



BATH & WELLS
Multi Academy Trust

'That they may have life, life in all its fullness' John 10:10

Batheaston Church School



Attendance policy

Approved by:

Bath & Wells Multi Academy Trust
Board

Date:

Last reviewed:
September 2023

Next review due by: September 2024

1 Aim of this policy

- 1.1 To support excellent levels of attendance for all children to enable fulfilment of their potential at Batheaston Church School ("the Academy). Regular attendance at school is essential to each child's academic success and life-chances. Research links attendance with achievement, indicating that even occasional broken weeks can have a negative effect. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. In promoting good attendance, it is also hoped that this will lead to the development of habits of good attendance and punctuality for the future. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.
- 1.2 It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age, therefore the Academy will encourage parents of Reception children who are not yet of compulsory school age, to send their children to every session available to them. If the child is unable to attend for any reason, the parents should inform the school in the same way as with children of compulsory school age.

2 Key principles

- High levels of attendance and punctuality levels are promoted and rewarded.
- It is the responsibility of everybody in the academy to improve attendance and punctuality.
- Where attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern, steps will be taken to support an improvement.
- Some children find it harder than others to attend school. The Academy will work with children, parents and other local partners to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Subject to the terms of this policy, any day-to-day attendance issues that parents or children have should be discussed with the Class Teacher. Where more detailed support around attendance is required, parents and children should contact the school office to make an appointment to see either the Headteacher or the Assistant Headteacher.
- We work in partnership with parents.

3 Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Academy

The Academy will:

- develop and maintain a whole academy culture that promotes the benefit of high attendance
- work with children and their families, building strong relationships, to support high levels of attendance and punctuality and understand any barriers to attendance

- investigate unexplained or unjustified absence, applying support and, where necessary, sanctions where appropriate
- be aware that sudden or gradual changes in attendance may indicate safeguarding issues, and we work in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org/policies)
- take into account individual needs when implementing this policy, including having regard to the Academy's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- share information and work collaboratively with the local authority, other schools in the area and other partners including, where required, making appropriate referrals in accordance with local procedures, legislation and guidance
- regularly monitor, review and analyse attendance and absence data including to identify pupils or cohorts that require attendance support and to set targets for the future
- ensure that all children can access full-time education, putting strategies in place where there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case
- ensure that the Local Governing Committee and the Academy's leadership team work together to monitor attendance levels and the effectiveness of this policy
- ensure that all legislation and guidance are complied with and reflected in our policies and procedures, including the non-statutory attendance guidance issued by the Department for Education, *Working together to improve school attendance (2022)*
- have in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who are at risk of missing education, having regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy available at [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org/policies).
- provide information requested by the Secretary of State, including termly absence data collected by the Department for Education
- regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- support children who are returning to education following long term absence
- ensure that effective systems to record and report attendance data are in place, including accurate completion of admission and attendance registers using an electronic management information system
- assign overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance at the Academy to a designated senior leader
- observe and fulfil the responsibilities set out in guidance issued by the Department for Education ([Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/106422/summary-table-of-responsibilities-for-school-attendance-publishing.service.gov.uk)) to the extent not covered above or elsewhere in this policy.

3.2 Parents and carers

We expect parents and carers to:

- ensure that their child arrives at to school on time, in the correct uniform and with the necessary equipment
- promote the importance of regular attendance at home, where in law regular means “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”, so therefore, if an absence is not authorised by the academy, the pupil’s attendance is deemed to be irregular
- follow the correct procedure for reporting the absence of their child from the Academy (see section 6.1 below)
- avoid unnecessary absences
- provide an explanation as to why their child is absent from school as early in the school day as possible, so the academy knows the child is safe
- keep the academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child’s attendance
- avoid taking their child out of education for holidays during term time (see section 6 below)
- inform the academy in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live
- observe and fulfil their responsibilities set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Education: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk).

3.3 Pupils

We expect pupils to:

- attend the Academy regularly and on time
- be punctual to all lessons
- follow the correct procedure if they arrive to the Academy late (see sections 4 and 5 below).

3.4 Designated attendance lead

The designated attendance lead (“DAL”) at the Academy is the Headteacher.

The DAL will be responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at the Academy and will:

- offer a clear vision for attendance improvement
- evaluate and monitor attendance expectations and processes
- oversee attendance and absence data analysis
- escalate urgent attendance issues ie. Children Missing Education
- ensure that key attendance messages are communicated to parents and pupils
- provide data and reports to support the work of the Local Governing Committee and Board of Trustees (see below).

