when we contact them?
- When do we invite parents to a meeting and who invites them?
- How do we deal with lateness?
- Who is responsible for making sure that our attendance procedures are working smoothly?
- Do teachers carry out spot checks to detect truancy after registration?

Incentives

- How do we encourage pupils to attend school?
- What rewards do we give for good, excellent and improving attendance?
- How do we involve parents?

Curriculum

- How do we make sure that pupils receive teaching in all areas of the curriculum?
- Do we have schemes to help pupils who struggle with reading and numeracy?
- How do we make sure that all pupils receive suitable teaching?

Systems

- Are there links between our attendance policy and our other policies, for example our policies on bullying and behaviour?
- Do we gather parent's views?
- What links do we have with other agencies?
- Do we need a plan to improve attendance throughout school? Do we have one?

Appendix 7: Group work with poor attenders

Group work with poor attenders can help pupils increase their confidence and improve their attendance as a result.

Groups for pupils with poor attendance can provide:

- A way of sharing solutions to the problem
- A way of sharing resources
- Support for pupils
- Time with pupils to assess their needs and help them cope.

Points to consider when setting up a group

The attendance problem

The nature of the attendance problem will affect who should join the group. A group could be for pupils:

- Who are repeatedly late to school
- Who truant after registration
- Who have been referred to the EWS
- Whose attendance is below the school average
- Who will respond well to group work
- Who are in year 6 and are likely to have poor attendance when they move to secondary school.

Age

Groups on attendance work best when the pupils are of a similar age. A group for junior school or lower school pupils can prevent poor attendance from continuing. A group for older pupils can help them to improve their attendance and value being in school.

Agreement of the parents

The group leader must obtain the parents' agreement by writing to them or visiting at home. The group leader can also use the home visit to find out about any problems affecting the pupil's attendance and to gain the support of the pupil's parents.

The pupil's suitability

Parents, teachers, the EWO and others who know the pupils should consider whether the pupils will benefit from group work. Some pupils do not respond well to group work. Some are too shy or too boisterous, while others have educational or behavioural difficulties that would hinder the group's progress.

The group leader should see pupils before they are asked if they would like to join the group.

Group size

We recommend that each group has no more than 10 pupils.

Gender

A mixed group should have roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Ideally there should be an equal number of men and women involved in leading the group.

Getting to and from the group

If the group takes place outside normal school hours, you should provide transport to and from the group.

Group leaders

A group should have at least two leaders. A further member of staff, who does not attend the group, can provide helpful advice to the leaders.

At least one of the group leaders is normally a member of school staff. The other leader may be from an agency such as:

- The EWS
- Social services
- The Youth Service
- The Educational Psychology Service

Time needed to lead the group

Time is needed not just to run the group but to prepare for the sessions, to visit pupil's homes, to meet the pupils before their first session, and to report to the school, the EWO and parents.

Experience of group leaders

At least one group leader must have experience of running groups, preferably groups for children or young people.

Leadership style

The leaders must deal with any difficult situation during a group meeting in an agreed and fair manner.

The group's aims

The group leaders and school staff must agree on the aims of the group. This will make them clear about the purpose of the group and allow them to judge the group's success in achieving the aims.

Aims are likely to include:

- Improvements in school attendance
- A more positive view of school
- Greater confidence
- Better communication with staff and other pupils.

Running a group

Groups should be well planned and regularly reviewed. The group leaders should consider:

Timing of group meetings

The group should meet at least once a week to ensure continuity. The group should meet at the same time each week, as this is easier for pupils to remember and commit themselves to.

It is better to meet during the school day, although this may mean that pupils miss lessons. Groups can also meet at lunchtime or after school, although pupils are likely to need incentives to attend at these times, such as refreshments.

An hour and a half is usually time for enough activity without pupils becoming bored. But the precise length of each group should depend on the needs of its members.

Groups normally need to run for at least a term to achieve permanent improvements.

Setting

Group meetings can take place on or off the school site. A youth service wing or community area in a school can provide a relaxed atmosphere, while keeping the group focused on school issues. Taking pupils off site can raise the status of the group and encourage pupils to participate more fully but it may mean setting aside more time or arranging transport.

The setting should be easily accessible to all group members. It should have enough seats, enough space to work in, toilets, and an area for displaying work.

Programme of Work

The programme will depend on the group's aims. It may focus on recent problems with attendance or on problems that have gone on for several years.

The early part of the programme should concentrate on putting group members at their ease and developing trust. Materials should be relevant and should help group members to understand their situation.

