



Achieving High Attendance

Guidance for All State Funded Schools in Cornwall
2016

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Achieving high attendance: Guidance for Schools and Alternative Provision Academies

Section 1: Purpose of this Guidance

The guidance is for all state-funded schools and Alternative Provision Academies in Cornwall. Throughout this document the term 'schools' will be used.

This guidance provides an overview of procedures to be followed when a pupil's absenteeism requires legal measures as well as offering guidelines around supporting parents and students when attendance is falling.

This guidance aims to:

- Outline the legal measures available to reduce levels of pupil absence
- The processes in place to support schools in taking legal action

Missing education leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Regular school attendance plays a key role in effective safeguarding. All schools must have robust procedures in place for pupil admission, ongoing attendance and punctuality.

Section 2: 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
- Inform 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.
- 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 Cornwall Council to inspect the register during school hours.

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

Legislation

If a child is not receiving full-time education, or if a pupil who is registered with a school repeatedly fails to attend, 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)
- the Education (Penalty Notice) Regulations 2007 (as amended 2013).

Section 3: Registers & Children Missing Education

The register is a legal document. The LA may need to use it as evidence in court. You must have clear procedures for completing the register.

Adding pupils to Registers

All schools must also notify the local authority **within five days** of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The notification must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

Removing pupils from Registers

All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include: (a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) at least one telephone number of the parent, (d) the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and (e) the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register (see Annex A).

Schools must make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the local authority, before deleting the pupil's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii) (See The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations for more information).

Children Missing Education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET. Cornwall has a CME Protocol that schools must adhere to, which is available on School Messenger.

Section 4: Authorised and Unauthorised absence

Pupil attendance and absence has to be legally recorded in accordance with the fixed codes set out within the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Schools and APAs can only consider/request legal procedures for non-attendance at school when the absence is unauthorised.

Should an absence be authorised or unauthorised?

Absences should not automatically be recorded as authorised because it is covered by a note from the pupil's parent/carer.

It must only be recorded as authorised if:

- The pupil has been granted leave of absence which has been approved beforehand by the school (this includes Traveller absence) or
- The pupil is unable to attend either because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause or on a day that the pupil's and parents/carers' religion sets aside for religious observance.

Therefore, schools must ensure that pupils whose attendance fall below average or become persistently low (below 90%) are monitored and investigated. Schools may ask for evidence to justify medical absences should a pupil have persistent absence (see medical absences section below).

What schools should do in the event of a child absence.

All schools should ascertain the reasons for the absence. Where there continues to be concern, schools should meet with parents/carers to discuss the reasons for the absence and to plan strategies for improvement and agree a plan of action.

As an outcome of the meeting there should be a clear plan of action within the school and at home. It will set out what is expected of the

child, the parents/carers, the school and supporting agencies. It will be shared with each party. It is important to investigate causes for absence and involve multi-agency support, should this be necessary.

However, there will be cases where, despite intervention, there has been no satisfactory improvement in a pupil's attendance and unauthorised absence is continuing. Legal action can be considered and advice sought from the Senior Education Welfare Officer.

Medical Absences

Where medical issues affect a child's absence, schools should ensure that they are meeting the educational needs of that child. Guidance is available for all schools at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306952/Statutory_guidance_on_supporting_pupils_at_school_with_medical_conditions.pdf

If a child has persistent absence due to medical issues, then schools should work with families and professionals to support access to education. Should a school feel that they have reason to believe absences are not justified, they can request medical evidence before authorising further absences.

Lateness: when is it not authorised?

Lateness before the close of registration (L) is an authorised absence. If a child is late after the register is closed without an acceptable reason, then a U code can be entered as unauthorised absences. If a child is persistently late after the register has closed and does not have genuine reasons, then the school can take legal action against the U code. A school can consider issuing a Penalty Notice in these circumstances, providing it meets the Cornwall Code of Conduct. Please see Section 6 for more information on Penalty Notices.

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 the Traveller Education Welfare Officer by ringing 01872 323400.

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.

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 Council's 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 your request for taking legal action.