3.5 Local Governing Committees

The Local Governing Committee will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognising the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Academy's ethos and policies
- ensure the leadership team fulfils expectations and statutory duties
- provide support and challenge to school leaders to improve attendance
- regularly monitor attendance data and trends, particularly in relation to particular cohorts of children and disadvantaged groups
- ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance

3.6 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees will:

- take an active role in attendance improvement, recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the Trust
- ensure the Academies fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- regularly review attendance data, discuss and challenge trends and help the Trust's leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ensure Trust staff receive adequate training on attendance, including dedicated training for staff with specific attendance responsibilities and any additional training that would help support pupils or cohorts overcome common barriers to attendance
- share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across its academies
- have a dedicated attendance lead (Tom Morrison - Assistant Director of Education) who will drive improvement across the trust and act as a central point for academies with attendance queries

4 Registration

- 4.1 Each Academy maintains an attendance register and uses this to record each child's attendance at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Registration session	Start time	End time
Morning	8:50	9:10
Afternoon	1:00 (Reception and KS1) 1:15 (KS2)	1:10 (Reception and KS1) 1:25 (KS2)

- 4.2 Children who arrive after the start of a registration session but before the end of the registration session will be marked as late. Where children arrive after the end of a

registration session, the process set out at section 5 applies. The registration session in Batheaston Church School is 8:50 - 9:10 (20 Minutes) and 10 minutes in the afternoon.

- 4.3 The register is marked using the national attendance and absence codes which can be found in the Department for Education's guidance on attendance - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance).

5 Late arrival

- 5.1 If a child arrives at school after the relevant registration period has ended, the parent must immediately go to the school office to sign in and provide a reason for the lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, the register will be marked as unauthorised absence.

6 Reasons for absence and how to report or request authorisation

- 6.1 **Authorised absence** - absence will only be authorised where the academy has given approval in advance for a child to not be in attendance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for the absence. Only the academy can authorise absence. The main circumstances for authorising an absence include: illness, medical/dental appointments and religious observance.

- 6.2 **Unauthorised absence** - absence will be marked as unauthorised where the academy is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

6.3 Reporting absence from the School

- 6.3.1 Where a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, the parent/carer should inform the academy by 8:40am on the morning of the day of the first absence to ensure the school know the location and safety of the child. The parent should let the academy know when they expect the child to return to school. If the return date is not confirmed on the first day of absence, parents/carers must contact the academy on each day of absence by calling the school office on 01225 858555 by 8:40am

- 6.3.1 On the day of return to school, parents must also provide written confirmation of the reason(s) for the full period of absence. In cases of prolonged absence due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the academy with medical evidence, such as a note from the child's doctor. If this evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

6.4 Appointments

- 6.4.1 Medical, dental and other essential appointments for a child should take place outside of school hours where this is reasonably possible.

- 6.4.2 Where an appointment must take place during school time, the child should attend the Academy for as much of the day as possible and as much prior notice as possible should be given in writing to the school office.

- 6.4.3 For the time absent from the school to be marked as an authorised, confirmation of the appointment by way of an appointment card or letter must be provided.

6.5 Children with Health Needs

- 6.5.1 Where illness is a clear reason for a pattern of absence, with supporting information, the academy will consider an Individual Health Care Plan. Parents and staff should refer to the Medical Conditions Policy for more information about medical needs, IHPs, and to children with health needs who cannot attend school available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](http://BathandWellsMultiAcademyTrust.org)
- 6.5.2 Where a pupil cannot attend school because of health needs, unless it is evident at the outset that the pupil will be absent for 15 or more days, the academy will initially follow the usual process around attendance and mark the pupil as ill for the purposes of the register.
- 6.5.3 The academy will provide support to pupils who are absent from school because of illness for a period shorter than 15 days. This may include providing pupils with relevant information, curriculum materials and resources.
- 6.5.4 In accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance¹, where a pupil is unable to attend school for more than 15 days due to illness:
- (i) the local authority should be ready to take responsibility for arranging suitable full-time education for that pupil; and
 - (ii) the local authority should arrange for this provision to be in place as soon as it is clear that the absence will last for more than 15 days.

The academy will inform and work collaboratively with the local authority to support these responsibilities

- 6.5.5 Where a parent/ carer maintains that absences are regularly the result of ill-health, yet no evidence of this is provided, the academy may choose to not automatically authorise such absences unless there is medical evidence to do so.

