



School Attendance Handbook

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Introduction

Why is consistent attendance at school crucial? Research indicates that maintaining excellent attendance at school plays a pivotal role in securing positive outcomes for children and young people. Missing classes leaves pupils susceptible to falling behind, resulting in gaps in their learning and a decline in self-confidence.

Establishing good attendance habits is essential from the early stages of education. It is observed that children regularly absent in the reception class are more likely to exhibit poor attendance in secondary school.

According to findings by Universities UK, children with poor attendance are five times less likely to achieve five strong passes at GCSE, hindering their prospects for higher education or employment.

Additionally, poor attendance at school is linked to adverse emotional health and well-being. Regularly absent children and young people may experience social isolation, lack confidence, and suffer from low self-esteem. Feelings of not fitting in with peers can lead to loneliness, and those who consistently miss school face an increased risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour or becoming victims of crime.

These are not the outcomes and experiences we want for our children. School is not solely about academic success and attainment; it encompasses learning about the world, building relationships, and discovering oneself. It involves trying new things, making friends, and finding one's place in the world.

To miss school is to miss the experiences that shape our choices, opportunities, and overall quality of life.

Evidence strongly suggests that children with regular school attendance achieve better outcomes, leading to healthier, wealthier, and more enriched lives.

We acknowledge that many children, families, and schools in Cumberland have excellent attendance. Cumberland Council are committed to learning from the existing good practice throughout our schools, actively learning from them and strengthening our existing partnerships for an even greater impact.

This handbook applies to supporting children/young people of statutory school age only, of which, is the term after the child turns 5 until the last Friday in June of the school year they turn 16.

Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for school attendance are outlined in the supporting documentation for Working Together to improve school attendance.

A summary table of responsibilities can be found below. These responsibilities apply to parents, schools, trustees/governors, and the Local Authority.

Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Graduated Approach to improving Attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

The Cumberland Attendance Pledge sets the expectation of all partners to support good school attendance.

1. Making sure children/young people regularly attend school is the responsibility of everyone.
2. We are committed to working together to improve school attendance for children/young people across Cumberland.
3. We understand that attending school is crucial for everyone, and when pupils are absent, it could signal important safety concerns we need to address, particularly if they are a child missing education.
4. Barriers to school attendance can be complicated and come from several reasons within families, communities, and environments. We are committed to breaking down these barriers.
5. We will collaborate with each other to remove barriers to attendance. Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in this partnership.
6. We strongly support and promote excellent attendance and role-model this.
7. If we notice that children/young people are not in school during school hours, we will be professionally curious and query the reasons behind their absence.

Each partner has an important and distinct role in supporting the child or family, no one partner can do it on their own.

It is the expectation that all partners, from local authority to private enterprise, support the Cumberland approach to school attendance and challenge school absence where appropriate. Service providers and businesses should ensure that all efforts are made to book appointments for school aged children outside of school hours.

The school attendance pledge will be available as posters via digital download at:

Families Information | Templates and Resources (cumberland.gov.uk)

Schools also have several tools to help set the expectations of good school attendance.

- Build close and productive relationships with parents and pupils, highlighting the benefits of good school attendance
- Modelling respectful relationships to build a positive relationship for pupils entering the school and building a culture that makes school a place that pupils want to go to
- Challenge parent's views when they have misconceptions about what "good" attendance looks like

- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.
- Maintain the attendance ambition for SEND pupils providing additional support where required
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in registration periods. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this may also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year group, class/form, and individual level.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand. (see page 15 of Working Together to improve school attendance for further detail on what should be included in this policy)

Monitor

It is the expectation of the Department for Education that attendance will be monitored on both an individual and strategic basis.

Schools are expected to:

- Ensure registration codes are accurate, making full use of the new codes to signify different reasons for attendance and absence
- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends, digging deeper on pupils of concern or to ensure pupils attend all timetabled lessons
- Provide the individual level analysis to class teachers or tutors so that they can facilitate discussions with pupils
- Know and understand all pupils who are persistently (PA) or severely absent (SA)
- Identify pupils who need support and focused effort before absence becomes entrenched, looking at worsening trends before PA or SA
- Conduct analysis of half-termly, termly, and yearly data identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance.

Schools should ensure data is regularly monitored for pupils with long term illnesses and or special educational needs or disabilities including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting support meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

To support with the delivery of Cumberland Council's duties, all schools are expected to sign up to data connections with the Department for Education and StudyBugs. The DfE data connection is a mandatory requirement under the Working Together to improve school attendance guidance, whilst the StudyBugs link gives the council more advanced data functionality and reporting features. The link with StudyBugs will enable the council to look at cohort trends, utilise visualisations and connect with additional settings for example Alternative Provision and Independent schools.

Cumberland Council will use this data to:

- Discuss overall trends in the school's data and any emerging patterns or issues to identify patterns early and focus joint efforts
- Monitor priority cohorts: Persistently Absent, Severely Absent, Free School Meals, SEND, Minority Ethnic Groups
- Attend Targeting support meetings fully informed about priority pupils and school landscape
- Share experiences from other schools that have tackled similar issues or put those schools in touch to share practice
- Identify schools demonstrating effective practice and priority schools for additional support

Listen and understand

It is essential that children and young people are listened to, and that discussions are held to explore barriers.

Parental values and judgements have changed post-pandemic and clear messaging is key to re-engaging families into the importance of education. *Thinks Insight and Strategy* suggest that there are three main changes to parental decision making:

Perceived ability to catch up on missed education

Parents report that they think their children are able to catch up on missed education effectively. This means they may consider small periods of absence from school manageable, without realising the possible wider negative impact.

Increased illness

Parents report that they worry that illness levels are higher. Parents also say that the pandemic has made them more wary about spreading illnesses. They are less likely to send their child to school when they are ill. It now feels less socially acceptable to do so. Some parents feel confident that they know when their child is well enough to be in school. Others feel less confident since the pandemic. Parents feel that schools have become more cautious about keeping a child in school. They perceive that a school is more likely to send a child home if they fall ill. Some parents were not aware of NHS guidance such as [Is my child too ill for school?](#) Consistency of schools' behaviour in following this guidance is important to parents.

A more holistic view of children's wellbeing

Since the pandemic, parents are placing greater emphasis on their child's mental wellbeing. They have a greater awareness about the need to support children with these issues. Some parents felt their children are still catching up on important life experiences they missed during the pandemic. For some parents, the pandemic helped to demonstrate the importance of achieving a balance between school and home life. It encouraged them to think about the importance of enriching activities such as time with family more than they might have done previously.

The Department for Education have developed [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Included in the appendices are template letters to assist settings with their parental communications and their ongoing development of positive attendance cultures.

Facilitate Support

Attendance Case File

At this stage the school may want to open an Attendance Case File and begin completion. The aim is that this should be a working document building a chronology of intervention and support. Not all sections should be completed at the outset and the document is laid out in the graduated approach to assist with understanding of when next stage may be appropriate.

