

Good practice Guidance – School Attendance Meetings

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Overview

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 with, not against families.

All partners should work together to 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.

It is your responsibility to know what support/processes are being actioned within school to support the pupil. You should be able to answer questions from the parents and pupils in the meeting about the support already in and outside of lessons

What's the first step?

Before inviting parents to a School Attendance Meeting, the school will have already written a letter of concern to the parents. The reason(s) for absence may have already been explored by the school through telephone calls, informal meetings on or off site. The school may have also explored and tried a range of strategies to improve attendance.

Who should be there?

The School Attendance Meeting should be attended by parent(s)/carer(s), the pupil (where appropriate), and sometimes, where appropriate, agencies working with the family (e.g., social worker, CYPS). It is a good idea to have two members of school staff present – usually the person who has been working with the family and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (Attendance Champion). This is so that any decisions regarding altered timetables or curriculum, for example, can be made at the time.

How should they be invited?

Parents should be invited to the meeting by letter. Arrangements might be made verbally to find a time that suits everyone – but once agreed, details should be confirmed in writing. The invitation to the meeting must make it clear that the meeting may go ahead even if the parents do not attend, unless the school is contacted, and a new meeting time is agreed. It may be appropriate to record some actions, particularly around how the school and other professionals are supporting the family. A copy of this should be sent to the parents after this meeting, these plans could be exhibited in court.

Preparation for the meetings

Have with you:

- CHILD'S VIEW obtain prior to meeting – does the child know what support is in place/what does it look like to them – get them to explain
- Registration certificate
- Log of any school support in place both academic and pastoral

What EHCP/SEN support is in place at school?

It is important that parents and pupil fully understand what support is in place in school so ensure you have a log of this so that it can be discussed at the meeting.

What's the purpose of the meeting?

The focus of the meeting should be on how to improve attendance by identifying any barriers to attendance and prevent the attendance getting worse. It is useful to focus on what has worked well or had a positive influence. This is an opportunity for everyone to share ideas about anything else that might help, including any new strategies or interventions that may be worth trying. At the end of the meeting, everyone will have a clear plan of the way forward.

It is important whilst identifying any barriers to attendance for the individual pupil at your school that you review whether whole family support is needed, therefore it is imperative that you identify any siblings at other schools that may or may not have attendance concerns. You may wish to contact the other schools to discuss your plan if appropriate.

Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation

Effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with school curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. You need to be clear what provision looks like in school and what behaviours need to change.

How do we set an attendance target?

Set a realistic target for the period of attendance between the initial meeting and the review meeting – this helps the pupil feel that it's achievable. The target is up to you and may vary according to circumstances – some schools simply set a target of 'no further unauthorised absence'.

When should we review it?

We suggest a 3-week review period, however between 2-4 weeks would be acceptable. This will allow you to monitor the impact of any new interventions or strategies that have been tried during the process and quickly intervene if it is not working.

Things to consider

It helps the parents if the template is typed or clearly written, and the names and roles of people who attended are written in full. If parents don't attend, hold the meeting in their absence and complete your own ideas of the support in school that may help improve attendance. Send a copy of the plan to parents with a letter and include a date to review the plan. If the parents do not agree with the plan made in their absence, it will at least open up a line of communication.

REMEMBER: The purpose of this meeting is to detail a plan that will help the pupil improve their attendance by addressing any barriers that family may have to school attendance. It is also to avoid legal proceedings being initiated against parent(s)/carer(s). It can, however, be exhibited in any legal proceedings that may take place should the matter be referred to the local authority and proceed to prosecution.

Guidance Notes for Completing School Attendance Support Meeting Template

Siblings:

Identify any siblings at other schools that may have low attendance, this is to ensure that you will be able to involve other schools in wraparound support for the family.

Early Help – support and services already involved:

Services already involved with the family should have been invited, however if services are identified at this stage, this must be completed on the form.

If no services are involved ask parents if they are happy to explore support after the meeting.

Child's view:

You should have already obtained this, but you can ask their view in the meeting and offer them time outside the meeting if they feel uncomfortable.

Attendance is presently:

Discuss the registration certificate and what the individual codes mean particularly around the authorised and unauthorised codes.

Log the main reasons for absence that the school are aware of and talk to the parents whether this is correct and note any further information given.

Identify and record the reasons for poor school attendance including barriers to improving the situation e.g., home issues, school issues, relationships, friendship groups, all relevant safeguarding concerns, and the impact of absence on the child's attainment and progress

School interventions support in School:

In this section explain why you are having this meeting indicating the support/intervention you have in place. This will give a picture of what has already been tried and can facilitate a discussion on the positive outcomes and what may be worth exploring further. Ask the

parents if know what support is in place and what it looks like to them. Discuss reasons given for absences and the impact of lost learning for their child.

Discuss EHCP if appropriate. What is in the plan?

Check the pupil understands what support is in place, what it means for them, how it may help, are they happy with the support in place, does it need to change?

If there are SEN needs – what reasonable adjustments have been made in school?