6.6 Leave of absence (including holidays during term time)

- 6.6.1 Parents and carers should make every effort to avoid taking children out of education for holidays or other extended leave during term time. The Trust will only authorise a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.
- 6.6.2 To request a leave of absence, parents/carers must make the request in advance and in writing addressed to the Head Teacher and, wherever possible, at least 4 school weeks ahead of the planned leave.
- 6.6.3 Where a leave of absence is requested as above, the Head Teacher will consider the specific facts and circumstances relating to the request. The decision:
- will be confirmed in writing
 - is solely at the Headteacher's discretion and
 - is final.
- 6.6.4 Where permission is granted, the Head Teacher will confirm the number of days and dates of absence which are authorised.
- 6.6.5 If permission is not granted and the parents/carers proceed to take their child out of school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Although such absence may be unauthorised,

¹ *Ensuring a good education for pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs (January 2013)*

it is better that the academy knows you are intending to remove your child from school, and the child is safe, rather than missing.

- 6.6.6 Parents may be issued with a penalty notice or be subject to prosecution by the local authority (see section 7 below for unauthorised absence) for unauthorised leaves of absence.

6.7 Religious observance

- 6.7.1 We recognise that children of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance:

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child belongs,

the absence from school will be authorised.

- 6.7.2 We ask that parents/carers notify the academy by writing to the Headteacher (Sally Jefferies) in advance where absence is required due to religious observance.

6.8 Children Missing from Education

If no contact has been made with the academy on the first day of absence the academy will take steps to ascertain the location of the child and their safety. The academy will refer to Child Missing from Education section of the Child Protection Policy and the specific academy procedure.

6.9 Part-time timetables

- 6.9.1 Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

- 6.9.2 If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a pupil with a full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any part-time timetables will be applied for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to a full-time timetable. Staff and parents should refer to the Reduced Timetables policy available at: [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](http://Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies (bwmat.org))

6.10 Approved Educational Activity (AEA) and Alternative Provision

When pupils are attending educational activities off the school site that have been approved by the academy, the register will be marked to show this is the case. (See DfE 2022 School Attendance guidance for more information.) Common examples include an approved sporting activity or an Alternative Education Provider.

6.11 Traveller absence

- 6.11.1 The academy will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The academy will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the the academy know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

6.11.2 To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes, in which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this academy, which is their 'main' school.

6.11.2 Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

6.12 Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

6.12.1 The academy will record pupils as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances in accordance with the DfE attendance guidance, if for instance:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable closure;
- The transport provided by the academy or the local authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's ['Home to school travel and transport'](#) guidance document;
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

6.13 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Parents who have concerns about their child's wellbeing can contact the academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead Sally Jefferies on 01225 858555

6.14 Coronavirus (Covid-19)

There may be circumstances in which children cannot attend school due to Covid-19. The Academy will adhere to any current guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to the recording of attendance in relation to Covid-19. If a child tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded as illness.

7 Addressing poor attendance and punctuality

7.1 The Academy will use data to target attendance improvement efforts to the children or groups of children who need it most. In doing so, the academy will:

- monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns, proactively using data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance
- provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and relevant leaders
- identify children who need support from wider partners as soon as possible and deliver this support in a targeted manner
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends
- benchmark school attendance data at each level against Trust, regional and national level
- monitor the impact of academy strategies and actions to improve attendance on particular pupils and particular groups

- work with the local authority and other local partners to identify groups
- hold regular meetings with the parents or carers of children who the Trust and/or local authority consider to be vulnerable

7.2 Our procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found here in section 6.8 above and further information is available in the Appendices [insert appendix steps for a child missing education]

7.3 Where absence or punctuality is a cause for concern, for example because there is:

- a pattern of unauthorised absence
- a question over the reasons provided for a particular absence or late arrival
- persistent absence, truancy or lateness
- a safeguarding concern

the Academy will make contact with the parents/carers with a view to working together to support improved attendance and/or punctuality, with reference to the Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, as appropriate.

7.4 Absence will be classed as persistent where it falls below 90% across the academic year. Absence at this level is very likely to hinder educational prospects and we expect full parental co-operation and support to urgently address these cases. Intervention steps may include implementation of an attendance action plan, referral to other agencies and support services and/or seeking to put in place a parenting contract.

7.5 Where out of school barriers to attendance are identified, the Academy will signpost and support access to any additional services.