It also outlines the evidence necessary for progression into enforcement action, if required.

Communication and Advice

Each school will have a named local authority Access and Inclusion Officer that is available via phone, email, and Teams to provide ad-hoc advice and guidance.

The council will organise termly Attendance Network meetings to provide schools an opportunity to build and maintain relationships with school leaders and offer opportunities for all schools (regardless of type) to regularly come together to share effective attendance practice. The networks enable the development of whole school practice and a regular touch point with local authority support and development opportunities.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case apply:

- Understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family
- Working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available)
- Regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools are expected to:

- Work in partnership with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work in partnership with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Consider adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by, and regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate.
- Make use of school nursing services and mental health support teams where they are available.
- Consider whether additional support from other external partners (including the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs, or other health services) would be appropriate and make referrals.
- Where external support is provided work together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.

Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

Part-time timetables should not be implemented to manage pupils with behavioural issues or used as a sanction, in these instances suitable support should be provided by the school. If pupils are placed on a part-time/reduced timetable on the basis of a

behavioural issue, then this may be regarded as an unlawful exclusion and could result in a warning notice or a notification to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

In order that the Local Authority can meet its duty to ensure that full-time provision is being made available please complete the Notification of a Part time timetable form for each and every pupil that is either on a part-time/reduced timetable or who is in alternative provision for all/part of the week.

Further information can be found in Cumberland Council's [Part-time Timetable Guidance](#).

Flexi-schooling

Flexi-schooling is an arrangement where a parent chooses to electively home educate their child for part of their provision alongside attendance at school. When a child is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education, but the element received at school is taken into account in considering whether that duty is met.

Any pupil undertaking flexi-schooling must remain on a school roll. Schools are under no obligation to agree to flexi-schooling if requested by parents. If they do, the sessions where the child is educated at home would need to be authorised by school and marked in the register with a code C-'other authorised circumstances'. It would not be appropriate to mark this time as 'approved off-site activity, as the school has no supervisory role in the child's education while they are being electively home educated and has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home.

Although flexi-schooling has similar features to a part-time timetable in that both school and parents must agree it, there are some differences:

Type	Hours	Usually initiated by	Provider of work when pupil absent	Timeframe	Register Coding
Part-time Timetable	Part-time	School	School	Short-term	Code C2
Flexi-schooling	Full-time	Parent	Parent	Short or long term	Code C

Alternative Provision

There is an expectation that schools and Alternative Provisions will maintain close working relationships and ensure that pupils are attending commissioned APs. Schools maintain the responsibility for accurate register codes. Any discrepancies between AP reported attendances and school register codes may be followed up the named school Access and Inclusion Officer to ensure accurate recording.

Further guidance and quality assurance templates are available:

Families Information | Policy and Guidance (cumberland.gov.uk)

Families Information | Templates and Resources (cumberland.gov.uk)

Early Help

Working Together 2023 defines Early Help as support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.

At this level of need an Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being (EHA) should be completed with the child and family to identify, what is working well, what the worries are and what wellbeing would look like? A clear plan will be developed by the agencies with the family that is SMART and is focused on what success will look like for the child/ren.

Any professional from a service that supports families can initiate an Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being (EHA) and can be carried out with any child or young person from pre-birth up to age 19 (up to the age of 25 if the young person has a learning difficulty or disability).

The completion of an EHA would trigger a response from different agencies. A date should be set for a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting, in order to identify a coordinator, agree the plan and which agency would work to achieve each of the wellbeing goals.

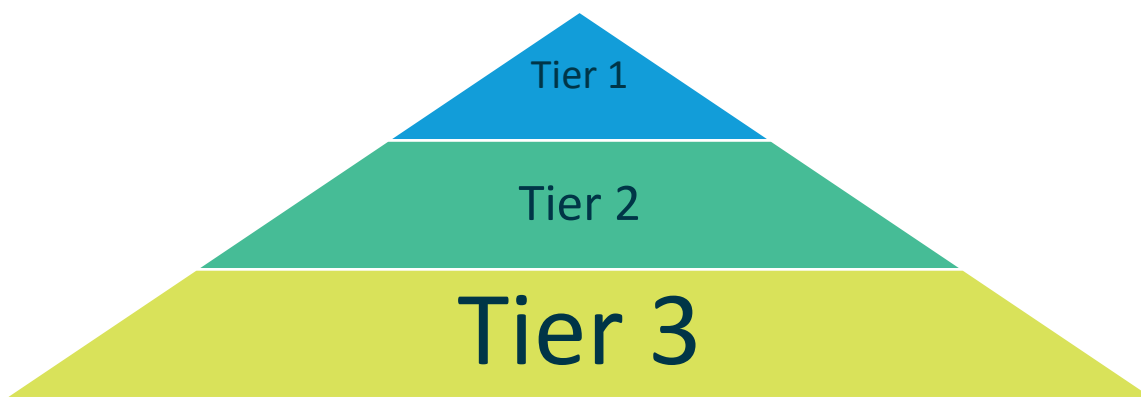
Early Help : Cumbria County Council (cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk)

Formalise Support

Targeting support meetings

Targeting support meetings offer an avenue for schools and local authorities to come together and discuss attendance in a strategic manner. Cumberland Council takes a 3-tier approach to prioritising these meetings.

Targeting support meetings are prioritised based on the previous full year attendance data. Data will continue to be monitored throughout the academic year to identify exceptional cases and offer proactive support where appropriate.



Tier 1 Targeting Support Meeting –

- For high priority schools where attendance is a significant concern.
- Targeting support meetings will be held termly
- Initial TSMs to be held with Senior Leadership from both the School and Council

Tier 2 Targeting Support Meeting –

- For schools where attendance data sits below national averages
- Targeting support meetings will be held termly
- Targeting support meetings held by School Attendance Lead and Access and Inclusion Officers

Tier 3 Targeting Support Meeting –

- Schools where attendance data is at or above national averages
- Targeting support meetings will be held annually
- Targeting support meetings held by School Attendance Lead and Access and Inclusion Officers

In general, all meetings will include:

Current position and horizon scanning, for example:

- Discussion of overall trends in the school's data and any emerging patterns or issues. This is not an opportunity to hold schools to account but to identify patterns early and focus joint efforts and share experiences from other schools that have tackled similar issues or put those schools in touch to share practice.

Agreeing joint approaches for all severely absent pupils, for example:

- Looking at the overall position for severely absent pupils and the trends and reasons for absence within the group.
- Agreeing new joint action plans for severely absent pupils since the last meeting.
- Reviewing progress and/or agreeing additional actions since the last meeting on existing plans.

