

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Hampshire County Council guidance for schools and other education providers

Promoting pupil attendance and recording
absence

May 2014 – to be reviewed March 2015

This guidance should be read in conjunction with
the DfE *Advice on school attendance*, January
2014 at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/
school-attendance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance)

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Stand alone (but related) Hampshire County Council statutory guidance found at:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools

Section 6: effective practice document for school attendance procedures and admissions for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children

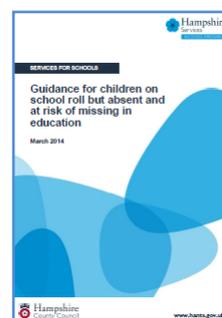
Section 7: pupils on school roll who are *at risk* of missing or are missing in education (CME):

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools

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Statutory guidance

Section 1: parent/carer and local (education) authority duties for children of compulsory school age

Compulsory school age

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Start of compulsory school age</p> <p>A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday.</p> | <p>If a child turns five between 1 September and 31 December, they are of compulsory school age on 31 December.</p> | <p>If a child turns five between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March.</p> | <p>If a child turns five between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August.</p> |
| <p>End of compulsory school age</p> | <p>From September 2013 all 16 year olds will be required to continue in education or training, until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.</p> | <p>From September 2015 all 16 year olds will be required to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday.</p> | |

Related attendance procedures for school

- 1 From September 2013 attendance data for all pupils in reception (including non-compulsory school age pupils) are included in school absence data collected via the school census. A child taking a full-time place aged four must comply with the school attendance policy, including leave of absence.
- 2 Year 11 pupils must be coded S for study leave if they do not attend school sessions during the exam period in the Summer Term; and present when they do. Study leave should not be granted or used at any other time. Under the attendance regulations the B code cannot be used to code children on revision. When exams end for Year 11 pupils they are coded as partial planned school closure #, which does not count as absent until the last day in June. Pupils should either be removed from roll the last Friday in June or the X code is used if they are staying on school roll to enter Year 12.

- 3 From September 2013 Hampshire County Council will routinely report to the Department for Education the known location of all 16 and 17 year olds with respect to their ongoing education and training.
- 4 The Department for Education guidance for schools is that they should intervene as early as possible in ensuring good attendance patterns and this includes pupils of non-statutory school age.

Parental responsibilities

Parents/carers¹ are legally required to secure full-time education for children of compulsory school age. The education provision must be suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child has. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision, or otherwise (eg elective home education). A child who is registered at school must attend regularly and punctually.

Duties of the local authority (LA)

The LA has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places. They have statutory powers to bring legal action against parents/carers who:

- fail to ensure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil
- fail to ensure their child is receiving a suitable education – either by regular attendance at school or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them.

The LA has a duty under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to serve a notice or a school attendance order to the parent/carer.

Both local authority maintained schools and academies can issue a penalty notice to a parent/carer for their child's non-attendance, **but it must be compliant with the LA code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.**

Relevant legislation

Only local authorities can prosecute parents/carers and they must fund all associated costs. For details of the action local authorities can take see pages 17-21 of the Department for Education's *Advice on school attendance*, January 2014.

In each district there is a monthly Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) meeting chaired by the district manager for children and families. Schools are able to refer to this panel

¹ *In education law, and for the purposes of this document, the definition of a *parent* is as described in the Education Act 1996, Section 576. A parent means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person, and
- any person who has care of a child or young person, ie lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent/carer in respect of a particular pupil when using the legal measures, but generally parents/carers include all those with day-to-day responsibility for a child.

to have legal action considered for pupils who have an unauthorised attendance level of 20 sessions out of 100 possible sessions.

From this panel meeting, if the decision is to proceed with legal action, the legal intervention court officer for that area will lead on the legal process. The referral form for ALP and other paperwork for schools related to the legal process are available from the Education intranet, see: www.hants.gov.uk/legalintervention.