7.6 Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. Our Trust encourages parents and pupils to be open and honest with the Academy about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. The Academy needs to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

7.7 When the Academy has concerns about the attendance of a pupil, it will make every effort to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this.

7.8 If parents have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age is regularly attending school and wider support in accordance with this policy is not appropriate, effective, or has not been made use of, the Academy may consider issuing a penalty notice and legal sanctions via a referral to the local authority. A penalty notice is a fine (£60 if paid within 21 days, or £120 if paid within 28 days) imposed on parents by the local authority.

7.9 If the Academy refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, it will show it has warned parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a penalty notice or other legal sanction.

7.10 When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, the Academy will have regard to:

- section 6 of the Department for Education’s guidance, Working together to improve school attendance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- the local authority’s Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

7.11 In the event that a penalty notice is issued but is not paid within 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to proceed to prosecution. The local authority also has separate powers to prosecute parents if their child of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly.

8 Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

8.1 If the academy decides to suspend or exclude a pupil, this will be recorded using the appropriate registration codes and the academy will follow the Trust policy available at; [Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust - Policies \(bwmat.org\)](https://www.bwmat.org)

9 Removal from Roll

9.1 There are strict legal grounds on as to when schools may remove pupils from the admissions register, and when the Academy decides to delete a pupil from their admission roll it must immediately notify the local authority.

9.2 If the Academy is told that a pupil is leaving to attend another school, staff at the school of departure will establish the pupil’s new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the pupil will start there. Once the Academy has confirmation that the child has started at the new school, its records will be updated.

9.3 If a child has ‘disappeared’ from school, the Academy must refer to the Child Missing Education Policy from the local authority and the Trust’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

10 Nursery Attendance

10.1 It is important that our records of children’s nursery attendance are accurately kept and regularly monitored to ensure that the Academy can identify any potential problems and look for patterns. All managers and staff are alert to signs that children and learners who are missing might be at risk of abuse or neglect, and appropriate action is taken when children and learners stop attending. We are aware that attendance is not statutory, but that non-attendance could be an indicator of other concerns. We are particularly aware of the need to monitor groups such as children who are in receipt of two year old funding, and those for whom we receive Early Years Pupil Premium, as these groups are considered to be vulnerable learners.

All absences will be recorded and frequent absences will be investigated and further action or monitoring considered. The Academy will always discuss our concerns with parents and endeavour to enable nursery children to attend as regularly as possible.

10.2 Absence is monitored for the health and well-being of children, for example so that the Nursery is aware of outbreaks of illness which need to be investigated, or to warn parents of infections.

10.3 Monitoring attendance and use of government funded hours may be passed on at the local authority’s request

11 Links to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies where necessary:

- Reduced Timetables
- Alternative Provision
- Children with Medical Needs Who Can't Attend School
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Exclusions
- Separated parents policy

Appendix 1- Batheaston Church School Approach to promoting good attendance and punctuality

Batheaston Church School expects every child attends every single lesson, in essence 100%, unless prevented from attending due to illness or any unavoidable cause. Attendance is measured through two registration sessions per day, morning and afternoon.

3 Step Action Plan to monitor and support full attendance at school:

Step 1: School attendance is monitored termly. If a child's attendance is causing concern their parent/carer will receive a letter or notification from the school alerting them to the fact this could be a cause for concern. The child's attendance will then be monitored further over the next two weeks to ensure attendance has started to improve.

Step 2: If a child's attendance falls further, or does not improve, a request will be made to discuss this with the Headteacher to identify if any support can be provided by the school. The Attendance and Welfare Support Officer will be alerted to the situation through the school's termly attendance report and meeting.

Step 3: If a child's attendance falls further, a referral will be made to the Attendance and Welfare Support Officer who will then work with the school to take the appropriate action to address the situation.