Agreeing joint actions for persistently absent pupils where they have barriers to attendance that require a multi-agency response to overcome them, for example:

- Looking at the overall position for persistently absent pupils and trends and reasons for absence within the group.
- Breaking down the persistently absent cohort into cases where help may be needed from the local authority or other partners to help remove out of school barriers or deal with safeguarding concerns, and those cases which can be supported in school.
- Agreeing any actions (where needed) for any new cases and review progress or agree additional actions since the last meeting on existing cases.

As an outcome of the Targeting support meetings a report will be shared with the school that records the discussions of the meeting.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

School attendance may be impacted by unidentified SEND needs, and we have seen a national growth in Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). If additional SEN Support has been implemented and the SEND Graduated Approach followed with little to no impact, it may become necessary to refer to an Educational Psychologist or for an Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment.

More information on SEND statutory services is available via the Local Offer.
[Families Information | SEND Information Hub \(Local Offer\) \(cumberland.gov.uk\)](#)

The relevant referral documents can be found at:
[Families Information | Templates and Resources \(cumberland.gov.uk\)](#)

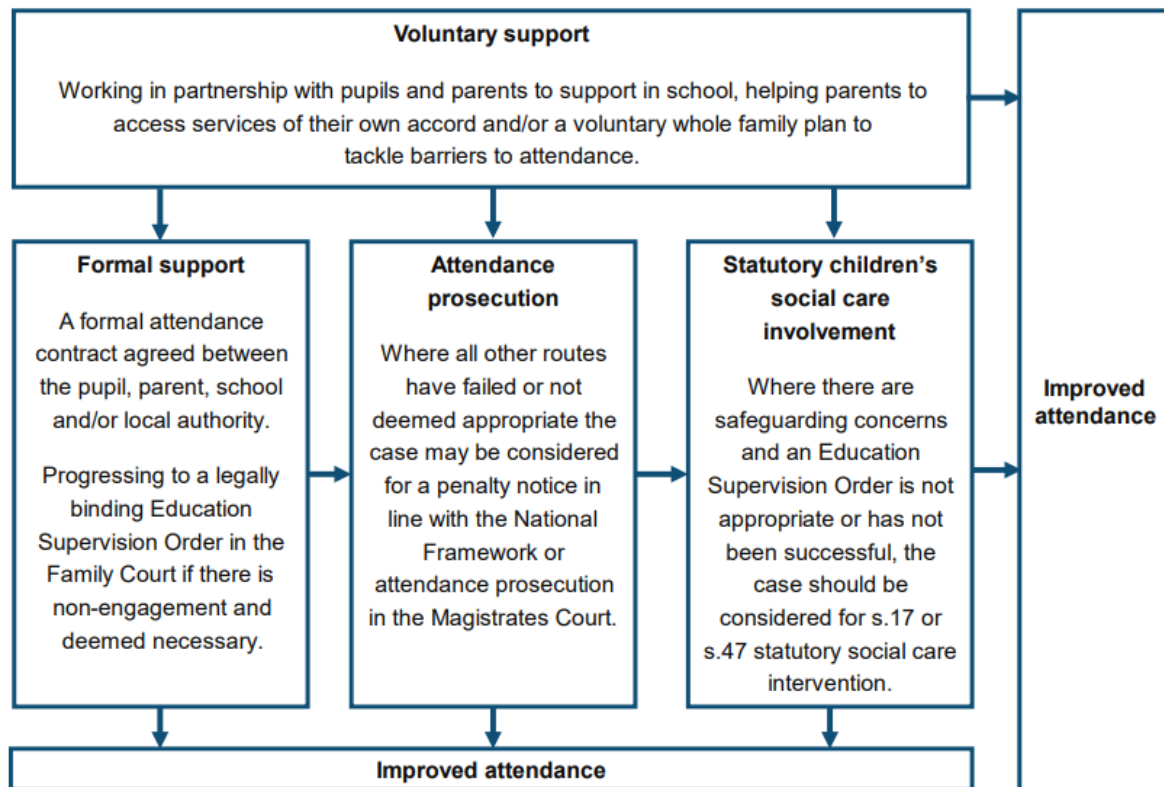
Attendance Contracts

An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support. Parents cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but it may be a useful tool for schools and parents to consider.

Enforce

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Attendance Case File

For enforcement action for unauthorised absence due to term-time holidays complete the Child/Young Person Details and Enforce sections of the Attendance Case File only to refer to the local authority.

For enforcement action for other unauthorised absences, it is expected that all sections will have been completed, demonstrating effective use of the graduated approach.

By using the Attendance Case File as a tool, the local authority will have sufficient evidence to progress to legal enforcement if determined necessary. This will reduce the need for “evidence ping-pong” and enable faster resolutions.

Notice to Improve

Previously known as Attendance Review Conference (ARCs), a Notice to Improve meeting will be held prior to Attendance Prosecution or a Fixed Penalty Notice to provide a final opportunity for a parent/carers to engage with support and interventions.

The Notice to Improve is expected to include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and details of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and parents' duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support and the option to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued, or prosecution considered if attendance improvement is not secured within the improvement period
- A clear timeframe for the improvement period of between 3 and 6 weeks
- Details of what sufficient improvement within that timeframe will look like
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a penalty notice before the improvement period has ended. If the parent/carers does not engage with the Notice to Improve, then a prosecution or FPN will be progressed.

Education Supervision Orders

Where a voluntary early help plan, school attendance action plan, or formal attendance contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution.

In deciding whether to progress to an ESO, the school and local authority should have exhausted voluntary support and be clear that making the order would be beneficial for the pupil and parent. Where safeguarding concerns exist, the lead practitioner should also discuss with the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services and agree an ESO would be a more suitable option than a Children in Need or Child Protection plan. In all cases, the local authority must fully consider using an ESO before moving forward to prosecution.

Further guidance is available on page 51 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence.

Schools should not have a blanket approach of making a request to the local authority for the consideration of the issuing of penalty notices (including for holidays in term-time). They should investigate the underlying reasoning behind the absences and offer support where appropriate. Schools should make judgements on each individual case to ensure fairness and consistency across the county.

Current Department of Education statutory guidance defines the absolute minimum threshold of unauthorised absences which must be reached before a Penalty Notice can be considered. That threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 weeks.

Penalty Notices are a direct alternative to prosecution.

Penalty Notices cover both general unauthorised absence and instances when attendance is otherwise reasonable, but the family have taken a holiday in term time. Penalty Notices can also cover both those scenarios at the same time for particular pupils and families i.e., generalised poor attendance and a holiday in term time.

Whilst there is no difference in law between generalised poor attendance and holidays in term time the Local Authority has adopted slightly different approaches to them.

