

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Good practice guidance for attendance and safeguarding

Updated May 2014

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Related documents

- Hampshire County Council guidance:
Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence guidance for schools:
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance.
- Hampshire County Council safeguarding children in education audit tool download at:
www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/schoolsandcolleges/safeguarding-children-in-education/safeguarding-audit.
- Pupils on school roll who are at risk of missing or are missing in education (CME):
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.
- Responding to parent/carer requests to electively home educate (EHE) and/or flexi-school:
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance.
- Guidelines for Hampshire schools, education centres and alternative providers in relation to Hampshire children:
www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance.
- Hampshire County Council's admissions procedures found in the Admissions section of the Education intranet (EDDIE):
www.education.hants.gov.uk/intranet/.
- Department for Children, School and Families (now the Department for Education):
Keeping pupil registers – guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations (2008).
- Department for Children, Schools and Families:
Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units (2008)

Rationale statement

This document is produced to support every school in Hampshire, to ensure that they have sound practices in place relating to both pupil admission to school and on-going pupil attendance at school. It needs to be read in conjunction with the Hampshire County Council document: Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence guidance for schools. It is produced because attendance at school is known to be a key protective factor in safeguarding children and young people.

The guidance is divided into key sections and outlines aspects of good practice that schools can use to audit their practice and procedures. It is accompanied by a chart which outlines the steps that schools should take to ensure that they have strong policy and practice for all pupils, but also that they are aware of their roles, responsibilities and key steps that they should take if there are any concerns about a pupil's attendance at school. (See Appendix 3 on page 15.)

Admissions

For children starting school in Year R, transferring from one school phase to the next and moving between schools in-year

All schools should follow Hampshire County Council's admissions procedures found on the Admissions section of the Education intranet (EDDIE):

www.education.hants.gov.uk/intranet/

and page 5 of the County Council's *Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence guidance for schools*, to ensure they comply with their statutory requirements.

Further to the statutory requirements, it is recommended that all schools implement the following best practice procedures.

Recommended best practice

Ensure that someone within the school is tasked with the responsibility of completing a check of all pupil records at the point of transfer in the first half term. They should look for the following gaps, whilst also considering whether the child is from a *family at risk* and may require close monitoring (see Appendix 1 on page 12):

- check the registration form is complete
- check every child has a CTF (previously referred to as a common transfer form) and attendance data for the last three years. If a child has an attendance pattern below 95% then check with previous *base* or *parent* school the reasons for absence and the number and frequency of days absent. Check if the child was at any point previously registered on the school's list of pupils who are subject to a child protection plan
- check that every child in the school has a complete pupil record pertaining to the child's educational history (schools and other educational provision from the ages 0 – 19). If there are gaps in any child's pupil records, school personnel must contact the child's last recorded *base* or *parent* school to discuss the child/family and complete an educational history. If this information is not available the headteacher must facilitate a parent/carer meeting to discuss the child's educational history. Any concerns raised in this meeting around safeguarding should be followed up by the school with Hantsdirect (children's reception team at Hantsdirect: Tel: 01329 225379) or an allocated social worker. If the child is out-of-county, the school must then follow up with the neighbouring county's Children's Services Department
- check every child's record looking for frequent changes in home address, GP address or child contact details pertaining to the child and family, as these patterns could indicate an underlying safeguarding matter.

If any of the above checks raise concerns and there are other indicators showing that this child is vulnerable or at risk, such as changes in address or named contacts, these concerns should be internally monitored by the school's child protection liaison officer and reported to Hantsdirect or the child's allocated social worker. If the child has siblings, the school should verify the data relating to the siblings. If the child subsequently transfers to another school, any monitoring and the reasons should be relayed to them. If any concerns at this point are raised the school should:

- arrange a parent/carer meeting to discuss concerns
- monitor the child, register their name on Hampshire County Council's *Monitoring vulnerable children form* (see Appendix 2 on page 13). This form should be used by the school to create a simple audit trail of the school's actions in relation to concerns. It enables the school to hold an internal and consistent record for individual children, which may then prompt a referral to the central reception team at Hantsdirect or use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as appropriate. See Appendix 2 on page 13 both for the monitoring form and instructions on how to use it
- register and record concerns. Where a child is placed on an internal watch list, any evidence of concerns should be recorded chronologically and regularly reviewed with full chronological history evidenced
- check if other educational providers have any siblings of the child attending, ie: early years, further education and alternative education, to ascertain whether there are shared concerns. Think family, not just care for your individual child!
- sensitively arrange opportunities for identified pupils to have regular adult/pupil meetings to provide an opportunity for the child to discuss/share enjoyment of school, general confidence and well-being and confide if needed
- arrange interagency meeting when appropriate
- check with other professionals, such as school health nurse, police liaison officer, local youth worker
- check with the children's reception team at Hantsdirect, to see if known, professional line: Tel: 01329 225379

*Please note the number for families to contact Hantsdirect on is:
Tel: 0845 603 5630.*

A child on roll

All schools should follow Sections 1 to 5 of *Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence guidance*, to ensure they comply with their statutory requirements and recommended good practice. This will ensure that all schools:

- have legal registers that are accurately coded, including internal lesson-to-lesson monitoring
- have staff trained around procedures for completing registers and coding, and who are aware of patterns to look for
- follow up absence and ensure that there is good intervention for pupils where attendance rates are below 95%.