Themes may include:

- Reasons for poor attendance – what is acceptable and what is not
- Good reasons for attending school
- Effects of poor attendance
- Relationships with other pupils
- Relationships with the family
- The future.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from having something to show for their participation in the group (See Appendix 8). This could be a folder of the pupil's work, a group project, or a display for the school.

Group sessions

The first session might cover how the group will work. Pupils can be asked to suggest rules for the group, for example telling the truth, or not shouting.

The first session must cover the rules on confidentiality, including:

- The need to follow child protection procedures, for example if a child reports abuse
- The need for group members to respect one another and not to repeat things said at the group to people outside the group
- What information may and may not be fed back to parents and teachers and how this will be done.

Giving the group a name can make an enjoyable start. Pupils can be asked to suggest names and then vote to choose one of them. Using an attendance sheet can keep the group focused on attendance. Pupils can work out the percentage of school days they have attended in previous terms and keep a weekly record of their attendance.

A set plan for group sessions can encourage pupils to think of themselves as part of the group. An example is:

11.00 am to 11.10 am	Arrival and welcome
11.10 am to 11.20 am	Warm-up activity, for example a game
11.20 am to 11.30 am	Filling in attendance sheets
11.30 am to 12.00 pm	Main activity
12.00 pm to 12.10 pm	Final game

Group leaders should follow the sessions plan in a flexible way. For example they should vary from the plan if a group finished a task more quickly or slowly than expected, or if some members are absent.

If the pupils are going to return to lessons at the end of the session, the final game should encourage them to wind down so that they return in a calm state.

Methods of work

These can include:

Role-play:

This gives group members an opportunity to practise being in different situations and taking on different roles. Miming and charades can be used as warm-up games to help pupils understand role-play. Members can practise suggesting solutions to each other in various situations, such as dealing with confrontation.

Cartoons:

Group leaders can use cartoons to develop themes. This helps members tell their story, for example why they do not attend school. Each frame should depict part of a sequence of events. This can help identify where things started to go wrong.

Self-assessment:

Members fill in worksheets, for example about friendships or about their lives so far. They can discuss these in the group or one to one. Members may interview and fill in worksheets for one another.

Videos:

Videos can be used to start discussions. Or earlier sessions can be taped for discussion later. Parents must give permission for a child to be videoed.

Tapes:

Music and story tapes can be used to start discussions. Members can also use tapes to interview one another, other pupils and teachers.

Discussions:

Group members can talk about events in the group. Group leaders need to chair the discussions sensitively.

Games:

Card games and quizzes can be used to prompt questions.

Absence from group sessions

Group leaders should agree what action will be taken if a pupil misses a session. The group leader may write to the pupil and their parents or visit them at home. The EWO may need to follow up the absence if the pupil was referred to the group by the EWS.

Funding

The cost of the group is usually low but finding needs to cover:

- Refreshments
- Equipment, such as pens, paper, and hired videos
- Transport
- Any trips
- Staffing.

Ending a group

The group leaders should plan the final session and the ending of the group. The ending of a group is not easy for some pupils, as most enjoy going to the groups. One-to-one meetings with pupils are useful for assessing pupil's progress in the group and discussing any further support they may need, for example visits by the EWO. It is important to involve parents at this stage.

Appendix 8: Incentives for good attendance

The school's procedures should include rewards for good attendance.

Organising an incentive scheme

The most successful schemes involve:

- Fair procedures that are followed by all staff
- Consultation with pupils about the form of rewards
- Short-term targets that are easy to achieve
- A method for pupils to monitor their own attendance
- A clear understanding among pupils and parents of the attendance needed to achieve a reward
- A clear timetable for presenting rewards, for example each week, or each half or full term
- Recognition of improved attendance
- Presentation of certificates or awards in assembly by someone invited specially for the occasion
- The appointment of a member of staff with responsibility for ensuring that awards and certificates are available.

Benefits and incentives for individual pupils

The benefits can be that:

- Pupils know that the school recognises and appreciates their efforts
- The school communicates better with parents
- Pupils of all abilities can gain awards
- Pupils have personal targets.

Incentives can include:

- Achieving personal targets
- Certificates for good attendance
- Letters of congratulation to parents with details of the pupil's attendance
- Weekly '100%' stickers to go into the pupil's homework diary or personal organiser
- Pens, school plaques, keyrings, school mugs, or diaries
- Praise from senior members of staff.

You should plan and grade incentives carefully. The rewards for improved attendance should not be as good as the rewards for high attendance.

Benefits and incentives for groups of pupils and their teacher

Benefits can include:

- Positive peer group pressure (if carefully promoted)
- Group solidarity
- Better awareness of the value of good attendance throughout the school.

