

Access and Inclusion Division

September 2003

Cumbria County Council

Education Welfare Service

Attendance Policy

Pack & Guidance

Attendance Policy – Pack & Guidance

Cumbria Education Welfare Service

Attendance Policy Package

The documents attached have been collated with the intention of enabling all schools to develop school attendance policies and strategies.

All of the documents should be read in conjunction with each other, as all have important contributions to make.

The template attendance policy document can be used as a basic policy document for any school but would need to have the significant detail of each school's practice added.

Attachments to each policy are at the school's discretion but I would suggest that agreed registration symbols and template letters used for parents should be included.

Documents in this package include:

1. Cumbria County Council, Education Welfare Service attendance policy statement and guidance (revised September 2003).
2. Cumbria County Council, Education Welfare Service, guide to attendance; Law and DfES advice (reproduced and amended September 2003 – with thanks to Norfolk EWS).
3. Cumbria County Council, Education Welfare Service; school attendance 'health check'
4. Guidance extract from Cumbria County Council Behaviour Support Plan materials on promoting good attendance.
5. Guidance for setting up attendance panels.
6. Template whole school attendance policy (includes an extract from Guidance to Ofsted Inspectors; update 38).
7. Extracts from ofsted 38 (guidance to ofsted inspectors in relation to attendance).

Further advice and guidance can be accessed through your Education Welfare team in your local area education office.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Template

School is committed to the principles stated in our _____ document. We believe sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular school attendance. In order to achieve this we will take appropriate action to ensure that all pupils achieve the maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted on as quickly as possible.

Aims

School aims to ensure that:

- All pupils have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- No pupils will be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils.

It is recognised that:

- The majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peers, and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society.
- Many pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their children's attendance at school as required by law (ref Section 7, 1996 Education Act).

Expectations

School expects that all our pupils will:

Attend school regularly.

- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day as stated in our Health and Safety contract which parents are asked to sign when child starts school.
- Carry out any work provided by the school during an authorised leave period.

School expects that parents will:

- Endeavour to keep health appointments out of school hours when possible.
- Inform a member of staff of any reason or problem that may hinder their child from attending school.
- Fulfil their legal responsibilities and ensure their child/ren attends school.
- Contact school, as soon as is practical whenever their child is unable to attend school.

- Seek permission from the school for any leave of absence. The Headteacher has the right to refuse authorised attendance in accordance with LEA guidelines.

Parents and children can expect the following from the school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact when a pupil is absent without explanation.
- Action on any attendance problem notified to the school.
- Referral of specific attendance issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.
- Attendance figures are published in the Governors' Annual Report to parents.

We encourage attendance by:

1. Consistent, clear communication with parents and pupils about the importance of regular, prompt, attendance.
2. Setting targets for improved attendance and sharing these with Governors, parents and pupils.
3. The accurate completion of registers at the start of each session, and within 15 minutes of the start of each session.

The school responds to non-attendance by:

- Contacting parents on the first or second day of an absence if no reason has been received. (Contact will be by either letter or telephone. See appendix 1).
- If there is no response to the first contact a second letter will be sent to enquire about the unexplained absence (appendix 2).
- Where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging the parent/carer is invited to visit school to work with school staff to help resolve the difficulties (appendix 3).

Where there is no response to school intervention and where the absence or pattern of absence has persisted without explanation the school can refer to the Education Welfare Service, once the pattern of absence meets the service referral criteria.

Holiday Absence

The school acknowledges that from time to time some parents will want to take their children out of school for holidays. While we would not necessarily encourage this activity it is within the Headteacher's power to grant and authorise up to two weeks holiday leave in any academic year. The school considers that these occasions should be kept to a minimum and that repeat requests within that same year should not be authorised.

On occasions requests may be received for an extended period of absence over and above the usual 10 day school holiday request. It is expected that these occasions should be exceptional and that the necessity for, and the timing and length of such leave will require careful consideration by school, families and pupils. Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- A trip to visit extended family living abroad.
- The nature of the trip justifies allowing longer than two weeks in term time.

It is noted that there are positive benefits for pupils both educationally and culturally to visit extended families living abroad. School would build on these experiences in a positive way, and may wish to provide absent pupils with packages of appropriate work for the period they are away.

Approved Absence Codes**Appendix 1**

The following are the approved absence codes to be used in this school.

Present

Statistical Meaning: Present

Physical Meaning: In for whole session

Authorised Absence (zero with appropriate code in it)	Unauthorised Absence
L Late (before registration closed) Statistical Meaning: Present Physical Meaning: Late for session	O Unauthorised Circumstances Statistical Meaning: Unauthorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session
E Excluded Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	L (Red) Late (after registration closed at 9.15 am and 1.15 pm) Statistical Meaning: Unauthorised Absence Physical Meaning: Late for session
H Annual Family Holiday (agreed) Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	Approved Education Activity (code letter only, no zero)
M Medical/Dental, Confirmed Illness Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	B Education Off Site Statistical Meaning: Approved Educational activity Physical Meaning: Out whole session Actual Meaning: PRESENT
S Study Leave Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	Included Educational Visits, Approved sporting activities and pupils attending another institution, under a Link Course/Consortium/Franchising arrangement)
C Other Authorised Circumstances Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	W Work Experience Statistical Meaning: Approved Educational Activity Physical Meaning: Out whole session Actual Meaning: PRESENT
R Religious Observance Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	Y Enforced Closure No Attendance Required (Use for short periods of closure snow and heat failure, etc) Statistical Meaning: No mark required Physical Meaning: No mark for session Actual Meaning: Not counted
T Traveller Absence Statistical Meaning: Authorised Absence Physical Meaning: Out whole session	

APPENDIX 1

(to be sent out on 2nd day of absence if no message received and parents not contactable by phone)

(insert date here)

(insert name and address of parent/guardian)

Dear (insert name of parent/guardian)

I notice that was absent from school yesterday and has not returned today.

Obviously we are concerned about, so could you let us know what the problem is as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 2

(to be sent out after 5 days of unexplained absence)

(insert date here)

(insert name and address of parent/guardian)

Dear (insert name of parent/guardian)

Unauthorised Absence

.....'s class teacher has informed me that has been absent from school for the past five days. As the school has not been contacted giving a reason for 's absence, I would be grateful if you could contact us to let us know why she/he has been away from school.

Your co-operation in this matter would be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 3

(to be sent out when Headteacher requests, usually when a class teacher or EWO has drawn attention to a problem)

(insert date here)

(insert name and address of parent/guardian)

Dear (insert name of parent/guardian)

.....'s attendance is causing us some anxiety.has missed sessions of schooling out of a possible since the beginning of the school year. This does mean that has missed a significant lot of schooling. We are anxious to solve this problem as I am sure you are. Could you give me a ring to arrange a time when we could meet and talk about what is the best way forward.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely

Access and Inclusion Division

September 2003

Cumbria County Council

Education Welfare Service

Attendance Policy
Statement and
Guidelines

Attendance Policy Statement and
Guidelines

Barry Armstrong

It is recognised that:

- a. Pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with peer groups and prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of the community.
- b. some pupils and their parents may need to be supported and rewarded at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities;
- c. in the first instance it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.

1. MISSION STATEMENT

Cumbria Education Welfare Service aims to fulfil Cumbria County Council's obligations in relation to access to and inclusion in education of all young people of compulsory school age within Cumbria, by providing support, and where necessary a challenge to pupils, parents and schools.

2. AIMS

Cumbria Education Authority aims to ensure that:

- a. all pupils of statutory school age gain an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum, or an appropriate agreed alternative curriculum;
- b. no pupils are deprived of their educational opportunities, by either their own non-attendance, that of other pupils or any other circumstances, from receiving an education that meets their needs and personal development.

3 EXPECTATIONS

Cumbria LEA expects from all of our school pupils:

- a. that they will attend school regularly;
- b. that they will arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day;
- c. that they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school.

Cumbria LEA expects the following from parents:

- a. to ensure that their children attend school;
- b. to ensure they contact school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend school;
- c. to ensure their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework;
- d. to contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.

Parents and pupils should expect the following from schools:

- a. regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance; (see Appendix 1 for exceptions);
- b. early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend without providing good reason;
- c. immediate action on any problem notified to us;
- d. refer specific issues to supporting agencies where appropriate.

4. Support for Attendance

Attendance can be encouraged in a number of ways:

- accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each morning session and at a designated time in the afternoon;
- attendance checks at appropriate times;
- the recording of attendance on individual Records of Achievement;
- a certificate for 95% and 100% attendance for any one term; a 'Gold' Award for 100% attendance achieved throughout the year; a 'Silver' Award for good attendance if there has been only school authorised absence;
- an improved attendance certificate for any pupil achieving a greater than 10% improvement in attendance on any one term;
- a class trophy to be presented for the most improved attendance each half-term and awards for any group with 100% attendance in any half-term;
- all awards to be presented by the Head of Year/Headteacher/Governors as appropriate;
- identifying and visiting pupils who have attendance problems in the feeder primary as part of liaison between KS2 and KS3;
- holding a special Parents' Workshop for those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school. (although school may wish to invite parents to these workshops);
- sending parents termly/weekly absence figures as appropriate for those whose attendance falls under 90%;
- Implement workshops to enable better transition from key stage 2 to 3;
- Implement buddy systems to help develop attendance 'role models' for identified attendance problems on entry to key stage 3.

5 RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively:

- Where contact is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone, or, if not on the telephone, then by letter (schools may wish to consider the use of the electronic call-back system or extreme cases the use of mobile telephones).
- Where there is no response a second letter should be sent within three days of unexplained absence or alternatively a visit made to the pupil's home address by a member of the school's pastoral staff.