Present situation:

Discuss what has gone well in the past when things have been better. The registration certificate will be an indicator when things were better for the family. Identify and record pupil strengths that can be built upon to secure improved attendance.

Ask what actions the parents are currently taking to help improve attendance and whether there is anything else they can possibly do. Ask if there is anything they feel that the school could do to help. This does not mean you have to put in place what is requested, but it provides a starting point for discussion.

Other key issues:

Brief log of any other key issues discussed

Action Plan Aim:

The target is up to you and may vary according to circumstances – some schools simply set a target of ‘no further unauthorised absence’.

Action Plan:

It is important here that the plan involves actions for **everyone** at the meeting where possible.

Examples of actions are listed below, however every family is different, so you may have actions.

Where there is a medical condition that requires support in school - complete an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP) [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-pupils-with-medical-conditions-at-school) [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupil-s-attendance-guidance-for-schools)

Young Person agrees to:

If the young person does not attend or is considered too young to make agreements with regard to their attendance, leave this section blank. Ideally, this section should include agreed actions made with the pupil and include the “voice of the pupil”.

Parent(s)/Carers(s) agree(s) to:

In this section list specific points that the parent(s)/carer(s) agree to, to try and improve the young person's attendance. For example:

- To obtain a medical appointment with a GP to discuss any illness.
- To seek a referral to a consultant via the GP.
- To co-operate with outside agencies such as Early Help, Youth Support Team, Social Services, Educational Psychology.
- To communicate regularly with the school over any reasons preventing the young person from attending school, etc.
- Encourage and support parents to establish a good routine at home and some suggestions that you may include in the plan could be:

Depending on why the child is absent from school, you may need to encourage and support parents to establishing a good routine at home and some suggestions that you may include in the plan could be:

- I will talk to my child about how going to school every day will help my child do well in school and achieve my child's hopes and dreams
- I will keep an attendance chart at home to track absences
- At the end of the week, I will recognize my child for attending school every day with.....
- I will make sure my child is in bed byp.m. and the alarm clock is set fora.m. and ensure they arrive at the school no later thanam
- If my child has a slight stomach-ache, headache, or allergies, and doesn't have a contagious illness, I will send my child to school. I will call the school or a doctor for advice if my child complains regularly
- I will set medical and dental appointments for weekdays after school
- If my child cannot avoid missing school, I will contact the teacher for tips and resources to keep my child learning
- I will find a relative, friend or neighbour who can take my child to school if I can't

School agrees to:

In this section list specific points that the school agrees to undertake to support the young person and family in order to secure improved attendance. For example:

- To make a referral to Early Help
- To initiate the Graduated response where appropriate
- To review the academic support provided for the young person
- To consider where appropriate a reduced timetable for a specific period
- To provide access to a school counsellor
- To provide a peer mentor
- To investigate allegations of bullying
- To communicate regularly with parent(s)/carer(s)
- To initiate a vocational subject-based timetable
- To make a referral to the school nurse
- To contact SEMH/C&I for advice
- To provide a Pastoral Support Plan
- To seek advice from an Alternative Provision provider to secure advice to support the young person

- To provide assistance to the young person to help catch up with missed work, etc.

Review date:

Set a review date between 2-4 weeks.

After meeting:

Copy of the plan is to be given to the parents, child (if appropriate) and other professionals after the meeting. If this is not possible, it can be sent via letter/email.

Review meeting Guidance Notes for Completing School Attendance Support Meeting Template

The focus of the meeting should be to review the attendance and any improvements made.

It is useful to focus on what has worked well or had a positive influence. This is an opportunity for everyone to share ideas further ideas about anything else that might help, including any new strategies or interventions that may be worth trying to prevent things becoming worse. At the end of the review meeting, a revised plan should be offered if further improvements are required or, where there is no improvement.

Have with you

- Child's view – obtained before the meeting where appropriate
- Up to date registration certificate
- Log of any support in place at school
- Copy of previous plan made and actions taken by the school
- Log of any support requests from Early Help or any other services - dates and responses
- Copy of IHCP if appropriate

Discuss previous action plan:

Write in here what has worked well and what hasn't, be positive about the successes however small.

Target met?

Yes: If the target has been met, it may be that you there is no further action, however you may need to continue with a further action plan to keep things on track.

Some improvement: If there has been some improvement, further support may need to be explored and another action plan will need to be implemented with another review date.

No: If the target has not been met and there has been no engagement or attendance has not been improved, a further plan will need to be implemented.

You may also need to consider whether it should be escalated for legal consideration. However, legal intervention will be a last resort and if there are further support that can be put in place, this must be explored prior to escalation.

Decision to escalate or set a new review date if appropriate

Set a review date no more than 3 weeks later.



Or

Escalate to the formal legal process - consider a Notice to Improve as next step.

It is important at this stage for continuity to have an Action plan to improve attendance in place even if you are escalating for legal consideration.

After meeting: A copy of the new plan to given to parents/child/professionals