We provide a sample guidance sheet that can be used on request forms for term-time leave. This allows parents to understand the importance of not taking leave and warns them of potential action that could be taken against unauthorised leave. This is in Appendix 2.

Changes of address / Missing Children

If you suspect that a pupil's family has moved away from the area without giving you its new address, you must inform the Local Authority. The school and /or the EWS must make a reasonable attempt to find out where the pupil has gone, by following the Child Missing Education (CME) Protocol.

You can gain more information from the Children Missing Education Officer or Senior Officer (CME) by ringing 01872 323400. You can also see a copy of the CME Protocol on School Messenger.

Section 5: Legal Measures available to schools for non-attendance

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at school for tackling persistent absence or lateness:

- Parenting contracts*
- Parenting orders (as a result of a Magistrates Court appearance)
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders (Application to Family Court)
- Prosecution (Only the Local Authority can prosecute parents/carers)

*Parenting contracts are available as a measure to support improved attendance for children of non-compulsory school age, until a child turns 5 in Reception Year, in a 6th Form or a maintained Nursery.

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice for non-attendance can be issued when a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence
- Unauthorised absences that appear to be condoned by the parent

The criteria for issuing a Penalty Notice is unauthorised absence for 10 or more sessions (5 days) within any 100 possible school sessions, where the parent has been previously warned. Cornwall Council advises that a pupil's overall attendance preceding an offence is below 90%, to warrant consideration of a Penalty Notice.

A Headteacher or other authorised person (as defined by Cornwall Council's Code of Conduct) will make the decision to request a Penalty Notice. The Local Authority will issue and track the payment and liaise with the school for further actions.

Where a school wishes to consider requesting a Penalty Notice, they should undertake the following actions:

- a) Issue a Penalty Notice Warning on a first offence or request for leave if not to be authorised.
- b) Request the LA to Issue a Penalty Notice following a second offence or where leave was taken following a warning being given on a refusal.

It is important that the Code of Conduct is followed and that, should a parent not pay the Penalty Notice, the evidence is robust enough to allow consideration to proceed to legal action under s444 Education Act (1996). The Senior Welfare Officer for Penalty Notices can advise you regarding the Code of Conduct and if a Penalty Notice is appropriate for individual cases.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 and 2007 require that all persons issuing a Penalty Notices do so within the Local Authority's Code of Conduct available at :

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/education-welfare/education-related-penalty-notices-for-truancy/>

Section 6: 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 Department for Education (DFE)
- 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 the appropriate 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
- ensure you have a staged process for monitoring absences, including letters sent to parents when attendance falls below expected levels
- be aware of the local and national expected levels of attendance
- ensure the school's policies for attendance are up to date and clearly show the procedures for monitoring as well as what the school expects parents to do to support regular attendance
- ensure all attendance work is coordinated by a named person in school

Setting targets

The DFE advises LAs to set targets for cutting absence. We advise that each school sets their own targets to cut absence. In particular, if unauthorised absence at the school has been above the national average for the past two years.

You can gain more information on national and local attendance trends from the LA. Please contact the Senior Education Welfare Officer.

Section 7: Attendance Strategies

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

Attendance policies (also see Appendix 4)

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.

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 parents' 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.

If you wish to develop initiatives to improve and promote attendance in your school, you can gain more ideas in the Appendix.

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 8: The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

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 provides different levels of Service Level Agreements (SLA) to schools, but will initiate all prosecutions on behalf of any school in Cornwall.

All schools, regardless of whether they hold an SLA or not, must refer any child to EWS where the child:

- Is removed from school to be Electively Home Educated. More information is available at: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/elective-home-education/>
- Has been 'missing' from school and no contact can be made with parents. (See CME Protocol on School Messenger)

How can the EWS support school attendance under a Service Level Agreement?

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 Education 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.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service:

All schools should have procedures in place to address poor attendance. This section provides details on how EWS manage referrals for schools with an SLA

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 may make a referral to the EWS if a pupil has had 10 or more unauthorised half-day absences during any 100 half days.

You must make the referral on form EWS1 (see Appendix 1). You must give the EWS details of the pupil's attendance for the past 100 half days.