- Where there is no response to the school intervention and the absence has persisted without explanation the school should consider a referral to the Education Welfare Service (EWS referral criteria are attached in Appendix 2) where appropriate.

In addition to these interventions schools may wish to consider allocating specific responsibilities to key members of pastoral staff for example:

Headteacher/Governing Body

- to develop a whole school attendance policy, to include guidance on registration practice, proforma letters to be sent to parents, rewards and referral systems.

Deputy Headteacher or Senior teacher (with responsibility for Pastoral Support)

- to liaise with Head of Year/House;
- to oversee the operation of the registration system and the collation of attendance data;
- to oversee the work of administrative staff;
- to produce the attendance profile for the whole school;
- to report to Senior Management Team on attendance matters;
- to liaise with EWO;
- to develop and maintain a process of targeting and supporting individual attendance problems (i.e. through the use of Pastoral Support Programmes);
- develop the use of attendance panels;
- develop re-integration policy for long term absences.

Heads of Year/House

- to collate attendance data for the year group;
- to oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time;
- to reinforce good practice at year meetings;
- to organise attendance assemblies;
- to initiate contact with parents in cases of prolonged unexplained absence;
- to liaise with EWOs as appropriate;
- to organise and plan for the return of long term absentees;
- to be involved in the development and maintenance of the targeting process for full attendance.

Form Tutor

- to complete registers accurately and on time.
- collect notes; question unexplained absences.,
- alert HOY/HOH to possible attendance concerns.

6. LIASING WITH VARIOUS AGENCIES WHEREVER APPROPRIATE

Good relations and working practices are essential. Agencies have difficult roles in that they endeavour to support both the school in meeting its legal obligations as well as home and pupil in ensuring that the latter's educational opportunities are maximised to the full. Some parents need the support of these agencies so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to their children.

Education Welfare Service

- The Education Welfare Service provides an investigative, supportive and enforcement service which should complement the role of the school;
- The Education Welfare Service will always endeavour to provide schools in Cumbria with a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves;
- The Education Welfare Officers will work closely with teachers, pupils and their families. Whilst the service priorities will relate to absence matters, other service activities do also include advice and guidance on exclusion procedures, child protection and child employment.
- The Education Welfare Service will support the school in the following ways
 - a) accepting appropriate referrals;
 - b) make home visits and assessments of difficulties;
 - c) liaison or mediation between school and home;
 - d) working with the families, school staff and the young person to resolve problems;
 - e) where necessary, instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the LEA in the Magistrates or Family Court;
 - f) offering professional advice, guidance and support about pupil attendance issues;
 - g) working in partnership with schools and other agencies to develop sensitive individual re-integration packages for long term absentees;
 - h) offer attendance assemblies/transition workshops to schools as appropriate.
 - i) offer assistance to schools wishing to develop attendance panels or buddy systems.
 - j) Offer training to school staff and governing bodies on registration practice, child protection and exclusion issues.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Statutory responsibilities on parents, governing bodies, headteachers and the LEA relating to the registration of pupils and the attendance of pupils at school are derived from the following regulations:

The Pupil Registration Regulations 1956
 The Education (Pupil's Attendance Records) Regulations 1991
 The Pupil's Registration (Amendment) Regulations 1994
 The Education (Pupil Registration Amendment) Regulations 1997
 The School Attendance Regulations 1995
 The Education Act 1996
 Schools Standards and Frameworks Act 1998
 Social Inclusion Guidance Circular 10/99 and 11/99
 The Children Act 1989
 The Education Act 2002

The statutory framework outlined above includes clear guidance in relation to how, where and when attendance issues should be addressed but also places statutory responsibility on all those in the education arena to ensure that all aspects of these regulations are adhered to. This includes clear and appropriate guidance on the registration of pupils and in particular on the correct symbols to be used for registration purposes. Please see template attendance policy document for a list of agreed registration symbols.

Procedures have been outlined for dealing with registration and unauthorised absence but a significant contributor to the absence rates from schools is often the authorisation of that absence for extended leave and in particular for holiday absence.

The LEA acknowledges that from time to time some parents would want to take their children out of school for holidays. While we would not necessarily encourage this activity it is within the Headteacher's power to grant and authorise up to two weeks holiday leave in any academic year. The LEA would consider that these occasions should be kept to a minimum and that repeat requests within that same year should not be granted.

On occasion requests may be received for an extended period of absence over and above the usual 10 day school holiday request. It is expected that these occasions should be exceptional and that the necessity for, and the timing and length of such leave will require careful consideration by schools, families and pupils. Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:

- a trip to visit extended family living abroad;
- the nature of the trip justifies allowing longer than two weeks in term time.

It is noted that there are positive benefits for pupils both educationally and culturally to visit extended families living abroad. Schools may build on these experiences in a positive way, and may provide workbooks for these records.

Serious consideration should be given for requests made in relation to children with significant and/or complex Special Educational Needs. Extended leave may interfere with the statutory assessment processes resulting in serious delays in receiving appropriate educational provision. Extended leave may also create problems on return to school in terms of social integration – this could affect peer relationships and/or a child's confidence.

School Attendance Policies

Whilst there is no legal responsibility for schools to have a specific policy on attendance Ofsted and the LEA share the view that this would be advisable for the following reasons:

- Given the significant changes over recent years which have been implemented through new legislation and guidance registration practice may not have kept pace with the required change.
- Attendance is a very important performance indicator often used as a measure by OFSTED. It is especially advisable to have an attendance policy if the annual attendance percentage falls below 92%. The benchmark used by OFSTED.
- An attendance policy is an effective way of ensuring the responsibilities identified in the LEA policy are fulfilled.

- The development of a policy will allow for formal consideration of the relationship between attendance and other school issues .e.g. curriculum development, parental involvement, pupil involvement, behaviour/SEN policy and pastoral systems.

Areas which could be included in any whole school policy could be:

School values and ethos.

Legal requirements and expectations including registration systems and duty to report attendance statistics.

The key to success is clearly in developing and maintaining effective communication between pupils, parents and the 'education system'. Part of maintaining an effective dialogue is having clarity about expectations.

A brief summary of the core responsibilities of key players follows:

Pupil:

- Take part in discussions and to have a say in plans which affect him/her;
- Be involved, as appropriate, in managing the issue of continuity;
- Listen to parents and school;
- Carry out work during any leave period which is provided by school.

Parents:

- Listen to the child and the school;
- Seek permission of the school for any leave of absence;
- Work in partnership with the school and/or LEA to address difficulties;
- Ensure they comply with statutory responsibilities.

Schools:

- Listen to child, parent and LEA advice;
- Maintain and publish attendance policy in school's prospectus;
- Adhere to correct registration practice and symbols, supply appropriate attendance statistics;
- Refer to EWS where appropriate in cases of absence.

LEA:

- To provide appropriate advice to parents, pupils, schools and other agencies.
- Produce supportive material for use in or by schools (i.e. behaviour support materials/attendance workshops).
- Investigate and assess referrals for absence (where appropriate).
- Take appropriate action to ensure pupils return to school including legal action.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Behaviour Support materials pack which is in every school includes a specific section in relation to dealing with truancy and absence from school. This guidance would be especially helpful in formulating a whole school attendance policy and should be made available to all relevant pastoral staff. Further advice on developing policies or practice to reduce absence from schools can be sought from the Education Welfare Service at any time.

1. Exceptions to normal school attendance

There are few or no exceptions to the use of the registration symbols identified at Appendix 1.

Having said this however, there are exceptions to normal mainstream school attendance registration where, for example, a pupil is dual registered between school and a Pupil Referral Unit or where a pupil attends alternative education provision at Key Stage 4.

In all cases, where a pupil is registered at a mainstream school, and attending another education provision, school staff must continue to enter the appropriate mark in the school's register. Close liaison between the PRU and/or alternative provider is the key to accurate attendance recording.

2. Deletions from school rolls

There is strict guidance about the removal of pupils from school roll.

This guidance is drawn from school attendance regulations 1995. Where consideration is being given to the deletion of a pupil from a school roll this should only be done with reference to these regulations.

For advice, please contact EWS directly.

Appendix 2

Referral criteria to the Education Welfare Service

Criteria:

1. **Irregular attendance** – when recorded attendance for the proceeding 6 weeks is less than 80% and absences are either unauthorised, or there are grounds to question the authorisation of absences.
2. The Education Welfare Service will attend a pastoral support programme or individual education plan meeting, (at school action plus) as the LEA representative.
3. **Child Employment** - where it is suspected that a pupil of statutory school age is illegally employed.
4. **Teenage pregnancy** – when a pupil's access to education is impaired because of pregnancy or parenthood.

Please note that referrals to the Education Welfare Service will only be accepted when schools have discussed or at least attempted to discuss the problem with the parent or carer of a pupil.

Evidence of school based intervention should accompany the referral (i.e. copy letters etc. to home).

Referrals will not be accepted without this evidence and can only be accepted with reference to the schools service level statement allocation

Access and Inclusion Division
September 2003

Cumbria County Council
Education Welfare Service

**Guide to
ATTENDANCE**

The Law and DfES Advice

Barry Armstrong

Guide to ATTENDANCE

THE LAW IN RELATION TO ATTENDANCE

The current legislation that covers attendance is:
 Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
 Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997
 Education Act 1996
 Education Act 1997
 Education Act 2002

Definitions

'Maintained school' means a school maintained by a local education authority, including Foundation schools*.

'Proprietor' means the person or body of persons responsible for the management of the school (includes the governing body)*.