Section 2: admission and attendance registers

All schools are required to have an admission register and, unless all of its pupils are boarders, an attendance register. For further details see pages 7-9 of the Department for Education's *Advice on school attendance*, November 2013. Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made (although schools should ensure they fulfil additional record-keeping requirements for looked after children). However, schools are no longer required to keep paper copies of registration certificates or *green books* for their admissions register if they use electronic registration with secure back up.

Contents of an attendance register

Schools must have clear procedures for completing attendance registers and teachers must complete them neatly and accurately as they may be required as evidence in a court of law.

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second afternoon session.

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- present
- attending an approved educational activity
- absent, or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school should follow up any absences to:

- ascertain the reason
- ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- identify whether the absence is approved or not, and
- identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register (or management information system which is used to download data to the school census).

NB: If schools take the official afternoon registration at the end of the day they must ensure that pupils who have attended during the afternoon (but have subsequently missed the official register at the end of the day) are investigated through lesson monitor or class registers. If it is clear that a child was present for the afternoon session then the official register should be changed to present and not absent as appropriate. Schools should deal with truancy from registration as a separate discipline issue.

Amendments to the admission register and attendance register

Every amendment made to the admission register and the attendance register must include: the original entry; the amended entry; and the reason, date, name and position of the person who made the amendment.

For further advice and support from Hampshire County Council with respect to the admission procedures, school places and in-year admission, visit the County Council Education Data and Information Exchange (Eddie) website:

eddie.hants.gov.uk/admissions/.

For technical queries, if you use SIMS and your school has a service level agreement with Hampshire County Council IT, then contact their help desk on:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.

Inspections of registers and register checks

School admission and attendance registers must be available for inspection during school hours by any:

- of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools
- additional inspector (assisting the Chief Inspector)
- officer of the local (education) authority authorised for that purpose.

Removal from school roll

There are several circumstances when a pupil of compulsory school age must be removed from the admission register. These include:

- when a pupil has been registered at another school but is not being dual registered
- when a pupil has ceased to attend school and the parent/carer has indicated in writing to the school that the pupil is being electively home educated

NB: For further guidance on elective home education read Section 8 of this guidance: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools

- when a pupil has ceased to attend school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school

NB: For guidance on children at risk of missing in education read Section 7 of: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools

- after the permanent exclusion of a pupil has been upheld by the governing body.

A pupil's name cannot be removed from the admission register because of poor/irregular attendance, nor can it be deleted at the request of a parent/carer.

Where a pupil is on the roll of a special school the pupil's name must not be removed without the prior consent of the LA.

Relevant legislation

For full details of the regulations relating to pupil registration, the use of computers/electronic registration systems and a full list of the grounds for deleting a pupil's name from the admission register, refer to:

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and subsequent amendments.

Section 3: authorised absence, unauthorised absence, approved educational activities and lateness

Authorised absence

Only the school can authorise a pupil's absence. An absence must not automatically be recorded as authorised simply because it is covered by a note from the pupil's parent/carer.

If a pupil is absent, the absence must only be recorded as authorised if:

- the pupil has been granted leave of absence, ie the absence has been approved beforehand by the school, or
- the pupil is unable to attend:
 - either because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause, or
 - on a day that the pupil's parents/carers' religion sets aside for religious activities.

When appropriate, an absence initially recorded as authorised may subsequently be amended to unauthorised. In such circumstances all relevant details relating to the amendment must be recorded.

Unauthorised absence

When the reason for a pupil's absence has not been established at the time the register is taken, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised. Any subsequent correction to a register recording an absence as authorised must be made as soon as is practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

Approved educational activities

An approved educational activity is either:

- an activity which takes place outside of the school, is approved by the school and is supervised by a person authorised to do so by the school, or
- attendance at another school at which the pupil is registered.

Absence due to enforced closure (absence code Y) or partial closure (absence code #)

This can occur either when:

- the school site (or part of it) is closed due to an unavoidable cause at a time when pupils are required to attend, or
- a pupil for whom transport is provided is unable to attend because the transport is unavailable.