Penalty Notices for generalised unauthorised absence

Before the Local Authority will consider issuing a Penalty Notice schools must provide evidence (by way of a Section 9 Statement from the School Attendance Officer and a Head Teacher's Attendance certificate) of:

- A minimum of 4 weeks voluntary support/engagement with pupils and parents once unauthorised absence first became an issue
 - A minimum of 6 weeks subsequent more formal intervention (e.g., attendance contract) addressing poor attendance
 - Parents being warned of the risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice/or prosecution if attendance does not improve (e.g., warning letter)
 - Both voluntary and formal support/engagement has not resulted in any meaningful improvement in attendance
 - The effects on that pupil's learning and life chances of poor attendance and the impact on other children in the same class
 - The registration certificate/record for the current academic year
 - The registration certificate/record for the previous academic year
 - A Head Teacher's Attendance Certificate showing an absolute minimum of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence over a recent 10 week period (Whilst an absolute minimum is required **schools are asked to provide at least the last 6 months attendance figures in the Head Teacher's Certificate** to provide a broader context)
- (Note – this evidence should be provided both for generalised poor attendance and for cases with both generalised poor attendance coupled with holiday(s) in term time and for the latter should also include the evidence requested specifically for holidays outlined below)

Penalty Notices for holidays in term time

Before the Local Authority will consider issuing a Penalty Notice schools must provide evidence (by way of a Section 9 Statement from the School Attendance Officer and a Head Teacher's Attendance certificate) of:

- A copy of any parental request for the holiday and the school response
- If no parental request was made in advance, how the school know the pupil was on holiday (e.g. text/phone call/e-mail from parent(s) whilst on holiday)
- A warning letter to parent(s) of the risk of a Penalty Notice or prosecution for taking their child out of school for a holiday
- The effects on that pupil's learning of taking the holiday and the impact on other children in the same class
- The registration certificate/record for the current academic year
- The registration certificate/record for the previous academic year

- A Head Teacher's Attendance certificate showing a minimum of 10 sessions missed recently through holiday (whilst an absolute minimum is required **schools are asked to provide at least the last 6 months attendance figures in the Head Teacher's Certificate** to provide a broader context)

The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions. Where a penalty notice has been issued to the parent in respect of the same child in the preceding three-year period, the amount of the penalty is £160 with no reduction for earlier repayment.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool and prosecution, or other legal interventions will be considered.

In presenting the case in Court, the local authority should set out clearly and concisely the facts of the case. To support prosecution schools must provide their named Access and Inclusion Officer with appropriate evidence.

Evidence should include:

- School's chronology of events to include:
 - Absence records, with reasonings
 - Letter sent home with regards to poor attendance
 - Evidence of attendance interventions and support provided
 - Minutes from meetings
- Section 9 Statement from the Access and Inclusion Officer
- Headteacher certificate

Any prosecution case must be laid before the Court within 6 months of the alleged offence. Before beginning any legal proceedings, the parent should be given a formal written notification, explaining the process and potential consequences.

All local authorities are expected to have an email mailbox to make these enquires as easy as possible. Cumberland Council can be contacted at accessandinclusion@cumberland.gov.uk

Attendance Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including in the preparation of court documentation.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000)

The decision to prosecute rests solely with the LA as an independent prosecuting authority.

In presenting the case in Court, the local authority should set out clearly and concisely the facts of the case. To support prosecution schools must provide their named Access and Inclusion Officer with appropriate evidence.

Evidence should include:

- School's chronology of events to include:
 - Absence records, with reasonings
 - Letter sent home with regards to poor attendance
 - Evidence of attendance interventions and support provided
 - Minutes from meetings
- Section 9 Statement from the school attendance officer
- Headteacher certificate

Any prosecution case must be laid before the Court within 6 months of the alleged offence. Before beginning any legal proceedings, the parent should be given a formal written notification, explaining the process and potential consequences.

Parenting Orders

Parenting orders are an additional order that can be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order. Parents' agreement is not required before an order is made.

The order requires a parent to comply with the arrangements specified by the Court which can include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's attendance for up to 3 months.

Any breach of the order could lead to a fine of up to £1,000.

School Attendance Orders

Where it appears a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either at school or otherwise than at a school (such as unsuitable home education), that local authority is responsible for serving a notice and if necessary, a SAO. Likewise, if prosecution for breaching the SAO is deemed necessary, it should be taken forward by the LA.

Any breach of the order could lead to a fine of up to £1,000.

Appendices

Register Codes

The full list of register codes and their definitions are available on Pages 55 – 65 of Working together to improve school attendance. There are some codes that are new or commonly misinterpreted which are collated below.

Code B: Off-site educational Activity

Attending an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. For pupils of compulsory school age, schools must also record the nature of the activity, examples are:

- attending taster days at other schools.
- attending courses at college.
- attending unregistered alternative provision arranged or agreed by the school.

The educational activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded.

Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil.

Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the educational activity notifies the school of any absences by the pupil. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code. This code must not be used for any unsupervised educational activity i.e., when a pupil is at home doing some schoolwork.

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

All schools are able to grant a leave of absence at their discretion. A leave of absence should not, and from a school maintained by a local authority or a special school not maintained by a local authority, must not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

All schools can grant leaves of absence for pupils to undertake employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours. Schools maintained by a local authority and special

schools not maintained by a local authority can only do so in the following circumstances (under regulation 11(2)):

- Where the local authority has granted a licence for the pupil to take part in a performance regulated by section 37(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- Where a pupil does not need a licence for such a performance because an exception applies under section 37(3) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, including where a Body of Persons Approval (BOPA) covering the pupil has been issued by the local authority in whose area the performance will take place or the Secretary of State
- Where a Justice of the Peace has given the pupil a licence to go abroad for a performance or other regulated purpose under section 25(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933

Schools should be sympathetic to requests for leave of absence that are supported by a licence issued by a local authority or a BOPA as long as the school remains satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a pupil's education. Where a local authority licence specifies the dates that a pupil is to be away from school to perform, the school should record the absence for those days as if a leave of absence had been applied for and granted. Where the terms of the local authority licence do not specify dates, however, or where a BOPA or other exemption or licence from a Justice of the Peace applies, it is at the discretion of the school to grant leave of absence.

Schools that are not required to follow regulation 11, must still use this code to record a pupil who is absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or work abroad under a licence or exemption as described above.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.

Schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority can grant a leave of absence, under regulation 11(6) to temporarily reduce the timetable of a pupil of compulsory school age to part-time, if the school and a parent who the pupil normally lives with have agreed that, exceptionally, the pupil should temporarily be educated only part-time and have agreed the times and

dates when the pupil will, during the period of temporary part-time education, be expected to attend the school.

Schools that are not required to follow regulation 11, must still use this code to record when a pupil is absent with leave because they are subject to a part-time timetable in line with an agreement between the school and a parent the pupil normally lives with that the pupil should temporarily be educated part-time.

Where a pupil is receiving a full-time education, but only part-time at the school in question (e.g. dual registration, part-time unregistered alternative provision, or flexi schooling) this code must not be used and the appropriate code for why the pupil is not in school for that session should be used.

Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority can grant leave of absence, where an application has been made in advance by the parent who the pupil normally lives with (or the pupil if they will be over compulsory school age by the time of the absence) and the leave is to enable the pupil to attend an interview for employment or admission to another educational institution. 327. Schools that are not required to follow regulation 11, must still use this code to record a leave of absence has been granted for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational establishment.

This interview must take place during the session for which it is recorded.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as authorised absence.

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by a local authority under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996 (exceptional provision of education), section 42(2), or 61(1) of the Children and Families Act 2014 (special educational provision off site). A pupil attending provision arranged by the school rather than the local authority must be recorded using Codes P or B instead.

Schools must also record the nature of the provision (regulation 10(5)), examples are:

- attending courses at college.
- attending unregistered alternative provision such as, home tutoring

Schools should ensure that the arrangements are in place whereby the provider notifies the school of any absence by the pupil. The school must record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as attending an approved educational activity.

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

The pupil is unable to attend the school because a local authority has a duty set out in regulation 10(12) or (13) to make access arrangements to enable the pupil's attendance at school and have failed to do so.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the pupil by the school or local authority is not available.

Walking distance in relation to a child under the age of 8, means 2 miles, and for a child of 8 or above, means 3 miles. In each case measured by the nearest available route.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

The pupil is unable to attend the school because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and the pupil is one of those that the school considers cannot practicably be accommodated in those part of the premises that remain in use. This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Where a school was planned to be open for a session, but the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather), the attendance register is not taken as usual because there is no school session. Instead, every pupil listed in the admission register at the time must be marked with code Y4 to record the fact that the school is closed. This code may not be used for any planned closure such as weekends or holidays. This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Relevant regulation 10(14) 381. The pupil is unable to attend the school because they are:

- in police detention,
- remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial, or sentencing, or
- detained under a sentence of detention

If a pupil is remanded to local authority accommodation, they should attend school as normal where possible and where it is not possible any absence should be recorded using the appropriate code.

A pupil's absence should be recorded under code Y7 (unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause) if they are unable to attend because they are serving a community based (i.e. non-detained) part of a sentence of detention, referral order, or youth rehabilitation order that requires them to be absent during the school day.

Schools are expected to communicate with the pupil's Youth Offending Team worker while the pupil is in custody and remains on the school roll to discuss the pupil's educational needs, progress and return to the school upon their release where appropriate. Education is a key part of effective resettlement; therefore, it is important that schools maintain contact with the Youth Offending Team throughout the sentence to support the child's resettlement where appropriate.

This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance. Code

Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

The pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be:

- contrary to any guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease published by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (or the equivalent in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland), or
- prohibited by any legislation relating to the incidence or transmission of infection or disease

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

An unavoidable cause, that is not covered by one of the other 'unable to attend' codes detailed above, is preventing the pupil from attending the school.

This code should be used only where something in the nature of an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending the session in question. The unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent. The fact that a parent has done all they can to secure the attendance of the pupil at school does not, in itself, mean the pupil has been prevented by unavoidable cause.

Schools must also record the nature of the unavoidable cause (regulation 10(6)).

This code is classified for statistical purposes as not a possible attendance.

Fair Access Protocol, Managed Moves and Off-Site Direction

The School Admissions Code 2021 states all Local Authorities (LAs) must operate a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) and all admission authorities must participate to ensure that unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered places promptly and at a suitable school.

Cumberland Council's "Fair Access Protocol for the Placement of Vulnerable and Hard-to-Place Pupils" outlines the approach taken.

Families Information | Professionals Hub (cumberland.gov.uk)

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used when parents choose to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school full-time. You may also hear the term 'home-schooling' used.

Parents have a legal right to have their child(ren) educated in accordance with their own beliefs and values, but the education provided must be efficient and full-time and must be suitable to the young person's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs.

Cumberland Council's approach to supporting Electively Home Educated children is outline on the [Home Education web-page](#).

Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)

Every child should have the best possible start in life through high-quality education, which allows them to achieve their full potential. There are occasionally circumstances in which children/young people with special educational needs need to be educated outside of traditional educational settings, such as schools or colleges. To ensure that all children/young people are able to receive an efficient and effective education, the Children and Families Act 2014 allows for education outside of educational settings.

Education Otherwise than at School (EOTAS)

Children Missing Education (CME)

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training) later in life.

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.

Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance

Section 19

Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to make arrangements to provide "suitable education at school, or otherwise than at school, for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them". Suitable education is defined as "efficient education suitable to the age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs", the child (or young person) may have.

In response to this duty, Cumberland Council have developed an Access to Education Policy that outlines the available support and Access to Education Decision Making process.

[Families Information | Professionals Hub \(cumberland.gov.uk\)](https://cumberland.gov.uk)

Letters

We have drafted letters to assist schools in their communications with parents/families. The table below outlines a suggested escalation process to follow. It is expected that schools continue to exercise good practice and offer support to proactively enable children and young people to achieve positive attendance at each stage.

Absence Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9
Unexplained	1								
Lateness	6	7	2	4	5	8	9	10	11
Medical/ Illness	3	2	4	5	8	9	10	11	
Unauthorised Absence	2	4	5	8	9	10	11		

Letter 1

Dear **<name of parent / carer>**

According to our records, **<name of pupil>** has recently been absent from school. You will be aware that it is the parent's legal responsibility to notify the school on the first day of a pupil's absence to explain the reasons why the <s/he> is unable to attend school and an expected date when <s/he> should return. Unfortunately, we have not received any contact from you.

I am therefore writing to you to give you an opportunity to explain the recent absences. Please complete the tear off slip below and return it to the school as soon as possible. Any absence that hasn't been explained within a week will be categorised as “**Unauthorised**” Absence – an explanation of this term and the possible consequences can be found at www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence

If you wish to discuss this letter further, please contact me on **<school telephone number>**.

Yours sincerely

<School Contact>

Please complete this slip and return to <location> as soon as possible.

Dates of unexplained absence:

<Dates of N Codes>

Explanation for the above dates of unexplained absence:

--

Parent/Carer Signature..... Date.....

Letter 2

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils we monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis. During our regular monitoring of pupil attendance, we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern. We then issue a first Letter to register our concern with parents. We are therefore writing to you due to **<Name of pupil>**'s current level of attendance:

Attendance	<current attendance> %
Authorised Absence	<current AA> %
Unauthorised Absence	<current UA> %

The information below shows how attendance can affect your child's future progression.

Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year

Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.

95%: 10 days absence a year

These pupils are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who are off for 3/4 days per term can only achieve 95% attendance.