Incentives can include:

- Having high attendance rate displayed in the school or publishing them in school newsletters
- Trophies for class or tutor groups each week or month
- Educational trips
- Recreational trips.

Note

You should monitor and review the scheme carefully to make sure that:

- Groups that fail to win awards are not blaming poor attenders
- Pupils are not comparing their attendance with the lower attendance of other pupils and coming to see poor attendance as normal.

Levels of attendance attracting awards

Incentive schemes can motivate pupils. But both pupils and parents can become disappointed if a child misses a reward because of a short illness or another unavoidable cause.

It can be useful to reward not just 100 per cent attendance but also:

- High attendance
- No unauthorised absence
- Big improvements in attendance or punctuality.

The conditions for these rewards should be the same throughout the school. And you must record authorised and unauthorised absence in the same way throughout the school.

Appendix 9: First response to absence

Most absences are short. You can greatly reduce these absences by following up all absences quickly. Research suggests that pupils are less likely to take time off for trivial reasons if they know the school will notice their absence and follow it up swiftly. Schools that contact pupil's homes on the first day of absence have cut short-term absences. This has led to lower rates of absence overall.

We recommend that:

- You remind parents that they have a responsibility to contact the school on the first day of an absence. You should also tell them what will happen if they do not contact the school or if they give an unacceptable reason for the absence
- You follow up absences in a fair way that is clear to all teachers, pupils and parents
- You make your procedures part of your school-wide attendance policy.

Suggested procedures

- Every parent should provide the school with a contact telephone number. You should consider using this number to enquire about a pupil's absence.
- You should produce a list of all absent pupils as early as possible in the day. You can produce this from a computerised registration system or by highlighting names on photocopied class lists.
- Administrative staff should remove pupils from the list if they arrive late but their parents have telephoned in or if they are continuing an absence that you have already followed up. They should explain this to the form tutor in a note with the register.
- You should contact the homes of pupils who are still on the list as soon as possible. You will need to decide who is responsible for contacting parents. You could train a member of the school's administrative staff to make the calls. Or you could give this responsibility to the class teachers, form tutors or year heads.
- If you cannot contact the parents by telephone, you may send a letter immediately. This should ask why the child is absent, remind the parents to contact the school immediately if the child is absent again, and ask them to confirm their contact telephone number.

- You should code each absence. Keep a note in the register of each action you have taken to follow up the absence and what the result was.
- You should use your normal procedures to deal with truancy, absence condoned by parents and repeated short absences. You may also refer the case to the EWS (see Section 7).

Comments

- You should give staff enough time to follow these procedures.
- Most parents will support the procedures for following up absences if they know about them. Schools need to know where pupils are to make sure that they are safe, as well as to encourage attendance. Parents appreciate contact from the school when they realise that the school is concerned for their children.
- The cost of telephoning parents should fall as parents get used to ringing in and there are fewer absences.
- You will need to pay attention to recording telephone conversations and to communications between administrative and pastoral staff.

Appendix 10: Computerised registration systems

There are many computer-based systems but not all will suit a particular school's needs. If you wish to use the attendance module of the schools information management system (SIMS), we can provide training, free software and technical advice.

Advantages of computerised systems

- The DCSF requires all school to publish their previous year's attendance statistics in their annual reports. Computerised systems can help with this.
- Computerised systems contain up-to-date information and are easy for staff to access.
- Computerised systems free up staff time by removing the need for tutors and year heads to carry out complicated calculations.

Deciding to introduce a computerised system

We advise you to:

- Ensure that all staff are committed to computerisation
- Decide who will be responsible for managing the system
- Plan training for all staff
- Inform staff of the benefits of the system, while acknowledging that there may be difficulties adjusting to it
- Support all staff, especially those who will be most affected, for example office staff and form tutors
- Decide how you will use the information the system produces.

Introducing a computerised system

Piloting the system, for example with one year group, can help iron out initial problems without disrupting the whole school. It can also enable a group of teachers to develop expertise and act as mentors for other staff.

Staff is likely to need extra time to set up the system and agree procedures.

Using the schools information management system

Some schools are using SIMS on its own, while others are using both SIMS and a paper system. We advise you to consider which option is better for your school. SIMS requires good procedures. Ideally, a named person in the school office should be responsible for the day-to-day management of SIMS.

Issues

Data input

Information from the SIMS register sheets can be entered into a computer manually or with a scanner. It can help if a member of the office staff takes on this task.

Printing official registers

Tutors need the same information as before. They should receive printouts of their group's attendance each week.