Appendix 2- School system for reporting absence

It is very important that the school is notified of the absence of a child from school at the earliest opportunity. Parents and carers should report the absence before the start of the school day. 01225 858555 or enquiries@batheaston.bwmat.org

Appendix 3 - Steps for dealing with Children Missing Education

Attendance & Welfare Support Service Education Inclusion Service

School Handbook

Guidance for working with Attendance & Welfare Support Service

Attendance & Welfare Support Service
Reviewed August 2023

CONTENTS

- School level interventions
- Referral
- Local Authority Statutory Interview
- Post Prosecution Monitoring
- Medical Absence

REASONS FOR REFERRAL

There are many reasons why a school may wish to make a referral to the Attendance & Welfare Support Service (A&WSS) including the following circumstances:

- Unexplained absences of ten consecutive days

- Continued unauthorised absence
- Patterns of irregular attendance
- Prior to removing a child from the school roll if the destination school is not known or there are other safeguarding concerns
- The school has been unable to contact parents
- The school is concerned that absence may be condoned by parents/carers
- School refusal
- The school is concerned that a pupil's absences may be due to emotional or medical difficulties
- Illegal child employment
- The child/young person is a vulnerable learner, for example:
 - those with special education needs & disability
 - children in the care of the local authority
 - children from minority ethnic groups
 - traveller children
 - children with carers responsibilities
 - pregnant schoolgirls and teenage parents
 - sick children
 - children in alternative provision

This is not an exhaustive list.

SCHOOL LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

A school should follow their attendance procedures as published in their Attendance Policy. The Policy should be in line with the DfE [Working together to improve school attendance](#). The Attendance policy needs to be readily accessible on the school website.

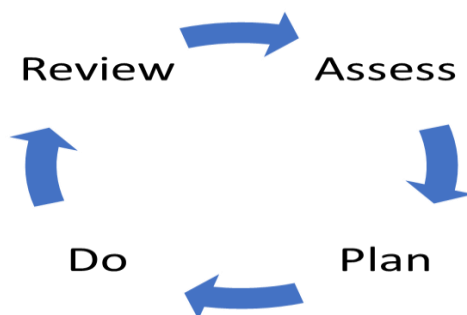
Your allocated Attendance & Welfare Support Officer (A&WSO) will be available to analyse attendance data, help you identify pupils where an intervention may be required, support your school level interventions and help signpost to appropriate agencies. This may include home visits, informal meetings and general information gathering to help understand the barriers preventing good attendance.

It is important that the school has taken appropriate and meaningful action to address a pupil's sporadic, poor or non-attendance and has made, or has attempted to make, contact with the parents/carers before a referral for Local Authority Support is made. Correspondence should be sent to all relevant parties as defined in education law e.g., stepparents, grandparents and absent parents.

A clear record should be kept of all contact made with the parent and the nature of that contact and notes/minutes of any conversations held with parents. A chronology is a good way to ensure that all information is collected and recorded. Any documents attached to the referral should be related to attendance/absence. Please note that the definition of “parent” in education is different and having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.

When making a referral to the A&WSS it must contain evidence that contact and correspondence has been to all relevant parties. Your A&WSO will be able to advise you further if required.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEETING, Assess, Plan, Do and Review



At the school level attendance meeting it will be necessary to draw up an agreed Action Plan to address the issues raised and your assessment of the case. Action plans should consist of the following:

- what is it that school is hoping to achieve; what is the expectation? This might include an attendance target for a set period of the action plan.
- the actions required to achieve the expectation.
- the person/s responsible for the action/s.
- the review date (not usually more than 3 weeks). Please do not wait 3 weeks if it is evident from an early stage that no progress has been achieved or is unlikely to be achieved by waiting until the review period is at an end.

Actions and targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (SMART). The form should be completed to reflect each individual circumstance and specific information relating to the pupil should be completed on the plan i.e., the pupil’s name should be inserted to demonstrate that the document relates to them rather than leave the generic heading “pupil.” A copy of the action plan or agreed contract should be sent to the parent/s.

If an invitation has been made to a parent to attend a meeting, evidence of this will be required so even if the arrangements have been made over the telephone or in person it is good practice to follow this up in writing. If the parent fails to attend the meeting and has not sent apologies, then the meeting **should go ahead** in their

absence and the **plan should still be made**. A copy of the plan should be sent to **all** parents with a **clear review date**.

When reviewing an action plan, it will be necessary to decide whether there has been sufficient improvement in the child's attendance to justify an extension of the review period. If the attendance target has not been met, then the reasons for this will need to be considered at the review meeting. A letter should be sent to the parent to record the outcome.

If the dates of the meetings do not match what was in the invitation to meeting letters, then the school need to be clear on how the new date/times were set, e.g., call to parent, email, second letter. Information outlining the changes need to be submitted with the referral.

Your allocated A&WSO will be available to analyse attendance data, help you identify pupils where an intervention may be required, support your school level interventions and help signpost to appropriate agencies prior to any referral.