Lateness

A school must set a time for the attendance register to close. This time must be publicised to pupils and parents/carers. Hampshire County Council supports the Department for Education's recommendation that schools keep the register open for up to 30 minutes after the start of the registration period. If a pupil arrives before the register has closed, the lateness must be recorded using the appropriate code (*L*), which will register as an attendance. If a pupil arrives after the register has closed this must be recorded using the appropriate code (*U*), which will register as an unauthorised absence.

If a pupil is frequently arriving after the attendance register has closed, the parent/carer is committing an offence by failing to ensure that the child is receiving full-time education and the parent/carer may therefore be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted under the Education Act 1996, Section 444.

For general queries with respect to authorisation or unauthorisation of absence, or attendance coding, please check Hampshire County Council's Learning, Behaviour and Attendance website: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.

Relevant legislation and guidance

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Department for Education's *Advice on attendance*, March 2013.

Section 4: attendance and absence registration codes, their descriptions and meanings

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|------|---|---|
| / | Present (morning session). | Present. |
| \ | Present (afternoon session). | Present. |
| B | Educated off site (not dual registered). | (Present at an) approved educational activity. |
| C | Other authorised circumstance (not covered by any other code). This code is used for the absence through agreed part-time pupils and pupils on flexi-schooling (see flexi-schooling guidance). | Authorised absence. |
| D | Dual registration, ie pupil is registered at more than one school and is attending another establishment. | Not counted in possible sessions' attendance for the child or school. |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision). | Authorised absence. |
| G | Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement). | Unauthorised absence. |
| H | Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance (agreed). | Authorised absence. |
| I | Illness (not medical or dental appointments). | Authorised absence. |
| J | Interview. | (Present at an) approved educational activity. |
| L | Late (before register closes). | Present. |
| M | Medical/dental appointment. | Authorised absence. |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence. | Unauthorised absence. |
| O | Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code). | Unauthorised absence. |
| P | Approved sporting activity. | (Present at an) approved educational activity. |

| Code | Description | Meaning |
|------|---|--|
| R | Religious observance. | Authorised absence. |
| S | Study leave. | Authorised absence. |
| T | Traveller absence. | Authorised absence. |
| U | Late (after register closes). | Unauthorised absence. |
| V | Education visit or trip. | (Present at an) approved educational activity. |
| W | Work experience. | (Present at an) approved educational activity. |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence. | Not counted in possible attendances. |
| Y | Enforced enclosure. | Not counted in possible attendances. |
| Z | Pupil not yet on roll. | Not counted in possible attendances. |
| # | Planned school closure to pupils, such as INSET days or school used as a polling station. | Not counted in possible attendances. |

Relevant guidance

- The Department for Education's *Advice on attendance*, March 2013, pages 9-14.

Section 5: requests for approved leave of absence

2013 Amendments to the Pupil Registration (England) 2006 Regulations state that: *“Headteachers may not grant any approved leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted”*. Before any request for leave absence is approved, a headteacher must be satisfied that there are *“exceptional circumstances”* justifying the request for leave of absence. The Department for Education (DfE) has in their amendments specifically removed references to *family holiday, extended leave* and the statutory threshold of *10 school days*.

Hampshire County Council's current advice is as follows:

1 Defining exceptional circumstances

Many headteachers and school clusters wish to define for their parents/carers what would constitute an *exceptional circumstance*, so that schools can be consistent in their response to any leave of absence requests received.

However, the Department for Education has not defined *exceptional circumstances*, except to explain that: “Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent/carer gave advance notice; and the pupil’s attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling”.

There is no current government discretion (eg for military families), it is the headteacher who must decide and be consistent in what they would consider to be an exceptional reason.

In relation to the practice of developing cluster or local school partnership letters (a blanket policy), schools need to ensure they remain lawful – in that headteachers have a discretionary power, and should consider each individual leave of absence request based on the circumstances of that family and the impact that absence will have on the child. Schools should not issue blanket policies where they state that they will only approve requests for leave of absence up to a certain duration, or where a pupil has a certain percentage attendance. Similarly, a refusal to authorise any leave of absence requests, or to automatically refuse certain categories of request, would be unlawful.