'Compulsory School Age' is from the start of the term following a child's fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches 16 years**.

'Walking Distance' is less than 2 miles for under 8 year olds and less than 3 miles for 8 year olds and over***.

Requirements.

		Act/Regs. and Section
1.	Schools with day pupils are required to keep an attendance register for all pupils	Reg.(5) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
2.	Every entry in an attendance register should be in ink. Any corrections shall be in such manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable	Reg. (14) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
3.	Attendance register must be taken first thing each morning and again during the afternoon.	Reg. (7) (1) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
4.	When the attendance register is taken, pupils must be recorded as either present, absent (see 5&6 below) or attending an approved educational activity (see 7 below). If attending approved sporting activity, the nature of the activity should be recorded.	Reg. (7) (1) (a) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995 Reg. (7) (1) (c) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
5.	When a pupil of compulsory school age is recorded as absent, there must be a statement as to whether the absence is authorised or not.	Reg. (7) (1) (b) Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995
6.	When the reason for the pupils absence is not known at the time the register is taken, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If the absence is later authorised then changes can be made as per 2. above.	Reg. (7) (4) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995.
7.	An approved education activity is an activity outside of the school premises which: a) is approved by a person authorised by the school to give such approval and b) of an educational nature (inc. work exp. and sporting activities) and supervised by a person authorised in that behalf by governing body/headteacher.	Reg. (7) (4a) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995

* Section 579 Education Act 1996

** Section (7) (2) Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended by section 8 (4) Education Act 1996 – Circular number 11/97

*** Section 444 (5) Education Act 1996

8.	<p>Absences may be recorded as authorised if:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 'Leave of absence' has been granted (see 10. below) or Absence is due to sickness or Due to unavoidable cause or On a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents belong Because the school is not within walking distance and no suitable arrangements made by LEA. <p>In cases where the child is registered at more than one school (see 11. below), when they are attending the other school.</p>	Reg. (7) (3) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
9.	A pupils name can only be deleted from the attendance register after it has been removed from the admissions register.	Reg.(7) (3) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised to do so by the proprietor of the school. Leave of absence shall not be granted to enable a pupil to undertake employment unless under section 37 of the Children and Young Person Act 1963 (performance) or section 25 of the Children and Young Person Act 1933 (employment abroad). If a pupil is so authorised school will be informed by EWS. Leave of absence may be granted to a parent with whom the pupil normally resided to enable him to go away on holiday. However, save in exceptional circumstances, a pupil shall not be granted more than 10 school days leave of absence for a holiday in any one school year. 	Reg.(8) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
11	<p>Duel registration is allowed when a pupil is registered at a school and also at: Pupil Referral Unit A special school including hospital schools providing a statement of SEN does not identify the special school only. (in the above cases, rules apply concerning removal of child's name and regulations should be consulted*) another school if a 'Travelling ' family**.</p>	<p>Reg.(10) (1) to (10) (3) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995.</p> <p>Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 1997</p>
12.	<p>The Attendance Register of every school must be available for inspection during the school day by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMI appointed under Sec.1(2) or 5(2) Education (Schools) act 1992 An Inspector registered under Sec.10 of that Act In the case of a school maintained by the LEA, any officer so authorised. 	Reg.(11) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995

* Reg.9 Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended by Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 1997

** Defined as having no fixed abode for the reason that his parent is engaged in a trade or business of such nature as to require him to travel from place to place Reg 10 (3a).


13.	Any person in 12 above is permitted to make extracts from the register.	Reg.(12) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995 and Sec. 40 Education Act 1997
14.	<p>Schools will inform the LEA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils whose parents notified the school that they are educating their children otherwise than at school (notification within 10 school days) • Pupils who fail to attend regularly or • Have been absent for a continuous period of 10 days. <p>Unless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence due to sickness and medical note provided or • Due to 'Leave of Absence' being given or • Pupil has dual registration (see 11. above). 	Reg. (13) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
15.	Every entry in an attendance register shall be preserved for a period of three years from the date the entry was made.	Reg. (15) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
16.	<p>Attendance Registers can be kept on computer. In these cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A print out of the attendance register must be made at least once a month • A years worth of monthly printouts must be bound together and kept for three years • Alterations / updates must be clearly distinguishable (see 2.above) • Data Protection Act must be complied with. 	Reg. (16) Education (Pupils Registration) Regulations 1995
17.	Parents probably commit an offence if they do not ensure the regular attendance of their child at a school where their child is on roll.	Sec. 444 Education Act 1996

A compilation of advice on attendance from the DfES and elsewhere

		Where advice is from
1.	Work Experience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only during last four terms of compulsory school life For statistical purposes, counts as present 	DfES Circular number 11/97
2.	Approved educational activity includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trips, educational visits Approved sporting activities Link courses Work experience 	DfES Circular number 11/97
3.	Study leave. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is classed as authorised absence Is not appropriate for all pupils Current advice is that it should be for a maximum of 15 days Is only available to Year 11 pupils Only during public/mock exam periods Is not an approved educational activity 	DfES Circular number 11/97 DfES Circular number 10/99
4.	Early Intervention recommended by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of individual attendance Recognition of class/year group achievement By use of letters, certificates, praise in assemblies or prizes.	DfES Circular number 10/99
5.	Working with parents. Home school agreements with clear expectations about regular and punctual attendance.	DfES Circular number 10/99
6.	Involving pupils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expose bullying Acting as mentors Suggesting strategies for improving poor attendance. 	DfES Circular number 10/99
7.	Contact on the first day of absence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfES Circular number 10/99. DfES – More Willingly To School (page 81) Croner's – The Head Legal Guide DfES – School Attendance – Policy & Practice DfES – Excellence in Schools
8.	Curricular Flexibility	DfES Circular number 10/99
9.	Use of temporary disapplication of the National Curriculum.	DfES Circular number 10/99
10.	Registration Periods Morning registration period should be no longer than 30 minutes. Afternoon registration period should be considerably shorter than this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfES – School Attendance & the Role of the Education Welfare Service (1998) Para. 28 DfES School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence

11.	Headteachers to pay attention to consistency of registration practice within their school	Para. 11 DfES School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence
12.	Internal School Targets. Schools could choose to set internal targets for attendance along with the other targets that they are required to fix.	DfES – Excellence in Schools Para. 3.12

Reason for Absence	Code letter	Remarks	Present	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Illness & medical and dental appoint.	M	If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or for long periods of absence for medical reasons then enquiries should be made by school/EWO. Only when school satisfied the absence is genuine should M be used Missing registration due to medical or dental appointments should be treated as authorised absence. Appointment cards should be seen if pupil is an irregular attendee. If a pupil is present for registration but has to leave for an appointment/illness no alteration is made to the attendance register.		✓	
Days for religious observance	R	Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice wherever possible.		✓	
Study Leave	S	Regard should be paid to the individual pupil's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it. Study leave does not constitute an "approved educational activity" as it is unsupervised.		✓	
Work Exp.	W	Approved work experience.	✓		
Other Authorised circumstance	C	Could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Family bereavements • Other unforeseen circumstance. 		✓	
Lateness during registration	L	In order to ensure consistency, all teachers must be aware of the periods of registration.	✓		
Lateness after registration	L (red)	For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken with late arrivals.			✓
Unauthorised circumstance	O	Truancy.			✓
Excluded	E	Where any pupil has been excluded for any period.		✓	
Present	/	Present for whole session.	✓		
Agreed family holiday	H	Agreed in advance of absence.		✓	
Traveller absence	T	Where a child has been identified as being absent because they are a traveller.		✓	

Education off site	B	Attending an approved education activity.			
Enforced closure	Y	No attendance required.	Not counted in figures		

**The Education (Pupil Registration)
Regulations 1995**

**As amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 1997
The Education (Pupil Registration) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2001
And the 1996 and 1997 Education Acts**

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 and shall come into force on 1st September 1995.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations:-
 “the 1998 Act” means the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
 “maintained school” means a school maintained by a local education authority;
 “proprietor” in relation to a school, means the person or body of persons responsible for the management of the school (so that in relation to a community, foundation or voluntary school or a community or foundation special school, it means the governing body);
 “the relevant person” means-
 (a) in relation to a pupil under the age of 18, a parent of his;
 (b) in relation to a pupil who has attained that age, the pupil himself.

Revocation

3. The pupils’ Registration Regulations 1956 (d) shall be revoked.

Amendment of the Education (Schools and further Education) Regulations 1981

4. Regulations 11 and 12 of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981 (e) shall be omitted.

Registers to be kept

5. The proprietor of every school shall cause to be kept:-
 (a) an admission register; and
 (b) except in the case of a school of which all the pupils are boarders, an attendance register.

Contents of Admission Register

6. (1)
 The admission register for every school shall contain an index in alphabetical order of all the pupils at the school and shall also contain the following particulars in respect of every such pupil:-
 (c) name in full;
 (d) sex;
 (e) the name and address of every person known to the proprietor of the school to be a parent of the pupil and, against the entry on the register of the particulars of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, an indication of that fact and a note of at least one telephone number at which the parent can be contacted in an emergency;
 (f) day, month and year of birth;
 (g) day, month and year of admission or re-admission to the school; and
 (h) name and address of the school last attended, if any.

6. (2)
 In the case of every school which includes boarding pupils a statement as to whether each pupil of compulsory school age is a boarder or a day pupil shall be added to the particulars specified in paragraph (1), and that the statement shall be amended accordingly where a registered pupil at the school becomes or ceases to be a boarder at the school.