90% and below: 19 days + absence a year

The Government classes Young People in this group as "Persistent Absentees", and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work. Parents of young people in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

If you have any queries or would like to talk to anyone about attendance, please do not hesitate to contact **<named school person>** on **<telephone number>**

Yours sincerely

<School contact>

Letter 3

Dear **<name of parent / carer>**

Since we wrote to you on *<date of 1st letter>*, *<name of pupil>*'s attendance has failed to improve significantly, and is now *<attendance percentage>*%. This is below what we expect and to put this into perspective 90% attendance is equivalent to missing 19 days of school per year.

When looking into the reasons why *<name of pupil>* has been absent from school, we noticed that the majority of the absence was linked to illness and/or medical reasons.

Due to the level of illness and/or medical absence, I must ask that if any further absence occurs, evidence must be received by the school that shows that the pupil has been absent and is being supported by a medical practitioner. Some examples of evidence that could be used are: Prescriptions, Appointment Cards, etc.

If this evidence is not supplied when your child returns after an illness or medical absence, your child's absence will be recorded as **"unauthorised."**

We would appreciate your support to make sure *<name of child>*'s attendance improves. The school will continue to monitor the situation and will be in touch again if it does not improve.

Thank you for your cooperation

Yours sincerely

<School Contact>

Letter 4

Dear **<name of parent / carer>**

Since we wrote to you on **<date of Letter 2>**, **<name of pupil>**'s attendance has failed to improve significantly, and is now **<attendance percentage>**%. This is below what we expect and to put this into perspective 90% attendance is equivalent to missing 19 days of school per year – your child will spend more time at home than at school this academic year!

Ongoing low attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success. It is important that low attendance is dealt with as early as possible to prevent poor habits of attendance forming with **<name of pupil>**. Poor attendance habits now will make it increasingly difficult for you to ensure your child attends school regularly as they get older.

We wish to help **<name of pupil>** to improve **<his/her>** attendance. To discuss **<name of pupil>**'s attendance, please contact **<school contact>** on **<school contact number>** and I will be happy to talk with you and if required arrange a meeting.

We would appreciate your support to make sure **<name of child>**'s attendance improves. The school will continue to monitor the situation and may refer your child's absence to Cumberland Council for consideration of legal action if unauthorised absence continues to occur.

Thank you for your cooperation

Yours sincerely

<School Contact>

Letter 5

Dear **<name of parent / carer>**

As you will be aware from our previous two letters, we have concerns with regard to **<name of pupil>**'s attendance of **<attendance percentage>**%. Unfortunately, we have not received a satisfactory reason for **<name of pupil>**'s absence and their attendance has failed to improve significantly.

I enclose your child's most recent registration certificate for your information.

Ongoing low attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success. It is important that low attendance is dealt with as early as possible to prevent poor habits of attendance forming with **<name of pupil>**. Poor attendance habits now will make it increasingly difficult for you to ensure your child attends school regularly as they get older.

We wish to help **<name of pupil>** to improve **<his/her>** attendance. I would like you to attend a meeting in school with me on **<date>** at **<time>** to discuss what we can all do to help **<name of pupil>** *attend more regularly*.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange another time and date to meet. In the meantime, the school will continue to monitor the situation and may refer your child's absence to Cumberland Council for consideration of legal action if unauthorised absence continues to occur.

Yours sincerely,

<School Contact>

Letter 6

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

As part of our commitment to improving the attainment of our pupils we monitor pupil attendance on a regular basis. During our regular monitoring of pupil attendance we identify any pupil whose attendance causes concern, including those pupils who have arrived late to school on a number of occasions. We are therefore writing to you due to **<Name of pupil>**'s current number of late sessions:

Attendance	<current attendance> %
Number of late sessions	<current AA> %
Number of "unauthorised" lates	<current UA> %

Being late to school can have a considerable impact over the whole school year. The table below shows you just how much time can be missed over a year just by being 5 minutes late to school every day:

5 minutes late every day = 3 days of school lost a year
10 minutes late every day = 6.5 days of school lost a year
15 minutes late every day = 10 days of school lost a year
20 minutes late every day = 13 days of school lost a year
30 minutes late every day = 19 days of school lost a year

We understand that the school mornings can be hectic, but when your child is late for school they are missing out on vital parts of their education. If your child arrives 30 minutes after the register has been taken, they will have an "unauthorised" late mark – this is the same as an "unauthorised absence" - an explanation of this term and the possible consequences are attached.

If you have any queries or would like to talk to anyone about attendance, please do not hesitate to contact **<named school person>** on **<telephone number>**

Yours sincerely

Letter 7

Dear **<name of parent / carer>**

As you will be aware from our previous letters, we have concerns with regard to **<name of pupil>**'s lateness, as they have recorded **<number of L and U codes>** so far this year. Unfortunately, we have not received a satisfactory reason for **<name of pupil>**'s lateness and their lateness has failed to improve significantly.

I enclose your child's most recent registration certificate for your information.

Ongoing lateness and low attendance are factors often linked to low levels of academic success. It is important that lateness and low attendance is dealt with as early as possible to prevent poor habits of attendance forming with **<name of pupil>**. Poor attendance habits now will make it increasingly difficult for you to ensure your child attends school regularly and on time as they get older.

We wish to help **<name of pupil>** to improve **<his/her>** attendance. I would like you to attend a meeting in school with me on **<date>** at **<time>** to discuss what we can all do to help **<name of pupil>** *attend on time every day*.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange another time and date to meet. In the meantime, the school will continue to monitor the situation and may refer your child's absence to Cumberland Council for consideration of legal action if unauthorised absence due to lateness continues to occur.

Yours sincerely,

<School Contact>

Letter 8

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

Name of Child: *<name of pupil>*

DOB: *<date of birth>*

Attendance Percentage: *<attendance percentage>*%.

Regular attendance at school is a major focus for the Department for Education (DFE) and Cumberland Council. In an effort to improve pupil's school attendance, schools, and the council work together to challenge parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly without any known justifiable cause.

<name of pupil>'s attendance this academic year is currently *<attendance percentage>*%. This is considerably below what our school, the government and Cumberland Council considers to be a level of attendance recommended for children to achieve their educational potential. Please note that parents are advised to provide an explanation for their child's absence. Absences through illness will no longer be authorised without medical evidence, for example a letter from your doctor, a copy of your child's prescription or an appointment card.

I will be monitoring your child's attendance for the next 3 weeks. Should there be any further unauthorised absences I will invite you to an Attendance Panel Meeting. It is the Headteacher's decision as to whether to accept any parental explanation for absence. Please be aware that pupils arriving to school after the official close of registers will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' unless there are legitimate reasons for your child's late arrival.

Every day in school counts towards *<name of pupil>*'s future, and I thank you in advance for supporting *<name of school>* in ensuring excellent school attendance.

If you are experiencing any difficulties, or do not understand aspects of this letter, please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely

<School contact>

Letter 9

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

Name of Child: <name of pupil>

DOB: <date of birth>

Attendance Percentage: <attendance percentage>%.