Referrals may be passed to the designated EWO for your school or sent to eworeferrals@cornwall.gov.uk. It is advised that any referral that is sent via email is encrypted.

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.

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 Senior EWO 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 3).

Stage 4: First warning

If the EWS decides to take legal action, it will send a 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 (EPM) will normally involve social care, the pupil, the pupil's family, the school and any other agencies involved. The meeting usually takes place at the pupil's school but it will be arranged and normally chaired by the EWO. For more complex cases, the Senior EWO may chair the meeting.

At the meeting, the EWS will consider the case, consult social care 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. The legal action that the EWS will consider at an EPM will include:

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

- Issuing a Penalty Notice under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 and 2007.
- Issuing a Caution under Police & Criminal Evidence Act (1984).

The EWO will agree a plan for improvement and make any recommendations for legal processes to be followed. These recommendations will then be reviewed by the Senior EWO.

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 Care.

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 will check the registers and give the Senior EWO 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, though a Penalty Notice can be considered as an alternative in certain circumstances.

Applications for Education Supervision Orders

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

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.

Supporting Whole School Attendance

EWS can also support schools in improving attendance, through the following measures:

- Review Attendance procedures and policies
- Advise and provide training to support staff in school in early intervention
- Hold 'Attendance Clinics' for parents where their child's attendance has fallen below 95%, agreeing action plans and setting targets.
- Monitor and track attendance trends and data to advise schools on targeting resources.
- Provide group work, school assemblies and attend parent events.

Appendix 1: Form for referring a case to the EWS



Education Health and Social Care

Education Welfare Service

Attendance Referral Form

Pupil name	F	M	Year group	
Date of birth			School	
Parent/carer full name			Address	
Home tel. no.			Work tel. no.	
Others with PR				
Other agencies involved				
Is child in care?	Y	N	Is pupil a young carer?	Y N
SEN status				
Support	IEP <input type="checkbox"/> IBP <input type="checkbox"/> PSP <input type="checkbox"/> PEP <input type="checkbox"/>			
Please state your reasons for referral and for deciding not to continue authorising absences.				

Details of prior action taken by referrer (include details of contact with parents)	
Evidence of attempts to make contact with parents where no engagement has been achieved.	
In order to accept this referral, a Registration Certificate (showing at least 10 unauthorised absences within the last 100 sessions) must be provided. Please confirm.	
Details of any Police 121A incident reports you have received about this child with this referral	
Please confirm that you have attempted to inform the parent of this referral to the EWS	
Referred by	Title
Date	Tel. no.

Please return completed referral form direct to the Education Welfare Officer or send to eworeferrals@cornwall.gov.uk If you need advice, please telephone the team on 01872 323400.

Please note that the information provided on this form may be shared with the family.

Appendix 2: Suggested guidance on parental applications for a family holiday

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 education 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.

The Headteacher will not normally give permission for more than 10 days' absence for a family holiday in any school year. Only in exceptional situations will the Headteacher give permission for a longer absence.

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 28 days or £120 if paid after this but within 42 days. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action.

Appendix 3: 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 EWOs 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)

FGCs 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

FGCs 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. FGCs are preventive. Therefore they are normally for children in Years 1 to 8. But older pupils can also benefit from FGCs, 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.

Appendix 4: 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 DFE'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 parents' views?

- What links do we have with other agencies?
- Do we need a plan to improve attendance throughout school?
Do we have one?

Appendix 5: 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 pupils' 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.