Registration certificate

This is a printout of an individual pupil's attendance record. It is an effective way of giving parents information about pupils' attendance. Some schools target parents of pupils with less than 90 per cent attendance during any one term.

Use of data

You will need to have arrangements to display or circulate information about absences so that they can be followed up.

Access to computers

You will need to decide where to locate computers. Easy access to the system is important. A computer in the staffroom can encourage staff to use the system. You need to arrange access for the EWO.

Fire drill

You will need to consider how computerisation will affect your fire-drill procedures. It is important to consider your fire-drill routines carefully and adapt them if necessary. You should test any new routine.

Avoiding problems:

Failure to return registers

Tutors should return registers immediately after registration. This will prevent delays in entering the information onto the system.

Failure of the scanner to read sheets

The scanner will not read unclear marks. You will not be able to detect this problem until you print the register out. To prevent delays you should give tutors clear instructions for filling in the sheets.

Failure to mark at registration

It is important to mark all pupils at registration. You should not leave the register open in case a pupil arrives later. Leaving the register open can cause serious problems if you need to refer to it later, for example if parents ask about their child's attendance.

Entering a reason for absence

It is important to enter the reason for absence on the absence form as soon as possible. You should also have a clear procedure for following up and entering information about unauthorised absences. Otherwise the weekly report of unauthorised absences will lengthen at an alarming rate.

Organisation of the register

Initially, the SIMS sheets and the information produced by the computer can seem more difficult to interpret than the old registers. Tutors will need a well-organised register folder where everything is easy to find, for example a folder with clear A4 pockets.

Appendix 11: Supporting pupils when they return from absence

Supporting a pupil after a long period of absence requires careful planning. The school, the parents and the EWO may have spent much time persuading the pupil to return. Returning to school may also have required courage on the part of the pupil.

Procedures for dealing with pupils who return after an absence not only help the pupil but also reduce disruption for other pupils. Sensitivity is vital, as well-intentioned jokes can undo good work.

Steps to success

We recommend:

- Appointing a named person to co-ordinate support for the pupil. This could be the form tutor, the head of year or a reintegration support assistant.
- Setting the return date in advance and alerting all staff, particularly the form tutor, subject teachers and, if necessary, the learning support team.
- Considering a special timetable or a phased return with learning support.
- Ensuring that staff can provide work or details of work to be done.

Reintegration support assistants

Schools in Cornwall use reintegration support assistants (RSAs) in two different schemes:

- To provide extra support for pupils in the classroom. In this scheme:
 - 1) the form tutor monitors the pupil's plans and ability to catch up on missed work
 - 2) the form tutor makes a written request to the head of year for help from an RSA if the pupil needs extra support
 - 3) the form tutor and the RSA liaise
 - 4) After agreeing to support the pupil, the RSA meets the pupil, the parents and the EWO to explain the scheme and agree dates for returning to school and reviewing progress
 - 5) the form tutor alerts subject teachers of the pupil's likely need for special materials. The RSA liaises with subject teachers.

Subject teachers identify essential areas of the curriculum that the pupil must cover:

- 1) The RSA uses the pupil's personal organiser or diary to inform parents of progress each week
 - 2) The manager of the scheme, the heads of year, the EWO and the RSA meet each month to review pupil's progress, consider any new referrals and allocate the RSA's time. The scheme manager keeps a reserve list of pupils who could benefit from support if pupils on the scheme are absent.
- To provide short-term support for students in separate lessons. In this scheme:
 - 1) tutors and the EWO make written referrals through years heads to the RSA
 - 2) a group meets to consider referrals. The group could include the scheme manager, the educational psychologist, the EWO, the head of learning support and the RSA
 - 3) the EWO or form tutor or both meet the pupil and the parents to offer support and to explain the scheme
 - 4) the RSA meets the pupil, the form tutor and the EWO to agree the date for returning to school and a date for reviewing the pupil's progress. The number of separate lessons is agreed, for example two periods a day. Normally, the scheme lasts for six weeks
 - 5) the RSA liaises with subject teachers to produce schemes of work that will enable the pupil to catch up.

Other issues

The RSA should work closely with a senior member of staff, for example the special educational needs co-ordinator or a deputy Headteacher.

It may be helpful to pilot the scheme with one year group, for example Year 10 pupils who need to catch up with coursework for their general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs).

It is useful to produce a list of GCSE coursework each term for each subject. The RSA and the pupil can use this as a checklist.

You need to be clear about who should contact pupils who fail to attend and who should write to the pupil's parents about their successes.