You will recall that I wrote to you on <date of Letter 8> regarding <name of pupil>'s poor attendance at school. I enclose a copy of <name of pupil>'s registration certificate, showing that since (date), <name of pupil> has had <number of unauthorised sessions> sessions of unauthorised absence. You will notice that further unauthorised absence has occurred.

Unfortunately, <name of pupils>'s attendance has failed to improve sufficiently. <name of pupil>'s current attendance is <attendance percentage>%. I am therefore inviting you to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting. The meeting is scheduled to take place at **<name of school>** on **<date>** at **<time>**. You will be asked to agree to a parenting contract to support <name of pupil>'s attendance at school. If you are unable to attend the meeting or require an interpreter, please contact me as soon as possible.

Absences through illness will no longer be authorised for your child without medical evidence, for example a letter from your doctor, a copy of your child's prescription or an appointment card. It is your responsibility to ensure that you inform the school of any absences through illness and to provide the appropriate medical evidence.

I must remind you that it is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their children receive an education. This is stated in Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence".

Should you be prosecuted for failure to ensure <name of pupil>'s regular attendance at school, you may be sentenced to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a 3-month custodial sentence.

If you are experiencing any difficulties, or do not understand aspects of this letter please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely

<school contact>

Letter 10

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

Name of Child: **<name of pupil>**

DOB: **<date of birth>**

Attendance Percentage: **<attendance percentage>%.**

I am sorry you were unable to attend the Attendance Panel Meeting today. However, the importance of this meeting cannot be stressed enough as <name of pupil>'s school attendance continues to be irregular with many unauthorised absences. I enclose a copy of <his/her> registration certificate, which shows that <name of pupil> has attended <attendances made> out of a possible <sessions available> sessions at school; <unauthorised sessions> of which are classed as unauthorised absence.

The decision has therefore been taken to continue to monitor your child's attendance until <date of review>. At that point, your child's attendance will be reviewed, and if they are still causing a concern, a decision will be made as to what further action will be taken.

The school may continue to unauthorise future absences unless medical evidence is provided. Medical evidence may include appointment cards, copies of prescriptions, letters from specialists etc.

I continue to be available to you to offer support regarding <name of pupil>'s school attendance, therefore please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the situation further.

Finally, I must remind you that the Education Act 1996 states that it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are on roll. A failure to do this could result in legal action being taken by Cumberland Council.

Yours sincerely

<school contact>

Letter 11

Dear **<Name of Parent>**

Name of Child: **<name of pupil>**

DOB: **<date of birth>**

Attendance Percentage: **<attendance percentage>%.**

Despite previous attempts to improve <name of pupil>'s poor attendance at <name of school> I remain concerned at the level of unauthorised absence. I enclose a copy of <name of pupil>'s registration certificate, showing that since (date), <name of pupil> has had <unauthorised sessions> sessions of unauthorised absence. **You will be aware from previous contact from me that you are legally responsible for the regular attendance of your child at school.**

Following a thorough assessment of this case, the decision has been made to refer your child's poor attendance to Cumberland Council. The Local authority will be in contact with you to arrange a notice to improve meeting which will consider whether or not to instigate legal proceedings against you for an offence under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence"

In the meantime, I would urge you to ensure your child attends school regularly. If you are experiencing any difficulties or you do not understand aspects of this letter, please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely

<school contact>

Letter 12

Dear <Name of Parent>

Name of Child: <name of pupil>

DOB: <date of birth>

Attendance Percentage: <attendance percentage>%.

Unauthorised Holiday/Leave Request

As you will be aware, Government Guidance advises that schools should not authorise requests for term time absence unless the school has received suitable evidence of exceptional circumstances. The Government does not consider a family holiday to be an exceptional circumstance.

In the absence of suitable evidence of exceptional circumstances, on this occasion the school cannot authorise your request for a term time absence.

We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement and full attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career.

I must take this opportunity to remind you, that should you still choose to take your child out of school unauthorised, then the school must inform the absence to the Local Authority Attendance Team. If you have parental responsibility, this could mean receiving any of the following:

- A penalty notice - The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 28 days, then court proceedings will be initiated
- If a previous penalty notice has been issued the Local Authority may decide to proceed directly to prosecution

We understand the disappointment that this refusal may cause but as you can appreciate this policy represents the school's responsibility and commitment towards ensuring your child's full and efficient education.

Yours sincerely,

<school contact>

Headteacher's Certificate

HEADTEACHER'S ATTENDANCE CERTIFICATE (Section 566 (1)(c) & (2) Education Act 1996)

(Name and Address of School)

I certify that in accordance with school records and the school attendance register:

(Full name of child and date of birth)

Is/was (delete as appropriate) a registered pupil at this school

And is /the child of and is living with/ living in the care of (delete as appropriate): -----

----- at ----- (BOTH Parents/Guardians full names
and date of birth if possible and address)

And has attended ----- school as follows:

(Pupil's name) has attended for ----- school sessions between -----and -----
----- the school having been open for ----- sessions during that period.

Absences shown in the school attendance register for (pupil's name) for this period
are designated as ---- authorised and ----- unauthorised.

The average attendance for this period in the school register for all Year ---- pupils, is
--% and the average absence rate is (--% authorised, --% unauthorised).

-----'s overall attendance is --% and his/her absence rate is (--% authorised, --%
unauthorised).

Dated this _____

Signed: _____

Headteacher

Head teacher: printed name -----

Section 9 Witness Statement

Please copy and paste into a new blank document and amend as necessary. This template is a basic guide to the level of information required and will need careful consideration on a case-by-case basis.

STATEMENT OF WITNESS (CJ Act 1967 Section 9, MC Act 1980, s 5A(3)(a) and 5B Magistrates Court Rules 1981 Rule 70)

Statement of:

Occupation: Attendance Officer

Age: Over 18

Address: C/O (School address)

Subject: (Child's name) **DOB:**

School: (School and address)

Parent(s): (Full name(s) of parent(s))

This statement consisting of (number of) pages each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe it to be true.

Dated **DD/MM/YYYY**

Signed: _____

Signature witnessed by _____

I am employed by (name of) School as an Attendance Officer. I have held this position sinceAs part of my duties I am responsible for the investigation of cases where identified pupils have unacceptable levels of absence from school.

(Child's name) is years old and is in Year at the school. He lives with his parent(s) (full name of parent(s) at (address)). (Child's name) is of compulsory school age until June (year).