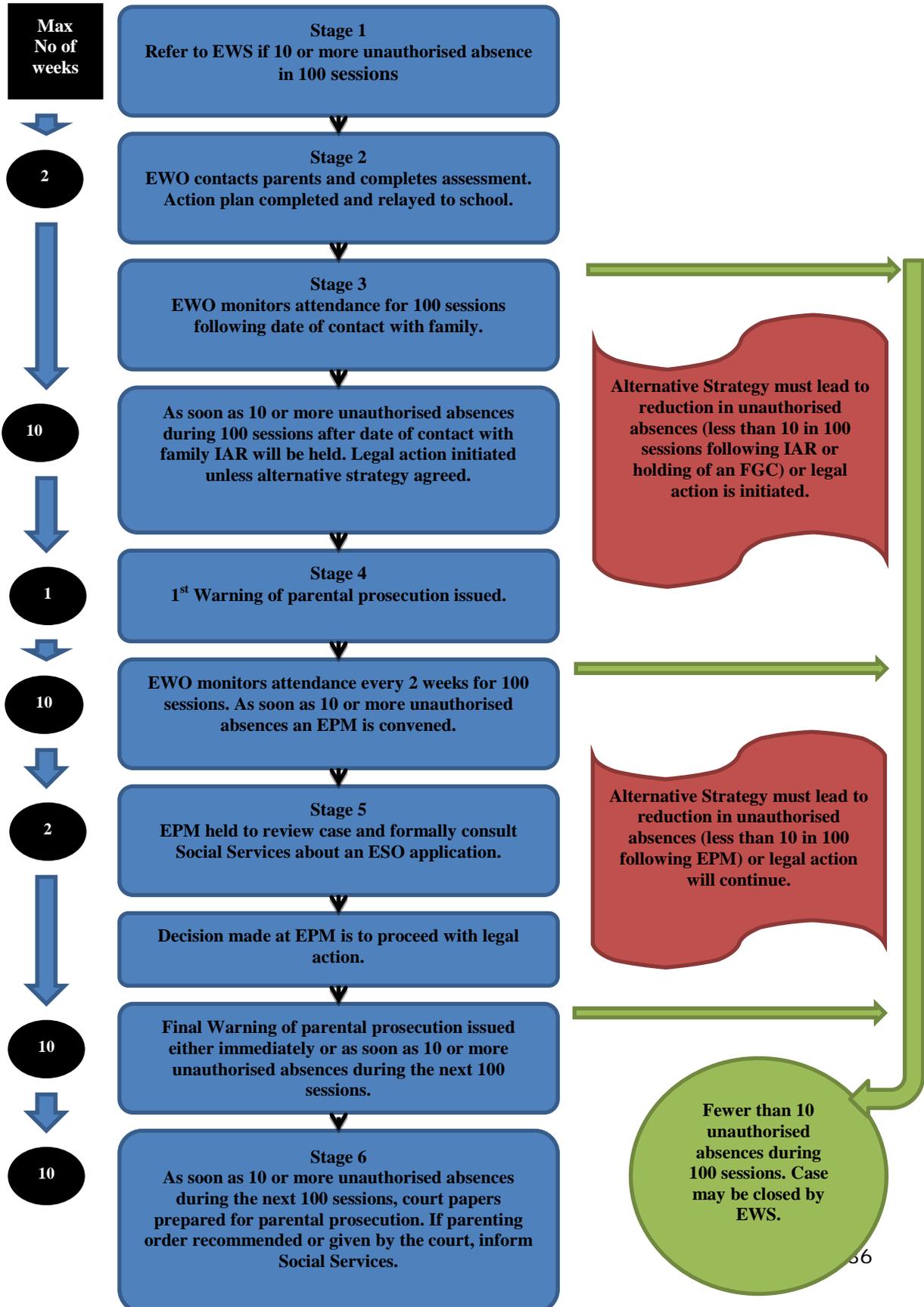
- If you cannot contact the parents by telephone, you may send a letter immediately. This should ask why the child is absent, remind the parents to contact the school immediately if the child is absent again, and ask them to confirm their contact telephone number.
- You should code each absence. Keep 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