Where no significant or sustained improvement in the pupil's attendance has been secured then an A&WSS referral for support form should be completed in full (The A&WSO can help you complete the referral to ensure it contains all the required documents to allow the case to progress to the LA Legal Services should this be required). It is vital that as much information as possible is made available in order that an accurate assessment can be obtained.

The referral form will be part of the A&WSS case file. Should the LA decide that legal proceedings are necessary; the form will be used as evidence in court and school staff could be called as witnesses.

Once a referral has been accepted then the school need to continue with their safeguarding/1st day call processes.

Following the acceptance of a referral from school the A&WSO will follow the LA Attendance process.

Following further supportive interventions, such as a Parenting Contract, should there be no sustained improvement in the child or young person's attendance a Local Authority Statutory Interview (LASI) will be considered.

A LASI is a formal process; this can be in the form of a face-to-face meeting arranged and chaired by an A&WSO to discuss a child's attendance or a Formal Letter Under Caution (LUC) can be sent.

Local authorities must conduct all investigations in accordance with the Police & Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984.

There are statutory defences for parents to use under the 1996 Education Act. The LASI is an opportunity for the A&WSS to establish in each individual case if any of these may apply. If it is established that parents do not have a statutory defence

and if prosecution is the appropriate course of action the matter will be managed via the Single Justice Process (SJP) or placed before the Bath Magistrates Court.

Single Justice Procedure

The Single Justice Procedure (SJP) is part of the Government's strategy to transform summary justice to make it simpler, faster and more proportionate.

It enables cases to be dealt with by a single magistrate, outside of the traditional courtroom setting, without the attendance of either prosecutor or defendant.

To have their case dealt with by this process a parent will have to plead guilty using the notice that is sent to them. This will usually get a 33% reduction on any fine. The parent still has the option to attend court even if they make a guilty plea. A not guilty plea will result in the need to attend court.

The SJP will not be appropriate for all cases. Where it is not appropriate the case will be placed before the Magistrate.

POST COURT CASE

It is important that, whatever the outcome from court, the child's attendance continues to be monitored.

The A&WSS will contact you with the result from court. As soon after the court case as possible the school should arrange a post prosecution meeting with the parent and draw up a new action plan which should include a review date. The action plan and review date should be sent to the parent following the meeting whether the parents were in attendance or not.

Should the pupil have accrued further unauthorised absences and where your own school level intervention and plans have been followed then your A&WSO can assist with taking this forward again.

MEDICAL ABSENCE

Where there is frequent or persistent absence attributed to illness the member of staff with lead responsibility for attendance should arrange a medical absence action plan meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to understand the reasons for absence and to examine any medical evidence provided by the parent/s and allow adjustments to be made in school if appropriate or necessary. It may be appropriate to invite your school nurse. If there are genuine health reasons why a pupil cannot regularly attend school, consideration should be given to the best way to support the sick pupil's education. If the pupil is not attending school at all you will need to consider a referral to the Single Point of Access (SPA) Panel to request Hospital Education & Reintegration Service (HERS). Please see the criteria guidance for schools when referring to HERS.

Where there is no evidence to support absence attributed to illness then the school should follow their normal attendance procedure and if appropriate complete a referral to the A&WSS.

PENALTY NOTICES

The referral to the A&WSS does not replace the Penalty Notice process. However, you cannot submit a request for a Penalty notice whilst there is an open referral to AWSS and likewise when submitting a referral if you have submitted a Penalty Notice then you must exclude the period of absence in that Penalty Notice request. Schools can make a request to the local authority for the consideration to issue a Penalty Notice under the current code of conduct. Schools must complete the Penalty Notice Request Form and attach supporting documents as evidence. If the request has not been completed correctly then it will be returned to you for amendments, causing a delay in issue. To avoid this, the PN request has a checklist for your convenience.

Penalty Notices best suit: -

- One off unauthorised absence or early intervention for
- Holiday in term time
- Persistent late arrivals
- Present in a public place during the first 5 days of a suspension or PEX.

A referral for casework resulting in potential prosecution best suits: -

- Long term, persistent or entrenched absence

Please see the regular Newsletters from the AWSS that will provide you with essential updates, information, links to the Drop-in Session and dates for upcoming training.

Appendix 4 - Examples of absence which would not be authorised

Unauthorised absence may include:

- Absence through sickness which has not been supported by a note or message from the parent, guardian or another responsible person
- Holidays which have been taken without the prior agreement of the school
- Unexplained absences

See DFE Guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)