I am aware from school attendance records that (child's name) was taken out of school by (full name of parent(s)) for a holiday from (dates of holiday (number school days missed – first holiday in time if the offence period is dealing with more than one holiday)). I exhibit the registration certificate for (child's name) for this academic year as (Officer's initials/1). The registration certificate is a legal record of (child's name) attendance at school. There are 2 school sessions a day with registration taken first thing in the morning and after lunch.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school for a holiday or to attend a family event must apply to the school in advance. The Head teacher at the school, (name of Head), can in exceptional circumstances authorise absence for family holidays or events. Department of Education (DfE) Guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' (effective from 19 August 2024 (paragraphs 37 & 38) and previous guidance) notes that generally the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

(Outline whether an application was made for the holiday in advance and if so, exhibit the request/application and the school's response (explaining if applicable that the letter declining to authorise the absence warned the parent(s) of the risk of prosecution if (child's name) was taken out of school for a holiday).

(If no application was made explain how the school learned the family were on holiday and exhibit any relevant documents (e-mail, record of tel call/text – possibly part of the Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS)).

(For any other more recent unauthorised holidays taken during the offence period detail them and exhibit any relevant documentation – requests/applications in advance/ notifications by e-mail/text/phone call).

(If applicable - School records for the previous academic year showed that (child's name) was absent without leave and on holiday/family events on (dates) and missed a total of (number) days education. I exhibit that record as (Officer's initials/number of exhibit).

Education missed due to holidays taken in term time obviously affect the pupil's education and a pupil can fall behind as a consequence. Additional school resources are needed to help the pupil catch up with his or her peers.

The records to which I make reference form part of the records relating to the business of (name) School, compiled in the course of that business by persons who had, or may reasonably be supposed to have had, personal knowledge of the matters dealt with in the information they supplied and who cannot reasonably be expected (having regard to the time which has elapsed since they supplied the information and all other circumstances) to have any recollection of the matters dealt with in the information they supplied.

Signed: _____

Draft School Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*, and *Cumberland Council's School Attendance Strategy* through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* and school attendance *Parental Responsibility Measures 2023*. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Further information can be found on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook page 4, and the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*

3.1 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'Attendance Lead') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Consulting with pupils, parents/carers, and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is **NAME** and can be contacted via **EMAIL / MOBILE**.

3.2 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with colleagues to tackle persistent absence.

The attendance officer is **NAME** and can be contacted the **EMAIL / MOBILE**.

3.3 Form tutors and Class Teachers

Form tutors and Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions and lesson attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. This must be completed immediately and within the first 5 minutes of registration or the lesson.

3.4 School Admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Ensure all parents addresses/contact details are up to date.
- Consider referral to support services and or an Early help assessment.

3.5 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

1. All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
2. All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
3. Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child and ensure they are up to date.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Keep to any attendance action plans that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their child's Attendance Officer

3.6 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time.
- Attend every timetabled session, on time.

3.7 Attendance Staff Team

Attendance Lead (Deputy Headteacher)	NAME
Assistant Headteacher	NAME
Senior Attendance Champion	NAME
Attendance Officer	NAME
Designated Safeguarding Lead	NAME
SENCO	NAME
Mental Health Lead	NAME
Pastoral Lead	NAME
Attendance Administrator	NAME

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See DfE *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* 2024 for the full list of attendance codes or refer to pages 27-31 on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. The school day starts at **START TIME** and ends at **END TIME**. Pupils must arrive in school by **START TIME** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **START TIME** and will be kept open until **END OF REGISTRATION TIME**. The register for the second session will be taken at **AFTERNOON START TIME** and will be kept open until **END OF AFTERNOON REGISTRATION TIME**.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via **OFFICE TELEPHONE** or recording it on **DIGITAL SOLUTION**.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a medical prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

GP fit for work notes for children are not acceptable.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

For any planned absences, parents must complete an absence request form. These can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website. This should be completed and submitted at least 2 weeks before the absence is due to take place.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Persistent lateness will trigger further intervention, including letters home and meetings with teachers/attendance officer.

Those who are late after registration closes and therefore absent will follow the same path as any other unauthorised absence and contributes to the 10-sessions of absence over 10 weeks national threshold.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit and contact any outside agencies who may be involved with the family.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer, or social worker.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school will refer to the Local Authority.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at least once a half term. This will be through messages, emails and termly data reports.

Every parent can see their child's attendance on a day-to-day basis using **DIGITAL SOLUTION**. Their child will be given the instructions for accessing this for this during the first week of starting at **SCHOOL**.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave.
- A temporary, time-limited transition timetable (part time timetable).
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unexpected or unavoidable events.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or central office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Romani people, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known

to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school.
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority.
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

For further information on specific codes refer to pages 26-31 of Cumberland Councils Attendance Handbook.

5.2 Enforcement

Our school will make use of the full range of potential enforcements. Refer to page 18-25 of Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook. ***Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.*

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Good attendance and improved attendance are rewarded at **SCHOOL**. We do this by:

- Celebrating year group and form tutor attendance every week during Form Time
- Displaying weekly attendance updates on the school boards in the hall
- Celebrating good attendance in assembly at least once a half term
- Attendance contributes to rewards trips and activities at the end of every half term. This must be at least 95% for students to be eligible (considerations are made for exceptional circumstances)
- The 100% Attendance Competition runs throughout the academic year. Pupils who have 100% attendance in a week will receive a token. This token can then be placed into a draw for one of five prizes worth £100, which the pupils vote on. The winners are drawn at the end of the academic year.

The school will work collaboratively with the Access and Inclusion Team at Cumberland Council to help to support pupils and parents in achieving good attendance.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

We work particularly closely with pupils and parents where there are more complex barriers to attendance. If a child is struggling or refusing to attend school, parents should inform us immediately.

To support more complex barriers to attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting.
- If the pupil cannot/will not attend a meeting at school, we will visit the family home.
- Depending on the barriers identified, the child's tutor/teacher will be informed and be part of any reintegration plans.
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that this can support a phased return into school.
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our pastoral leads.

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority. Reasonable adjustments can be made to support students in school.

Where there is a prolonged physical or mental illness, the Access and Inclusion Team at the Local Authority will be requested to support with education.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

To support a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting or attend the family home.
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that a pupil may need a phased return into school. This will be in communication with Form Tutor and Head of Year/Manager who will also support with the return to school.
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our pastoral leads.

8. Attendance monitoring

The school analyses attendance data at least once a week. This includes punctuality. The attendance team meet weekly to discuss attendance and consider next steps for those pupils where attendance is decreasing.

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Refer to page 8 in Cumberland Council Attendance handbook.

8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with *DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school.
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance.
 - Explain the help that is available.
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence.
 - Review any existing actions or interventions.
- Communicate with parents via **DIGITAL SOLUTION**, email, phone call or letters to inform them of attendance updates.
- Visit the family home to communicate and meet with parents.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers

to attendance and re-engage pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.

- Implement enforcements, where necessary

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by **ATTENDANCE LEAD**, Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Additional Links

Supporting attendance | EEF

<https://thehub.naht.org.uk/management/guidance-on-authorised-term-time-pupil-absence/>