Contents of Attendance Register

7.(1)

There shall be recorded in the attendance register at the commencement of each morning session and once during each afternoon session the following particulars:-

- (a) in the case of every pupil whose name is entered in and not deleted from the admissions register whether the pupil is present, absent or attending an approved educational activity within paragraph (4a);
- (b) in the case of any such pupil of compulsory school age who is absent, a statement whether or not his absence is authorised in accordance with paragraph (3); but this paragraph does not apply in respect of a pupil who is a boarder; and
- (c) in the case of every such pupil of compulsory school age who is attending an approved educational activity the nature of that activity.

7.(2)

For the purpose of this regulation only a pupil is of compulsory school age unless:-

- (a) he has not attained the age of five years before the commencement of the term of which the session forms part; or
- (b) he has attained the age of sixteen years before 1st September in the school year of which the session forms part.

7.(3)

In the case of a pupil who is not a boarder, his absence shall be treated as authorised for the purpose of this regulation if:-

- (a) he has been granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation 8;
- (b) he is unable to attend:-
 - (i) by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
 - (ii) on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs; or
 - (iii) because the school is not within walking distance of the pupil's home, and no suitable arrangements have been made by the local education authority either for his transport to and from school, or for boarding accommodation for him at or near the school or for enabling him to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his home; or
- (c) in the case of a pupil to whom regulation 10 (3A) applies he is attending another school at which he is a registered pupil.

7.(4)

Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time when the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register recording that absence as authorised shall be made in accordance with regulation 14 and as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence is established by the person with responsibility for completing the register.

7.(4a)

An approved educational activity is either-

- (a) an activity which takes place outside the school premises and which is:-
 - (i) approved by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school;
 - (ii) of an educational nature, including work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996 and a sporting activity; and
 - (iii) supervised by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor or the headteacher of the school; or
- (b) in the case of a pupil, other than a pupil to whom regulation 10(3A) applies, that pupil's attendance at another school at which he is registered pupil.

7.(5)

The name of a pupil may only be deleted from the attendance register when that pupil's name has been deleted from the admission register for that school in accordance with regulation 9.

7.(6)

For the purpose of this regulation "walking distance" has the meaning given to that expression in section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996.

Leave of Absence

8.(1)

Leave of absence may only be granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school.

8.(2)

Leave of absence shall not be granted to enable a pupil to undertake employment (whether paid or unpaid) during school hours except:-

- (a) employment for the purpose of taking part in a performance within the meaning of section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) under the authority of a licence granted by the local authority under that section; or
- (b) employment abroad for a purpose mentioned in section 25 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (d) where a licence has been granted under that section by a justice of the peace.

8.(3)

Subject to paragraph (4), on application made by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, a pupil may be granted leave of absence from the school to enable him to go away on holiday.

8.(4)

Save in exceptional circumstances, a pupil shall not in pursuance of paragraph (3) be granted more than ten days leave of absence in any school year.

Deletions from Admission Register

9.(1)

The following are prescribed as the grounds on which the name of the pupil of compulsory school age shall be deleted from the admission register:-

- (a) where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local education authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local education authority on the grounds that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school;
- (b) except as provided in regulation 10, in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has been registered as a pupil of another school;
- (c) in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that he pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school;
- (d) except in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered;
- (e) in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation 8(3), that the pupil has failed to attend school within ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted, and the proprietor is not satisfied that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause;
- (f) that he is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age;

- (g) that he has been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than four weeks and both the proprietor of the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil;
- (ga) that he had been continuously absent from school for a period of not less than four weeks and he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by the Secretary of State;
- (h) that the pupil has died;
- (i) that he will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and intends to cease to attend the school;
- (j) in the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school;
- (k) where the pupil is registered at a maintained school, that he has been permanently excluded from the school; or
- (l) where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school.

9.(2)

In a case not covered by paragraph (1) (a), (h) or (k), or regulation 10, the name of a child who has under arrangements made by a local education authority become a registered pupil at a special school shall not be removed from the admission register of that school without the consent of that authority or, if that authority refuse to give consent, without a direction of the Secretary of State.

9.(3)

The following are prescribed as the grounds on which the name of a pupil not of compulsory school age is to be deleted from the admission register:-

- (a) that he has ceased to attend the school, or, in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school;
- (b) that he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than four weeks and the proprietor of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil;
- (c) that the pupil has died;
- (d) where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception class at the school; or
- (e) where the pupil is registered at a maintained school, that he has been permanently excluded from the school.

9.(4)

For the purpose of this regulation:-

- (a) a pupil shall be treated as ordinarily residing at a place where the pupil is habitually and normally resident apart from the temporary or occasional absence;
- (b) "reception class" means a class in which education is provided which is suitable to the requirements of pupils aged five and any pupils under or over that age whom it is expedient to educate together with pupils of that age;
- (c) children are to be regarded as having been admitted to a school to receive nursery education if they were placed on admission in a nursery class; and
- (d) the permanent exclusion of a pupil does not take effect until the governing body have discharged their duties under section 66 of the 1988 Act, and:-
 - (i) the relevant person has stated in writing that he does not intend to bring an appeal under section 67 of the 1998 Act;
 - (ii) the time for bringing an appeal has expired and no appeal has been brought within that time; or
 - (iii) an appeal brought within that time has been determined or abandoned.

Dual registration

10.(1)

Where a pupil is registered as a pupil at a pupil referral unit and at a school other than a pupil referral unit, the name of that pupil shall not be removed from the admission register of either the unit or the school pursuant to regulation 9(1) (b) without the consent of both the local education authority by which the unit is maintained and the proprietor of the school.

- 10.(2) Subject to paragraph (3) where a pupil:-
 (a) is registered as a pupil at a special school (including a special school established in a hospital) and at another school (other than a pupil referral unit); and
 (b) there is not maintained for that pupil a statement of special educational needs specifying the name of the special school only, the name of the pupil shall not be removed from the admission register or either school pursuant to regulation 9 (1) (b) without the consent of the proprietor of both schools.
- 10.(3a) This paragraph applies to a pupil who:-
 (a) has no fixed abode for the reason that his parent is engaged in a trade or business of such nature as to require him to travel from place to place; and
 (b) is at any time registered as a pupil at two or more schools.
- 10.(3b) The name of the pupil to whom paragraph (3a) applies shall not be deleted from the register of a school pursuant to regulation 9 (1) (b) while he is attending that school.
- 10.(3c) The name of a pupil to whom paragraph (3a) applies shall not be deleted from that pupil's school of ordinary attendance pursuant to regulation 9 (1) (b).
- 10.(3d) Subject to paragraph (3e) for the purposes of paragraph (3c) a school shall be a pupil's school of ordinary attendance if, during the immediately preceding 18 months, it is the school which the pupil has attended during periods when his parent is not travelling in the course of trade or business.
- 10.(3e) In any case in which two or more schools fulfil the definition of a school of ordinary attendance in paragraph (3d), paragraph (3c) shall only apply in respect of the school which fulfils the definition most recently:- and
- 10.(4) The requirements to obtain consent in paragraphs (1) to (3e) do not apply in cases covered by regulation 9 (1) (h) and (k).

Inspection of registers

- 11.(1) The admission register and the attendance register of every school shall be available for inspection during school hours by:-
 (a) any of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools appointed under section 1(2) or 5(2) of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 (a);
 (b) any inspector registered under section 10 of that Act; and
 (c) in the case of a school maintained by a local education authority, any officer of the local education authority authorised for the purpose.

Extracts from registers

12. The persons authorised by regulation 11 to inspect the admission register and attendance register of any school shall be permitted to make extracts from those registers under section 40 of the Education Act 1997.

Returns

- 13.(1) Subject to paragraph (2), the proprietor of every school shall make, in the case of a school maintained by a local education authority to that authority, and in every other case to the local education authority for the area in which the school is situated, at such intervals as may be agreed between the proprietor and the local education authority, or as may be determined by the Secretary of State in default of agreement, a

return giving the full name and address of every registered pupil of compulsory school age who:-

- (a) fails to attend the school regularly; or
- (b) has been absent from school for a continuous period of not less than ten school days, and specifying the cause of absence if known to the proprietor.

13.(2)

Paragraph (1) shall not apply with respect to any absence from the school:-

- (a) due to sickness of the pupil of which a medical certificate has been furnished to the headteacher
- (b) due to leave of absence granted by a person authorised in that behalf by the proprietor of the school in accordance with regulation 8; and
- (c) of a pupil who is registered at more than one school in accordance with regulation 10, due to the pupil attending another school at which he is a registered pupil.

13.(3)

When the name of a pupil has been deleted from the admission register in accordance with regulation 9 (1) (c) the proprietor shall make a return to the local education authority giving the full name and address of that pupil within ten school days immediately following the date in which the pupil's name was so deleted.

Methods of making entries

14.

Every entry in an admission register or attendance shall be written in ink and any correction shall be made in such a manner that the entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable.

Preservation of registers

15.

Every entry in an admission register or attendance register shall be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Use of computers

16.(1)

Nothing in these regulations shall be taken to prevent the keeping of an admission register or an attendance register by means of computer, but where such a register is so kept the following paragraphs of this regulation shall apply for the purpose of modifying the requirements of these regulations.

16.(2)

The requirements of regulation 5 shall not be treated as satisfied unless a print is made of the attendance register not less than once a month and of the admission register not less than once a year.

16.(3)

The requirements of regulation 14 shall not be treated as satisfied unless, where any correction to an original entry in the registers is made, prints of the register in question made after the correction distinguish clearly between the original entry and the correction.

16.(4)

The requirements of regulation 15 shall not be treated as satisfied, in the case of an attendance register, unless each print of the attendance register relating to a particular school year is retained in a single volume for that year and that volume is retained for a period of three year after the end of that school year.