In addition to this, the following procedures are recommended for any child where there are concerns regarding safeguarding or who are subject to a child protection plan.

Daily

- All absence is recorded and followed up through first day contact. This includes any internal absence picked up through the school's systems for monitoring lesson by lesson.
 - If the parents/carers are not contactable or the reason given for absence is queried, the school must pursue other contacts, including peers and siblings, to ensure they ascertain the reason for any absence(s). If the school is unable to contact parents then they should follow the procedures for children at risk of missing education (see separate Hampshire County Council guidance). The school will not automatically accept a parent's/carer's reason for absence but will endeavour to validate the reasons. Any negative pattern of absence will be followed up by a letter home, to invite parents/carers in for a meeting.
- When a child returns to school, the child protection liaison officer/tutor/class teacher should ensure there is a pupil meeting to check the child is:
 - able to participate in lessons and can catch up with work missed
 - well – physically, socially and emotionally.
(A number of serious case reviews identified that staff in schools did not listen to the child and that opportunities to provide the child with an opportunity to talk or disclose were not taken. Providing a meeting opportunity after a return to school should be part of good practice for children at risk.)

Weekly

- Ensure that both the child protection liaison officer (CPLO) and the attendance lead receives weekly registration certificates for all pupils on the internal monitoring list (such as Hampshire's *Monitoring vulnerable children form* in Appendix 2) as recommended on page 3 of this document – or who are subject to a child protection plan for monitoring of any negative trends.
- Ensure that all absences are authorised or unauthorised and no *N* code is not cleared.
- Where there is a pattern of frequent lateness the school must follow up with the family in the same way it would for repeated absence. Any concerns should result in the following actions:
 - a parent/carer meeting
 - pre CAF/CAF or single agency referral, as appropriate, to address any needs
 - child's needs discussed at appropriate interagency meeting
 - intervention agreed and monitored
 - when appropriate, a request for support sought from the locality team following the agreement reached by the school cluster.
- All actions identified and recorded on pupil's file.

Half termly or termly

- Ensure that attendance data for identified pupils is shared and discussed as a standard agenda item on a calendared meeting, such as pupil progress meetings, tutor team meetings or an interagency meeting. Actions and minutes of these meetings should be recorded and shared with appropriate stakeholders, such as the CPLO. This should include all pupils being monitored as vulnerable or at risk, not just those pupils whose attendance rate is falling and is below 95%.
- Attendance data should be correlated with attainment data and behaviour data at the school as part of triangulation.
(A number of serious case reviews found that the vulnerability of children was missed as data sets were not triangulated and, as such, indications that a child was reaching out through poor behaviour and absence were missed.)
- Hold at least one adult/child meeting per term for all children who are subject to a child protection plan, to ensure pupil voice is heard and warning signs are picked up if evident. This could be as part of normal monitoring or Individual Education Plan or Personal Education Plan cycle if relevant.

Annually

Ensure that the school's SIMS administrator sets up a user defined group within SIMS, or a dynamic group in SIMS discover, for all children the school is monitoring for safeguarding and for any child subject to a child protection plan. This user defined group should be kept up to date by the SIMS personnel, so that on a weekly basis it accurately reflects the pupils who need to be monitored. (Lessons learnt from serious case reviews regarding the movement between schools of vulnerable pupils indicate that all schools should consider adding any child coming onto its roll after the start of the year into a user defined group, until it is satisfied that there are no concerns regarding the child in relation to safeguarding.)

The following actions should also be undertaken:

- the CPLO updates the monitoring vulnerable children list and the register of pupils subject to a child protection plan, and informs the SIMS monitor of the members of the user defined group for monitoring
- ensure the school's attendance, safeguarding and confidentiality policies are all updated and reviewed in light of one another
- ensure that all new staff are trained as part of their induction in child protection and all existing staff are reminded of key procedures
- the school collates information and evidence as part of school self-evaluation related to behaviour and safety of pupils
- review and clarify where necessary all staff roles and responsibilities, identifying those who lead on attendance, safeguarding and child protection to ensure the school's policies, practices and procedures are being effectively implemented
- check and re-send pupil contact sheets for school records, and check home address and GP details.

