

Important information to include when writing attendance letters

- Before school's refer to Herefordshire Council regarding poor attendance, it is important that they have attempted to communicate and engage with the families first.
- We would also expect schools to send parents/carers a penalty notice warning letter (1. Attendance Warning Letter) when there have been 10 or more unauthorised absences. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
- These letters are provided as examples of a warning letter. These are examples only and each school may want to add further information specific to them. The example does present the minimum information that needs to be shared with the parents/carers in italics. The information in italics must be included in your warning letter.
- The warning letter will be the first stage of the legal process so it is important that the wording is accurate.
- It is also extremely important that the letter is dated as this information will be required should further legal action be taken regarding poor school attendance.
- It is best practice to send each parent/carer a letter but if they are living at the same address then we will accept one letter to the address. The letter must be addressed to both parents/carers. We would also recommend that the letters are sent via royal mail rather than handed over in person. If you do hand deliver or hand the warning to the parent/carer in person you must record the time/date this occurred. If the parents/carers live at different addresses then they should each have their own letters sent to them. Letters can also be emailed to both parent/carer, the letter should form the email and not be sent as an attachment.
- It is the schools responsibility to ensure that the details on the warning letter are accurate. You are the data controller and need to ensure that the details you have for parents/carers are correct i.e. the address details are correct and you have the parent's full name. If at any point after the referral is made you become aware that any of the details are inaccurate, you must inform the enforcement team immediately.
- There is nothing stopping schools from sending other letters prior to the warning letter (Example 1a. Cause for Concern Letter). The information above is relevant for those letters too. The aim is to make sure parents/carers are fully aware of the concerns around their child's attendance and that legal action could occur if they fail to acknowledge or address it.

- Once the school has sent out the warning letter to the parents/carers the school should seek to make a referral to Herefordshire Council once a further 10 unauthorised absences have occurred. There must be at least 10 unauthorised absences within a 10 week period **after** the date of the letter. Once this threshold is met, the school should send out a further letter informing parents/carers that they are being referred to Herefordshire Council for possible legal action (Letters 4a and 4b). It is important that you do not specify what action will be taken as this may be different once the referral is reviewed by the enforcement team.
- This procedure should be referred to in the school's attendance policy. The referral to Herefordshire Council is related to the parents/carers not adhering to the school rules.
- Schools should note that once the parents/carers are referred to Herefordshire Council, the legal process has started.