16.(5)

A print of a register produced by means of a computer shall for the purpose of regulation 14 be taken to be made in ink.

16.(6)

The provisions of this regulation are without prejudice to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Access and Inclusion Division

September 2003

Cumbria County Council

Education Welfare Service

School Attendance Health Check

Barry Armstrong

School Attendance Health Check



COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction

The school attendance health check has been compiled from a variety of sources, including questions frequently asked of schools during Ofsted inspections.

The health check is meant as a schools self diagnostic tool, but could form the basis of any schools annual planning review. The check can be undertaken in house or in partnership with Education Welfare Service/and other agencies.

While the health check is by no means exhaustive if all the checks are made and gaps addressed, it should provide a sound platform from which to tackle any attendance issues on a whole school basis.

The health check has been designed for use by any school, primary or secondary, although some of the checks are aimed solely at the secondary sector.

HEALTH CHECK

Section 1

Issue – Whole School Attendance Policy	Indicator	Evidence	Action required/By who
Does the school prospectus and related documents indicate the high value that should be placed on good attendance?			
Does the school have a clear/accessible whole school attendance policy?			
When was this policy last reviewed?			
Was the governing body involved in the development and agreement of the existing policy?			
Were the EWS involved in the development and agreement of the school's attendance policy?			
Have parents/pupils been involved in the development of the school's policy?			
Does the school's attendance policy include a section how the school will re-integrate pupils after lengthy absence?			
Does the school have clear action plan of how it intends to implement the issues arising from the attendance policy reviews?			

HEALTH CHECK

Section 2

Issue – Monitoring of Attendance	Indicator	Evidence	Action required/By who
Are all staff clear of procedures for registration of pupils and recording of absence?			
Are procedures written and circulated to all staff including admin?			
Is the school's registration system electronic?			
Do class tutors have easy access to attendance data?			
What are Year Heads/House Heads actually doing to try to raise attendance?			
How do the Senior Management Team review whole school attendance issues?			
How is the Education Welfare Service involved in receiving whole school attendance profile with governors and staff?			
Is there clear working arrangements with the Education Welfare Service –who is responsible for co-ordinating links?			
Is there a first day response system in place?			
Has this been communicated to all relevant staff? Has the school got proforma standard letters for parental contact?			
Who has overall responsibility for			

attendance issues in the school?			
What is the school's current target for attendance?			
What are the school's targets for reduction in; (a) authorised absence (b) unauthorised absence?			
Does the school have a clear action plan on how it intends to achieve its targets?			
What training do staff and governors receive on attendance related issues?			

HEALTH CHECK

Section 3

Issue – recording and information analysis	Indicator	Evidence	Action required/By who
What action is taken at senior management level as a result of attendance analysis?			
What method do school staff use to analyse attendance?			
Is there a relationship between unauthorised absence in the school and pupils on free school meals?			
Are there specific patterns of poor attendance within: (a) subject groups (b) tutor groups (c) year groups (d) particular staff members lessons?			
Do the senior management team/governors meet with EWS to discuss and plan for attendance analysis?			

HEALTH CHECK

Section 4

Issue – strategies	Indicator	Evidence	Action required/By who
What proportion of the additional funds made available by DfES to tackle low attendance?			
Do the school support the use of legal intervention to support attendance?			
How are staff involved in decisions about legal action?			
Does the school have a clear published action plan to address attendance issues within the school?			
Does the school have a clear policy on how to support vulnerable youngsters on return to school i.e. teenage mothers?			
Do the school welcome back absentees positively – how?			
What is the system of re-integration for absentees?			
Has this been communicated to all staff and agencies?			
Does the school use a system of rewards for good and improved attendance?			
Is attendance given a high value and priority in the school? Are certificates used appropriately to promote attendance?			
Issue – strategies adopted			
Does the school run/access attendance			

workshops, transition workshops?			
What action is taken to establish links with juniors?			
Does the school use attendance panels?			
Does the school use a traffic light system to help address attendance issues?			
Are school assemblies used to reinforce the value of education and need for regular attendance?			
Does the school use a flexible approach to education at year 10/11 to ensure that pupils are engaged effectively in study and work experience?			

HEALTH CHECK

Section 5

Issue - partnership	Indicator	Evidence	Action required/By who
Does the school have a identified EWO?			
Does the school have a senior member of staff who is responsible for co-ordinating links with EWS and other agencies?			
Is there shared responsibility for decisions and agreed action ?			
Is joint work between agencies and school staff encouraged?			
Does the school have clear referral procedures both internally and to access external agencies?			
Are regular attendance updates provided to the key workers in other agencies?			
What/who are the agencies which contribute to helping the school tackle attendance issues?			
How do these agencies contribute to the schools actions/targets?			
Does the school involve inspector/advisors on attendance issues?			

Access and Inclusion Division
September 2003

Cumbria County Council

Education Welfare Service

Attendance Panels

Barry Armstrong

Attendance Panels



CUMBRIA
COUNTY COUNCIL

ATTENDANCE PANELS

FRAMEWORK

Since the 1997 White Paper, 'Excellence in Schools', legislation and guidance have reinforced the message that the best efforts of schools and teachers will come to nothing if pupils do not attend. The Attendance Panel is one of a range of pro-active strategies the Education Welfare Service has implemented, within the Social Inclusion agenda, to tackle poor school attendance.

The Panels are linked to a range of other activities:

- First day contact
- Register inspections
- Attendance Workshops
- Attendance Officers
- Truancy Sweeps
- Legal proceedings
- Alternative and/or vocational curriculum
- Etc

which together constitute a comprehensive strategic response, as recommended in 'Missing Out' (Audit Commission 99).

They do not replace the statutory legal processes, but make available a more formal response to those pupils and families where, after some initial assessment, concerns exist about the legitimacy of absences, and where the level of attendance needs to improve but is not sufficiently low to warrant court action. If informal approaches have failed to effect improvement, they give parents a formal reminder of their responsibilities and a last chance to resolve issues with appropriate and structured support. The Panels can also provide valuable evidence in court proceedings if matters are not resolved. However, the approach may not be suitable with 'families under stress' and some other high-risk groups as identified in SIPS (10/99 and 11/99) who require more extensive and intensive support to address the underlying causes of irregular attendance.

ATTENDANCE PANELS

FORMAT

School and Education Welfare Service look at pupils attendance and agree, which parents, are to be called to an Attendance Panel by following the agreed criteria.

CRITERIA

No entrenched attendance issues. This is a preventative, early intervention strategy. Do not use them as a last resort.

There should be some evidence of the parent being able to exert a good degree of control and influence over their child(ren).

Pupil attendance should be no less than 65% at the outset.

PROCESS

The approach is largely a strategic one which can be used for referred and non referred pupils. For example, pupils already referred to the EWS can become involved with an Attendance Panel as part of an agreed programme of work. If successful the referral closes; if unsuccessful it can be a valuable part of the evidence for formal proceedings. Pupils not referred to the service can still be part of an Attendance Panel that an EWO would attend. However, if the EWO is asked to undertake any work with the pupil beyond the panel meeting then a formal referral is required.

School writes to parents inviting them to attend the panel, stating date, time, venue, offering a 20-minute appointment maximum.

The Panel consists of no more than 3 members, a mix of the following:

Senior Teacher
Governor
Head of Year
Education Welfare Officer

The Venue: School Quiet room Verging on the official

The Chair: by agreement but not the Education Welfare Officer.

Set attendance % targets.

Each case will be individual and therefore appropriate realistic and achievable targets will need to be set in the agreed actions, e.g. request GP notes, reduction in lates.

The parents need to be aware of the possibility of legal proceedings taken against them and this can be written into the agreed actions.

School to send out weekly attendance letter until the review.

Set review date: 6 weeks

When everyone agrees set targets, inform the parents that they will receive a copy of the agreed actions as will the school. A copy for the Education Welfare Officer's file.

If parent/carer(s) fail to attend, the panel will make decisions in their absence and the Education Welfare Officer will inform the parent/carer(s) by sending them the agreed actions in writing.

The review will be held by school and the Education Welfare Officer.

Check the attendance since the panel met and if all targets have been achieved the Education Welfare Officer will write to parent(s)/carer(s) informing them of the outcome.

If all targets are not achieved, then another set of targets need to be agreed and reviewed again in 6 weeks. Consideration needs to be given to doing a Pastoral Support Programme, Education Supervision Order or a prosecution. Parent(s) will be informed of any new decisions by the agreed actions being sent to them in writing.

ATTENDANCE PANELSDATE:.....**BASIC DATA SHEET (To be completed for all pupils)**

Year Group: Date of birth:		Male	Female
Ethnic Origin:			
Term:	Summer	Autumn	Winter
School:			
Parental attendance at panel:	Mother	Yes / No	Father
			Yes / No
	Other carer (please specify)		Yes / No
School Action:	School Action Plus:	Statement:	
Exclusions:			
Looked after child:	Yes	No	
Free school meals:	Yes	No	
Lone carer family:	Yes	No	
Any other agencies involved:			
% attendance for previous 6 weeks when identified for panel:			
% attendance at time of panel:			
% attendance at 1 st review: Outcome:			
% attendance at 2 nd review: Outcome:			
% attendance at 3 rd review: Outcome:			

N.B. Please attach copies of agreed actions when returning.

Please return to the education welfare representative on your panel.