For any child coded as a *B* code – educated off site

Schools should have due regard for the fact that they retain a duty of care for pupils on their school roll at all times. It is recommended that schools agree protocols for monitoring pupil attendance as part of the set-up procedures for activities where their pupils are being educated off site.

Department for Education (DfE) statistical meaning:

Brief description	Educated off site (not dual registration)
Statistical meaning	Approved educational activity
Legal meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical meaning	Out for whole session
Department for Education definition	Where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off site at a supervised activity approved by the school
Relevant regulation	6 (4) is the legal meaning of the code under Regulation 6 (1) (a): Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Schools' safeguarding responsibilities:

- for educational and safeguarding reasons, the DfE guidance: *Keeping pupil registers – guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations (2008)* states that: “schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity provided off site can notify the school of any absences by individual pupils so that the school can record the pupil absence using the relevant absence code”
- where there are a consortia of schools, all must have suitable and robust safeguarding systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved
- approved educational activity covered by the code *B* must be an activity supervised by someone approved by the school. It must also take place during the session for which the mark is recorded. The code *B* is not applicable for absence when pupils complete work at home, eg pupils on an agreed part-time timetable or excluded.

For any child coded as a *D* code – dual registration

DfE statistical meaning:

Brief description	Dual registration (ie: pupil attending other educational establishments) amended by DfE 2011
Statistical meaning	Approved educational activity
Legal meaning	Not counted in possible attendances amended by DfE 2011
Physical meaning	Out for whole session
Department for Education definition	The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. Where a pupil is dually registered at institution X and Y, institution X marks the pupil approved educational activity while they are attending institution Y and vice-versa. Both institutions share responsibility for the child. Failure to attend either institution at the proper time, without good reason, is unauthorised absence

Schools' safeguarding responsibilities: the DfE guidance (2008) states: *“Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the school where the pupil is scheduled to be can notify the other school of any absences by individual pupils so that both schools can record the pupil absence using the relevant absence code. For safeguarding and educational reasons, one of the schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner, such as through first day calling procedures”.*

For any child who may be retained in custody

Note: children who are detained purely for medical reasons, eg: under mental health legislation, should not be treated or regarded as children who are in custody. They must be treated in the same way as other children who are unable to attend school for medical reasons.

Schools cannot remove from roll pupils who are in custody awaiting their trial, ie: *on remand* or are given sentences which exclude a custodial element. They can remove from roll pupils who are serving a sentence of four months or longer which includes a custodial element, if they are satisfied that the pupil will not return when released. For example, those who will complete their compulsory school age before being released. However, this does not prevent schools from excluding pupils but the exclusion must be in accordance with current legislation and statutory guidance.

It is good practice for schools to consult Hampshire's Education Inclusion Service (EIS), the local Youth Offending Team and other agencies before making a decision whether to remove a pupil from roll. For example, it is not good practice to delete a

pupil who has an imminent release date. Schools and EIS should discuss strategies to support the continuing education, support and reintegration of all pupils returning from custody.

If a pupil is deleted from the school roll because they have a custodial sentence of more than four months, then the school should pass the pupil's information to EIS who, where applicable, will relay this information to the local authority closest to the pupil's home. This would include an electronic transfer of information to the *lost pupil database*, via the DfE's School to School (s2s) website:

www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/datatdatam/s2s/a0064650/school-to-school-s2s, as a safeguard against the pupil missing his or her education.

The local authority has long-term responsibility for the pupil's education until a new school place is found and will work with the place of custody, Youth Offending Team and other agencies to ensure that a new school or other educational provision is in place before the pupil's release from custody.

Regardless of whether the pupil is deleted from the school roll or not, the school, the place of custody, the Youth Offending Team and other appropriate agencies should work together and share information in order to maintain the continuity of the pupil's education. The transition from custody to community presents many challenges to the young person involved, therefore it is vital that the school which the pupil joins or re-joins upon leaving custody, and the other agencies, should also have strategies to ensure the pupil's effective reintegration to school life and the community. These strategies will ultimately play a significant part in local efforts to keep communities safe.

For any child sent home to *cool off* – *unofficial exclusion*

The latest DfE exclusions guidance makes it clear that removing pupils from school sites for disciplinary reasons, without following formal exclusions procedures, is illegal, since there is no basis in law for headteachers or other school staff to do this, even if done with the agreement of parents or carers. NB: As this practice is illegal, the school might in these circumstances be judged to continue to hold the safeguarding responsibilities for the child during these times, even if a guardian has been informed.

What constitutes an unofficial exclusion?

Unofficial or informal exclusion refers to:

- headteachers or other school staff sending pupils home for disciplinary reasons, but not following the procedures required for formal exclusion

and

- pupils being sent home for either short periods of time or for longer, indefinite, periods which can sometimes result in the pupil not returning to school at all.

These pupils may be marked as an authorised absence, or in some cases marked as attending, and eventually taken off the school roll incorrectly without having

another school place to go to. This practice is illegal and the formal exclusion process should always be used.