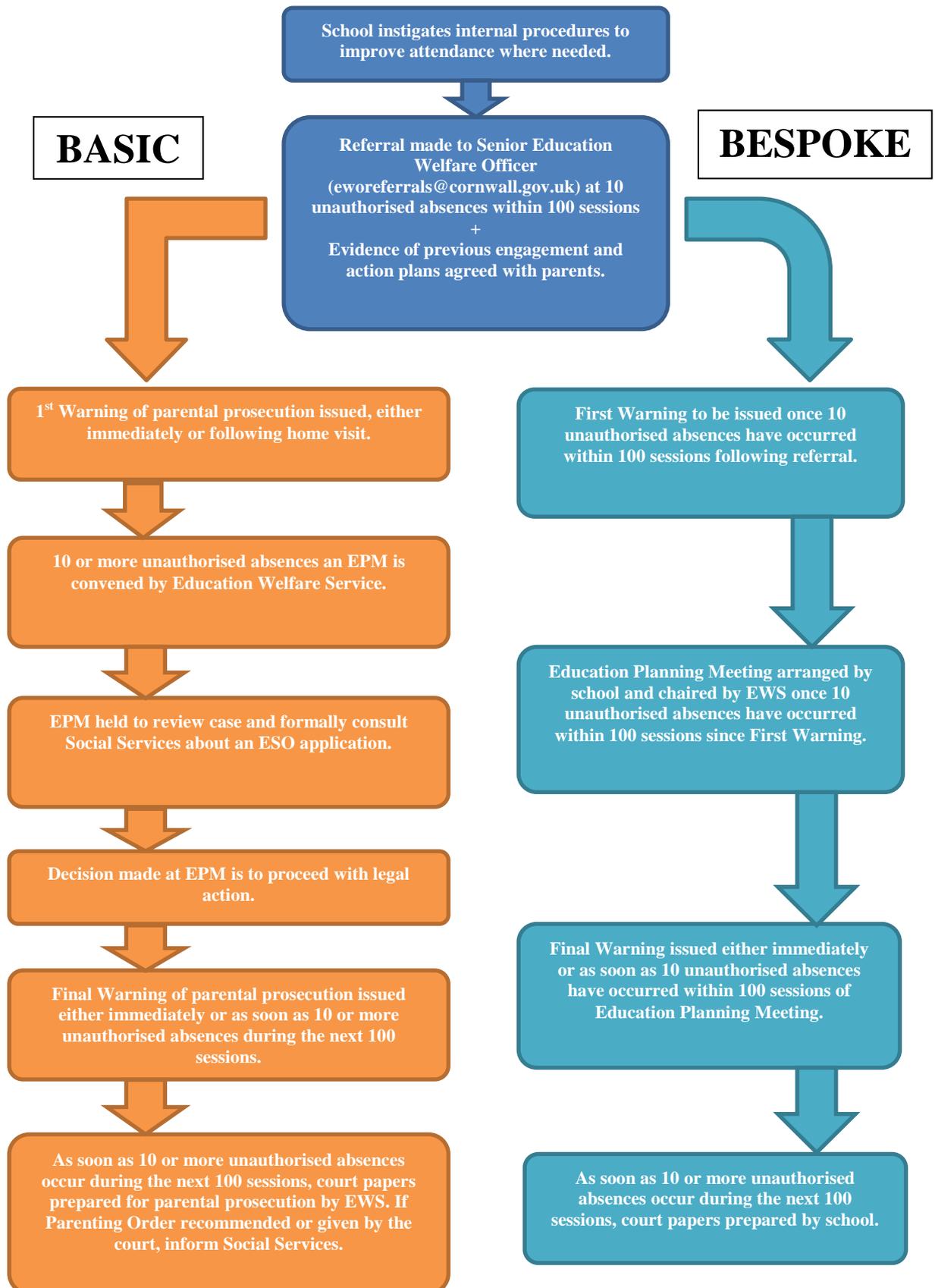
- You should give staff enough time to follow these procedures.
- Most parents will support the procedures for following up absences if they know about them. Schools need to know where pupils are to make sure that they are safe, as well as to encourage attendance. Parents appreciate contact from the 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 6: Referral to EWS Flowcharts

A framework for managing attendance referrals for schools with a Full Service Level Agreement :



A framework for managing attendance referrals for schools with a Basic or Bespoke Service Level Agreement :



Appendix 7: 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
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

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
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

More information and advice on the use of absence coding can be gained from the Education Welfare Service and by referring to the current Government Guidance at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/361008/Advice_on_school_attendance_sept_2014.pdf

Alternative formats

If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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