Access and Inclusion Division

September 2003

Cumbria County Council

Education Welfare Service

Promoting School Attendance

Extract from behaviour support materials
Edited by L. Sanczuk

Promoting School Attendance



COUNTY COUNCIL

Chapter 2: Promoting School Attendance

Introduction

School attendance is essential to the all round educational development of a student. All those who work within the education arena have a responsibility to promote the importance of school attendance. Within the school environment school attendance needs to be given a high profile with clear procedures, aims and expectations. Parents, children, young people and those within the wide community need to contribute to the ethos of encouraging and promoting good school attendance. Using a clear mission statement with clearly identified roles and responsibilities is essential. Included in the section on promoting good school attendance are suggestions based on existing good practice which could be adapted by all schools and although many of the suggestions are not new, they focus on practical strategies. Prioritising good school attendance is complementary to the school's behaviour policy and adheres to county guidelines. The section on promoting school attendance is based on advice and guidelines published by the Education Welfare Service and the theoretical basis on which Education Welfare Officers carry out their role in relation to proactive work with schools, used on a day to day basis in schools.

Helping Individual Pupils

Principles

- Our schools will offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcome.
- Pupils will know that their presence is important.
- A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received.
- Attendance issues will be raised with parents through Parents' Evening, Governors/PTA, AGM, School Prospectus, Newsletter, letter prior to commencing school.
- Parents will be promptly informed over concerns about attendance and given the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff.
- Attendance will be discussed with individual pupils if there is a level of concern or pattern of absence and with parents if necessary.
- Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from class tutor/teacher, and should the need arise from a senior member of staff.

School

- Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example.
- Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff (not just teaching and pastoral staff). Staff will respond to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care.
- The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absences, liaising closely with parents.

Registration

- Registers will be taken punctually each day at --- am and --- pm.
- If a pupil arrives after the registers close at --- am and --- pm, s/he should report to the school office or at the clearly designated area.
- When a pupil misses registration altogether and fails to provide an adequate explanation then that pupil will be marked as an unauthorised absentee for this session.

AUTHORISED ABSENCES

Absence will be authorised for:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances.

Whenever possible, medical/dental appointments should be made outside school hours.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Absence will not be authorised for:

- Shopping
- Looking after family members
- Minding the house
- Birthdays or similar events
- Any work (paid or unpaid) undertaken during school hours.

Parents must appreciate it is their responsibility to encourage their child to catch up on return.

Authorised leave for a school holiday is not a right and can only be authorised by the headteacher. Parents should apply on the appropriate form to the school for permission in advance of any such holiday.

The school's response will take into consideration such factors as:

- The child's previous attendance
- Academic progress
- Examination commitments

If a pupil is persistently absent and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Pupils who are absent through sickness for an extended time will be provided with work to be done at home and will be re-integrated back into school on their return as appropriate.

Consultation between the school and Education Welfare Service will be arranged to set targets for, and to support poor attendees. Other services eg Child and Family Guidance will be consulted where appropriate.

Regular liaison between feeder primary schools and secondary schools will be sought in order to identify pupils who may require extra support during the transition.

IDEAS ON TRUANCY

For Schools

- Governors could consider the appointment of an attendance co-ordinator or allocate this responsibility alone, to a senior member of staff. A clear task specification should be provided.
- Headteacher and co-ordinator should summarise and highlight relevant documentation/legislation:
 - Education Regulations (pupils attendance records)
 - School attendance, policy and practice on categorisation of absence
- Headteacher and co-ordinator to establish a clear database of attendance statistics.
- An attendance management group should be set up representing all relevant groups working in partnership. This group would need clearly defined boundaries i.e. chair, times, minutes, deadlines, etc.
- An attendance policy document could be drawn up with realistic achievable targets for the whole school.

Membership of any attendance management group would need to be representative i.e. school staff, EWS, governors, students, a parent, police (and other agencies) plus other members of the community i.e. business, religious etc.

Ideas to run in conjunction with the targets set by any management group:

- Headteacher could create a slot in the day/week for a 'parents surgery', with no appointments required but time limits set and adhered to.

- On starting new children, consideration could be given to interviewing all parents before their children start school and a contract entered into committing parental support to high attendance, punctuality and prior authorisation of absence.

Most parents find a visit to school intimidating and consequently as welcoming an atmosphere as possible should be created i.e. comfortable room, tea, coffee, pleasant greetings etc. Interviewers should be well briefed on the subject and the child involved.

ii. Management of Attendance Group

Main Aim: To produce a draft policy for consultation. Details which could be included in this:

- Responsibilities of school, parents and the LEA
- Role of the EWS
- Organisation of registration and registers
- Procedure for notification of absence
- Punctuality and deadlines for closure of registers
- Rewards for good attendance
- Clear definition of types of truancy
- Strategies for tackling problems of truancy
- Support available for parents
- Parents' actions in cases of truancy.

Policy document to be clear, simple and not too long and to be produced and circulated to all relevant agencies.

Lateness

Lateness is often a clue to a more serious problem and particular attention should be paid to individual patterns of lateness.

Teachers set clear examples by not being late themselves. Exclusion is not recommended by the DfEE for either continuous lateness or truancy. A clear system of appropriate sanctions will however avoid condoning unpunctuality. Sanctions which are too heavy could push a latecomer into truancy.

Lack of punctuality should be discouraged by the school's culture. Arrange change-over between lessons to identify late arrivals, with bells to announce thresholds i.e. one bell two minutes before the end of each lesson and two minutes after the start of the next. Clear procedure should be drawn up for recording pupils leaving or returning to the site.

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFERING KINDS OF POOR ATTENDANCE.

Parentally condoned, unjustified absence

Focus strategies on parents, i.e. through parents' evenings, letters, newsletters, interviews, home visits etc. Establish contact with parents as a first step, not a last resort, and inform them about what is a justified absence and what is not. Where possible, improve liaison between home and school.

Persistent long term absenteeism

Schools should maintain systematic regular contact with home. The role of the EWO should be central in this contact with the possibility of involving other external agencies. A welcoming, caring planned reception is vital for such children's successful re-integration into school.

Intermittent or spasmodic absenteeism

Look for any possible patterns, i.e. specific days, lessons, etc. Examine curriculum for causes or the effect of teachers' absence. In addition look at external occurrences, i.e. local market days, Fridayitis etc.

Post registration truancy/internal truancy

Establish a well publicised system of classroom checks. School should be checked regularly, as should local haunts (Police could be involved here) especially after registrations and breaks. Find out where internal truants hide.

School Phobia

- Begin work in the home using outside intervention if necessary.
- Re-introduce students gradually through brief planned visits.
- Set achievable targets.
- Praise smallest achievement.
- Use friends to monitor the student.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

When considering individual cases of absence, schools should consider:

- The nature of the event.
- Frequency of absence.
- Whether advance notification is given.
- Overall attendance record of the student.

DfEE provides more detailed guidelines; for example:

Illness

Schools' responsibility to decide to authorise or not. Medical certificates may be sought, but parents are not legally obliged to provide them.

Other authorised circumstances

Absence may be authorised at a school's decision.

Holidays

Only in exceptional circumstances and no more than two weeks in any year.

Authorised or Unauthorised?

Aim: To establish a distinction between an authorised and an unauthorised absence. Absence may be considered authorised when:

- The pupil is absent with leave granted by any person authorised to do so, by the governing body or by the proprietor of the school
- The student is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause
- The absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent/s belongs
- The school at which the student is registered is not within walking distance of the student's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LEA for:
 - a) the student's transport to and from school
 - b) boarding accommodation at or near the school
 - c) the student to register at a school nearer to home.
- Arrangements may be made to authorise absence retrospectively if the school is satisfied with the explanation.

REFERRAL AND THE ROLE OF THE TUTOR

Aim: To establish a clear and effective system of referral to follow when a potential problem is identified.

Establish early intervention strategies for tutors. Forms should be designed to make record keeping simple (see example). Intervention should be seen as a first step rather than as a last resort.

There should be a clear referral system so that referral stages from tutor to home to year head, Education Welfare Officer, deputy, etc are systematically followed. Each stage carries a strategy for action and is recorded.

Establish clear procedures for sending letters home, making home visits and contacting outside agencies. Provide training for tutors in understanding and handling problems related to poor attendance. Establish procedures for receiving and welcoming students back into school after exclusion, truancy, school refusal or prolonged illness. Consider phased re-introduction.

Welcoming students back

Ground rules:

Identifying the long term absentees is the beginning of a long process

Punishing truants only reinforces negative feelings about school

The principal outcomes aimed for are the improvement of self-esteem and successful reintegration into school life.

STAGES IN RE-INTEGRATION

The truant selects a teacher mentor and, with the teacher mentor's help, a student mentor.
 The mentors help the truant complete a confidential questionnaire.
 Using the questionnaire, the mentors and truant complete an action plan and select a day for returning to school.
 Staff and students who work with the truant are primed to avoid sarcastic comments.
 Class teachers make no fuss. The student is treated the same as the rest of the group. Work does not make the returning student feel the spotlight is on them, or inconvenience the rest of the group.
 The student is greeted on their return to school.
 The student is rewarded for each small success and the parents are informed.
 A date is agreed for complete re-integration.
 A small 'ceremony' is held to celebrate complete re-integration, involving mentors, parents and friends.

Mentoring

Aim: To help truants talk about their problems and re-integrate into school life.