Other mechanisms have been inappropriately used by some schools as a means of *unofficially excluding* pupils. For example:

- following a fixed period exclusion, a pupil remains out of school awaiting a reintegration interview which may be indefinitely delayed and the pupil does not return to school (see paragraph 40 of *Improving behaviour and attendance: guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units*, Department for Education (2008) exclusions guidance for information on reintegration interviews)
- parents/carers being advised that if their child returns to school after the fixed period exclusion ends, the child will be permanently excluded
- parents/carers being strongly encouraged to home educate, even though they may not be aware of the responsibilities involved
- disruptive pupils being asked to stay out of school for particular reasons, eg: for the duration of an OfSTED inspection
- pupils placed on study leave for periods of time longer than recommended in guidance. For guidance on school attendance please go to:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a0010012/school-attendance.

Child moving/coming off roll

If a parent/carer informs the school a child is transferring school or will be home educated, the base or parent school should refer to Sections 2 and 6 of *Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence guidance for schools*, to ensure they comply with their statutory requirements.

In addition to this, we recommend the following procedures for any child where there are concerns regarding safeguarding or who is subject to a child protection plan.

Transferring to another school

- Request a meeting or telephone conversation with a parent or carer, if informed by letter, to discuss the reasons for leaving and to ascertain the intended location/new school for the child.
- Once the *base* or *parent* school has received contact, ensure that any concerns and relevant data – such as attendance certificates and behaviour logs – related to the child are passed on to the receiving school's CPLO.
- Ensure that within the pupil records and data being transferred to the receiving school, that the details of a named contact at your school are kept within the file as a contact point if more information pertaining to the child is required.
- After the pupil files have been passed on, and before the child is taken off roll, ensure that within SIMS the school records (in the comments box when editing marks on the child's registration certificate) – the following details are included:
 - the name of the person spoken to at the new school, plus the date and time
 - the expected start date at the new school.
- If a receiving school does not make contact by 20 school days of absence, then the school must follow the procedures set out in separate guidance: *Pupils on school roll who are at risk of missing or are missing in education (CME)*.

Appendix 1

Working together to safeguard children, DCSF (now DfE),
March 2010, pp 287

Families at risk is a shorthand term for families whose members experience, or are at risk of, multiple and complex problems – such as worklessness, poor mental health, substance misuse, or offending behaviour by adults or children – which frequently leads to very poor outcomes for children, young people and adults within the families. The safety and welfare of children living within these families are more likely to be a cause for concern than those from the population as a whole.

The term *families at risk* was first adopted following the *Families at risk review*, undertaken by the Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Taskforce with the then Department for Children's Schools and Families (now DfE). The review found that families at risk, because of the multiple difficulties they face, have a significant likelihood of facing a crisis situation without preventative support.

Problems experienced by family members, could include combinations of the following factors:

- poverty, debt, inactivity or worklessness and low aspirations
- low parental education and skills
- domestic violence
- relationship conflict
- child neglect and poor parenting and family functioning
- poor mental health
- poor physical health and disabilities
- teenage pregnancy
- learning disability
- poor school attendance and attainment
- involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse
- poor housing and homelessness.

Appendix 2

Recording concerns about vulnerable children Pro forma and guidance for schools

Overleaf is a simple pro forma for schools to use when recording concerns about an individual child.

The purpose of the pro forma is to:

- 1 give all Hampshire schools a consistent way of recording concerns about individual children
- 2 maintain a clear focus on actions necessary to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child, ie: consider what needs to change and how this will be achieved
- 3 prompt consideration of referral to social care or use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as appropriate
- 4 provide a simple audit trail of the school's actions in relation to any concerns.

Schools should ensure that all relevant staff are aware of these forms and use them appropriately, making arrangements as necessary to ensure those with pastoral care responsibilities have an oversight of concerns recorded.

If there is uncertainty as to whether a referral to social care is appropriate, particularly in relation to a safeguarding issue, advice should always be sought from the school's CPLO or the children's reception team at Hantsdirect:

Tel: 01329 225379.

Unless discussion with the child or their family about a concern might engender risk to the child, an open approach should always be used. This will facilitate engaging the child and family in addressing the concern and lead into use of the CAF if appropriate.

If a new concern arises a new pro forma should be completed.

Hampshire Children's Services Department Safeguarding Unit

Monitoring vulnerable children form

Child's name: DoB:

Name/title of person raising concern:

Details of concern	Action taken – including communication to whom and which organisation <i>(Has a CAF or referral to Children's Social Care been considered?)</i>	Outcome of action	Further actions required By whom and when	Review date	Name and signature of person completing entry

Name: Date:

Designation: Copied to:

October 2012

Appendix 3

Steps to promote strong attendance procedures and safeguarding