Use former truants who have successfully re-integrated as mentors. Let student mentors lead rehearsed sessions.
 Arrange training for teacher and student mentors in counselling skills.
 Initial meetings can be held at home or in school. Choose somewhere comfortable, clean, quiet, relaxed and private.
 Arrange a regular time; allow at least 20 minutes for each session.
 Make sure there are no interruptions; put an engaged sign on the door and take the phone off the hook.
 The mentor must be on time to greet the student.
 Adopt a relaxed posture, smile, speak gently, make eye contact and avoid abrupt gestures.
 Use prepared material to stimulate conversation.
 Start with a positive comment.
 Allow the students to do most of the talking. When in doubt, stay quiet.
 Use open questions. Avoid 'yes' or 'no' questions. 'What worried you?' is more effective than 'Were you worried?'.
 Focus on students' behaviour, rather than on the sort of people they are.
 Be clear about the intended outcome – to enhance the students' self-esteem and positive commitment to school.
 Praise achievement
 Make a brief record of each meeting and share it with the student to secure their agreement.
 Agree the next meeting (time, place, theme) and the timing of future meetings. Gradually leave a longer time between meetings.

Peer counselling is fundamentally a service that complements adult support. The joint adult and student mentor approach can be very effective. Student mentors themselves benefit greatly from the experience and can quickly develop mentoring skills, particularly that of active listening. Well publicised 'on call' rotas or surgeries can be the first line in enabling students to open up about problems.

THE CURRICULUM

Aim: To ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of individual students and positively encourages them to attend.

Establish projects such as **Compact**, of which attendance is a central focus. Compact is a scheme aimed at motivating young people to achieve goals related to attendance, punctuality and attainment (ages 14 – 16). This is

achieved through target setting, action planning, and liaison with and sponsorship by providers of employment, training and further education.

Look at alternative curriculum schemes such as Cities in Schools, in which flexible curricular packages are tailored to suit individual students. Cities in Schools is a charitable company that provides programmes for young people with poor attendance in the last two years of school, re-integrating them into mainstream schooling where possible and preparing them for life beyond school through work experience, college courses, personal awareness and careers guidance. It is sponsored by Burger King.

Examine the benefits of modular courses and flexible and active learning approaches. Allowing students to transfer between courses will make absenteeism less damaging.

Avoid creating groups of students who are not entered for public examinations. Accreditation gives a course validity in their eyes.

Distribute subject periods effectively across the week, and mix morning and afternoon sessions.

Ensure that absentees do not end up in options no one else wanted, forming a 'sump' group.

Look for ways to make sure that subject specialists cover colleagues' absences.

Audit the curriculum to identify where internal truancy is highest. Research suggests that vulnerable areas are French, PE, RE and Maths.

Records of Achievement give credit to the full range of a student's achievements: working with others, reliability and personal commitment, as well as academic progress. Such records acknowledge a student's performance day to day (formative assessment) and do not rely on an examination or report (summative assessment).

Set up system for identifying absences related to learning difficulties. The need to establish a Special Needs Register should facilitate this.

- Do not underestimate extra-curricular activity as a method of improving attendance and enhancing students' commitment to school.
- Development of the staff's awareness and practice of teaching and learning styles will produce more stimulating curriculum delivery.
- Develop individual Action Plans to enable students to monitor their own performance.

Whole School Ethos, Policies and Procedures

CREATING THE RIGHT ETHOS

Children and young people slip into patterns of poor attendance and truancy for many reasons; some to do with the students' home situations, and social reasons, some because of their personal perceptions and aspirations, and some because of pressure from their peers. There are however an increasing percentage whose propensity to non attend is increased by what greets them in our schools themselves.

Creating a nurturing and welcoming ethos in school is as important as dealing with home situations or peer pressure etc. and can often make the difference between encouraging or discouraging better attendance.

With this in mind, the guidance outlined over the next few pages comprises simple suggestions which have been proven to make a difference for children and young people. It would not necessarily be

expected that this guidance should be used as a tick list, but merely look at the suggestions, analyse practice and reflect on options.

In an ideal world these suggestions may help to make the school and classroom a more stimulating place; may help to make some young people feel more valued and listened to, and may encourage improved attendance.

Aim: To create a 'praise culture' in which students enjoy school, find it stimulating and interesting, grow in self-esteem and experience success.

On the campus

- Teachers are in a very powerful and privileged position and have a tremendous opportunity to effect change.
- Remember, it's up to you to start the dialogue; positive informal contact helps to build effective relationships.
- Greet the students and smile at them.
- Try to remember to use people's first names.
- Don't ignore misbehaviour: if you see a problem, it's your problem.
- Set good standards of speech, dress and manner.
- Give non-judgemental feedback. 'You're shouting' is more effective than 'Why are you so noisy?'
- Talking quietly, even in difficult situations, is far more effective than shouting.
- Students will know if you like them.
- Spend part of your day walking round the campus speaking to students.
- Develop your interpersonal skills, listening skills, body language, communication skills and intervention skills.
- Remember that most students are happy, co-operative, committed individuals.
- Remember that students are young and cannot be expected to behave like adults.
- Create comfortable bases for students to relax in at breaks and lunch.

In the classroom

- Negotiate ground rules and have them clearly displayed.
- Be the first to arrive.
- Greet students by first name as they arrive and ensure they enter the room in an orderly way.
- Find reasons for praising students as they arrive.
- Make it clear when the lesson is about to begin.
- Before you start, make the objectives of the lesson clear.
- Treat everyone as an individual.
- Don't punish groups to get at the guilty. The innocent will resent you.
- Be consistent and don't have favourites.
- Involve students in what is going on and share responsibilities with them.
- Check their comprehension as you go along.
- Don't just put ticks when marking students work – write comments.
- Seek help and advice when you are unsure.
- Differentiate teaching material to suit your students and vary your teaching techniques. Vary activities: don't spend too long on one activity.
- Avoid dead time before activities.
- Foster respect for books, equipment and each other; it starts with you.
- Use humour, but not sarcasm or humiliation.
- Remember that quiet learners are not necessarily effective learners.
- Give students feedback on what they have done.
- Keep a tidy room and leave the room tidy when you go. Allow sufficient time for clearing away at the end of the session.
- Organise the exit from class.
- Encourage colleagues to watch you teach: peers can give ideas, support and help develop reflective practice.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Aim: To look at the management of the school's day, week and year in order to identify possible influences on poor attendance.

Time Management strategies to consider include:

- Opening the school early to receive students. A breakfast session is a good fund-raiser.
- A longer morning than afternoon session.
- A short lunch break.
- Reviewing dining provision to ensure a varied menu and avoid long queues.
- Provide programmes of lunchtime activities.
- Ensure that students remain on site at lunchtime.
- Teaching periods should not be too long.
- Have a break in the morning but not in the short afternoon session.
- Training days should not be at the beginning nor in the middle of the week. Friday seems to be the most effective.
- Arrange incentives for attendance on the last day of term, such as mufti days, parties and so on.
- Avoid returning to school or finishing the term in midweek.
- Prepare the calendar for the year in advance.
- Plan the end of terms to avoid 'wind down'.
- Plan study leave and develop students' skills in using the time effectively.
- Take care that 'activities weeks' are not seen as a soft option and that they do not become 'activities fortnights' or 'inactivity weeks'.

REGISTRATION

Aim: To create an efficient registration system and ensure that the registration period is an effective use of time.

- Select effective system: manual registers, swipe cards, electronic attendance registers (EARS), optical mark readers (OMR). It must:
 - Produce information that is easy to understand.
 - Save time.
 - Be cost effective (some electronic systems are very expensive.
 - Produce a simple analysis of the data).
 - Maintain the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Agree with the LEA symbols to record presence and distinguish between categories of absence, and train staff in using them. Put the instructions in all registers.

Establish clear procedures for storage and security. The 1956 regulations require registers to be kept for three years after they were last used.

If a computerised system is selected, governors should ensure that they:

- Register under the Data Protection Act 1984.
- Print the attendance register at least once a month.
- Print the admission register at least once a year.

Procedures should be established for keeping letters, records of phone calls and communications with parents. These may be required if there is any dispute or the parents are taken to court.

Create a scheme for the effective use of morning and afternoon registration time: a mini-assembly, thought for the day or PSE.

Register students transferring from one class to another.

BULLYING

Aim: To address bullying as one of the single most important causes of truancy.

- Draw up a whole school policy against bullying, stating the aims of the school with regard to bullying behaviour and the strategies designed to address the problem.
- Launch the policy with a survey, assemblies, personal and social education lessons, publicity, theatre visits, awareness days and so on.
- Work with the aim of getting bullies to acknowledge their behaviour and feel concern for their victims. Use a non-punitive, no-blame approach.
- Work with the students who have been bullied to assure them that they were not responsible, that they are not making it up and that the problem can be resolved.
- Draw up strategies to help those who have been bullied become more assertive, more confident and more able to ignore taunts.
- Address the issue with the group involved, exploring how they may have helped make the problem worse and how they can help resolve it.
- Encourage all students to break the silence about bullying through mentor schemes, the school council, bully hot-lines, the tutor system, a bully box, questionnaires, surveys and so on.
- Use INSET to develop staff awareness of what they can do to detect, prevent and deal with bullying.
- Through parents evenings, newsletters, surveys and questionnaires, inform parents about how they can become involved and how they can help solve the problem.

REWARDING ATTENDANCE

Aim: To identify good attendance as a central feature of the school's reward system and make all staff feel responsible for its improvement.

- Reward good attendance and punctuality regularly through assemblies, certificates, letters home, class and individual prizes, gift tokens, merit marks, photographs in the foyer or attendance stickers.
- Let classes, year groups or house groups compete for good attendance figures.
- Attendance and punctuality figures should be a central feature of reports home.
- Reward improvement as well as consistently good figures.
- Look at ways in which attendance targets can become a prerequisite for receipt of other rewards.
- Examine ways in which tutors can put rewards 'on hold' until a student clears any unauthorised absences.
- Set achievable goals for individuals, classes and year groups.

Make sure those people with genuine reasons for absence and those who are improving significantly are not debarred from the rewards system.

LETTERS FROM PARENTS

'Mary has the flu. I hope this meets with your approval.'

'John has been suffering from tonsilighthouse.'

'Ben hasn't come cos he hasn't been. I've given him something to make him go and when he's been he'll come.'

These are of course not real letters. However, all parental notes, even if less striking than these, should be given close attention by tutors.

- Some may be forgeries; a casual glance by a tutor under pressure may miss the deception.
- The note may contain clues to problems the child is experiencing at home. These may have behavioural consequences or indicate the need for more specific support for the child.

- Reasons such as 'headaches' or 'feeling sick' may hide more serious problems such as bullying, or difficulties with particular lessons.
- Regular contact with parents through the post or by home post can be very effective in identifying truancy, involving parents in the issue and educating parents as to what is and is not authorised absence.

Access and Inclusion Division
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Cumbria County Council
Education Welfare Service
Guidance for Inspectors:
Attendance and
Punctuality

Barry Armstrong

Attendance and Punctuality

For information;

'What ofsted look for'

Guidance for Inspectors: Attendance and Punctuality

Introduction

This guidance is designed to help inspectors evaluate how well truancy and lateness are addressed in schools' policies and practice.

Inspectors must report on attendance and punctuality as indicators of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development, and focus on how well schools promote good attendance as an aspect of the school's care for its pupils. Requirements are set out in *Inspecting Schools: The Framework* and the *Inspection Handbook* for the relevant phrases. This guidance explains how to proceed if pupils' attendance is at least satisfactory and what to do if it is low.

What should schools be doing?

The DfES has set out requirements and guidance in a number of recent publications and Ofsted has recently reported on these issues.

Registers

Schools must maintain attendance registers efficiently. If registers are not reliable, lives could be put at risk in the event of an emergency on the premises and pupils could be at risk off-site, with their absence unknown to the school and parents. If records are not accurate, the task of analysing absence patterns is made more difficult.

- School must take an attendance register at least twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.
- Consistent codes must be used by all staff (including temporary teachers), generally following LEA guidelines.
- Absence cannot be authorised by parents; it is for schools to determine whether parents' explanations allow absence to be authorised by the headteacher.
- Schools should be clear on how long registers are kept open and when pupils are marked as late. Ideally, there should be a secure system for late registration that does not interrupt teaching.
- Whether the register is manual or electronic, original entries and subsequent corrections must be clearly distinguishable.
- Attendance at an approved off-site educational activity must be recorded and distinguishable from attendance on-site.
- Registers must be retained for at least three years. The DfES has requirements for registration matters when pupils appear to have been transferred elsewhere (to focus child protection concerns).

Schools' policies and practice

Schools should have systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality.

- If possible, contact should be made with parents promptly on the first day of the pupil's unexplained absence. Through such procedures a school exercises its duty of care, identifies truancy that is unknown to parents and at the same time reinforces with parents the importance of regular attendance at school.
- Where post-registration truancy is a problem, registration in each lesson should be considered to identify pupils who "skip" individual lessons.
- For the worst attenders, patterns of absence should be analysed to identify any particular lesson or group of pupils where there is a problem. If there appears to be a link with home circumstances, the school should refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) for investigation.
- Staff should monitor circulation areas, such as corridors, between lessons to ensure that pupils can and do arrive punctually for their next lesson and, where possible, their teachers should be there to welcome pupils as they arrive.

Schools should have strategies for encouraging good attendance and punctuality, minimising the effect of absence and lateness and removing or mitigating any causes they may lay within the school.

- Where truancy and lateness are particular problems, there should be systems of rewards for good or improved attendance and punctuality by individuals and classes. Such arrangements can harness peer group pressure productively.
- Whatever the reason for absence, all teachers should have arrangements for re-integrating those pupils who have been away, so that they can catch up quickly. Where appropriate, school should liaise with hospital schools and home tutors.
- School should face squarely the possibility that some lessons, in pupils' minds, are not worth attending. A pattern of misbehaviour, lateness and truancy in connection with particular lessons should prompt senior staff to investigate the curriculum, teaching or relationships, and seek to tackle any problems that are found.
- In promoting partnership with parents about attendance and punctuality, schools should be reasonable, painstaking and innovative. Where pupils are carers, lateness and absence may sometimes be unavoidable. The importance of attendance should be explained. Schools should be open about their criteria for authorising absence and their determination to tackle condoned truancy. Parents should be informed of the DfES policy on family holidays during term time: to avoid these wherever possible, with each request treated individually and schools only exceptionally agreeing to more than 10 days; if longer is avoidable, disruption should be minimised, for example by setting and marking work.
- Some schools have successfully enlisted the support of the police, the youth service and other agencies in combating truancy and associated delinquency.

What you need to do as inspectors

You should refer to the relevant sections set out in the Ofsted *Inspection Handbooks*. Further guidance is available on page 22 of *Evaluating Educational Inclusion: Guidance for schools and inspectors*, published in October 2000.

The registered inspector should ensure that attendance figures are analysed and interpreted in the pre-inspection commentary. Inspection activities marked ■ below should always be followed. Others marked □ below should be pursued where attendance is significantly below 95 per cent in primary schools, 92 per cent in secondary schools (and comparable levels in sixth forms and special schools), where particular groups are poor attenders or where punctuality is a problem.

At the parents' meeting, the registered inspector should seek parents' views about:

- the effectiveness of any first-day call or other prompt contact arrangements;
- rewards or sanctions relating to attendance and punctuality; and
- provision to help pupils catch up after being absent.

The inspector leading on the issue should undertake a range of activities, paying particular attention to them where attendance is low. These include:

- analysis of the school's policies and documentation;
- checking registers for consistency, comparing authorised absence entries with parents' explanations, picking up general patterns of absence and lateness;
- consideration of any analysis by the school of attendance and punctuality, including data that explains patterns (such as pupils who are carers or Travellers' children);
- discussion with office staff who administer procedures;
- discussions with senior staff on: action to ensure punctuality to lessons, including staff punctuality; action to monitor administrative procedures; analysis of trends and subsequent action, including possible curriculum modification or specific monitoring of teaching; their liaison with the EWO to determine which pupils to target; and action to ensure that teachers re-integrate returners effectively;
- talking with pupils, exploring action taken by the school to monitor attendance and punctuality and what help they receive after absence;
- where needed, discussion with teachers about keeping registers, criteria for recording lateness and authorising absence, their role in logging patterns of default, their action to encourage improvement and how they adapt their teaching to integrate returners;
- discussion with the school's EWO or others who give support on attendance.

Where schools suggest to inspectors that weakness in dealing with attendance and punctuality are due to the ineffectiveness of the Education Welfare Service (EWS), it is important of inspectors to seek corroboration by, for example, discussing the matter with the area manager of the EWS. Where an EWO has not been able to give effective support, what has the school done to remedy the situation?

Where attendance or punctuality are issues in the school, other inspectors should:

- note the accuracy of registration (schools' procedures vary – this is entirely acceptable so long as they are reliable and efficient);
- ensure accurate recording of the number on roll and those present in lessons on each evidence form;
- note procedures for dealing with late arrivals to lessons at the beginning of a session and subsequently;
- evaluate action by teachers to re-integrate those returning from absence, including attention to this possibility in lesson plans; and
- check the completeness and consistency of work in pupils' books over time (for example, by comparing the books of several pupils).

Where internal truancy is suspected, the registered or other inspectors should:

- compare inspectors' figures for attendance at lessons and, if the picture differs significantly from that in attendance register, follow this up with senior staff and propose a mid-session head count; and
- check places in school where pupils might 'hide' and exit points at key times.

Evaluating the school's practice

While attendance and punctuality feature particularly in evaluating pupils' attitude and the school's welfare provision, the evaluation will throw important light on all aspects of the school, particularly in sections on standards and on teaching and learning.

- While punctuality and attendance themselves are symptomatic of pupils' attitudes to school, inspectors should evaluate pupils' underlying attitudes to achievement, relationships with teachers and capacity for self-improvement. If a significant proportion of pupils are late or truant, why do they persist in this?
- Strategies for re-integration after absence may involve modifying lessons immediately after a return, catch-up activities or interventions planned over a longer period of time. Where returners are floundering in lessons without adequate response to their needs, teaching is not as effective as it should be. How effective are arrangements to avoid disruption to lessons by pupils arriving late to school (for example, late slips from the office rather than explanation to teacher)?
- How effective are systems for safeguarding pupils' welfare by knowing exactly who is present and who is missing? How effective are strategies to improve attendance and punctuality? Can pupils get around school safely and quickly?
- In its partnership with parents about these matters, is the school reasonable, painstaking and innovative? Does it take a clear and reasonable line on the authorisation of absence? Are the EWS and other agencies suitably engaged?
- The impact of poor attendance and lateness on standards should be evaluated. Inspectors may wish to demonstrate the damaging effect on achievement by reference to evidence such as the school's value added data for poor and comparable pupils who remain in school.
- In year groups or sets where attendance is poor, how imaginative has the school been in adapting curricular provision to improve pupils' engagement?
- How reflective, pro-active and effective are the schools' managers in securing improvement in attendance and punctuality? Are patterns reviewed, in relation to pupils' academic and personal development, with a view to modifying the curriculum, classroom organisation or behavioural management? If this is a key area for improvement, what action does the governing body take? Where, in some classes, a substantial minority are routinely absent, staffing levels may be too generous: could staff be better deployed, for examples, with team teaching to support pupils returning from absence?