Hampshire County Council advises that:

- where schools do operate a cluster or partnership response to requests for absence it remains acceptable and lawful to communicate with parents/carers examples of what you all would consider to be exceptional circumstances, as long as it is very clear that these are examples and every request will be considered individually
- the nature of the words *exceptional circumstances* are such that they indicate unusual events or an abnormal occurrence. It is therefore not possible to define in advance when a request will or will not be exceptional. Even if an event is exceptional, for example both parents/carers in the forces and only one week between tours of duty available for a family holiday. If the child’s attendance rate was 50% and the reasons given to date were a cause for concern, you would be unlikely to approve a leave of absence.

2 How do I decide if it is exceptional, whether to authorise and how many days?

Although the decision is the headteacher’s, to support your decision-making we would ask you to consider the following.

- Could this request for leave take place during the normal school holidays? If the answer is *yes* then it is not an exceptional circumstance. The Department for Education is clear that there is no parental/carer right for a family holiday: cost, experiences for the child, weather and overlapping with school holidays are not factors on which the decision should be made.

- If it is an exceptional circumstance you still have to decide whether to approve the absence or not. This decision should be made by considering primarily the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling; followed by the frequency of the requests; the nature of the event for which leave is sought and whether the parent/carer gave advance notice. You do not have to approve leave of absence even if the reason given is exceptional. Schools and headteachers should ensure that they are not discriminatory in their decision to approve leave in exceptional circumstances for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children who may request this in addition to the extended leave covered by the *T* code. (If schools are using the *T* code correctly this would only be used for the time when a child is absent from school as the family are travelling for employment.) The decision to approve the leave should be made without consideration for leave taken for employment, but schools should take into account the child's overall attendance rate, which may include other absences.
- If you do approve leave of absence you need to make it clear the days you are authorising and from what time that approval takes place. For example, you may approve the absence for the immediate family wedding that takes place on the Wednesday, but may feel that due to the location of the wedding the child does not need to be absent for the entire week or for the two whole days of travel either side of the event.
- Guidance for parents can be accessed from the County Council website: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents.

3 Authorised approved leave of absence

Hampshire County Council anticipates that it will be extremely rare for leave of absence for a holiday in term time to be authorised. Where it is approved the school should use the appropriate authorised absence code. If leave is not approved the absence should be coded as a *G*.

4 The leave of absence form

Schools have the option to use either the County Council leave of absence form, which can be downloaded from www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools, or devise their own. The County Council form is purposefully designed to ensure schools and education centres remain lawful, allows for a range of legal intervention to be used if necessary, and reduces the possibility of parental/carer complaint.

If a parent/carer takes a child on holiday during term time without obtaining the headteacher's consent beforehand, the pupil's absence must be recorded as unauthorised *G*. The parent/carer is then committing an offence and may be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted under the Education Act 1996, Section 444. Schools and other authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice without warning where the parent/carer has chosen to take the child on leave during term time without authorisation; or evidence is subsequently found to suggest a child

was away from school with the knowledge of the parent/carer and does not meet the statutory defences mentioned above.

NB: Although the LA discourages pupils being taken out of school and supports headteachers in the non-authorisation of leaves of request outside of exceptional circumstance, there is no local authority policy for schools on *approving leave of absence*, as to produce such a policy would usurp headteachers' authority.

Relevant legislation and guidance

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013.

Good practice guidance

Section 1: good practice: recording and monitoring attendance and setting targets to reduce absence

Recording attendance

If a school records information about attendance accurately, efficiently and effectively, it can use this to:

- identify possible gaps in learning, progress and attainment
- identify pupils/families who require support and intervention
- provide detailed information to individual pupils
- provide detailed information to parents/carers
- provide regular reports to the governing body
- support effective school self-evaluation
- provide the LA with any information and data it requires
- provide the information and data required by the Department for Education
- identify ways in which levels of attendance and pupil progress can be improved
- set targets for individual pupils, teaching groups, year groups and/or the school as a whole to improve attendance
- recognise the positive attendance rates overall and reward individual pupils for continued or improved good attendance rates.

Monitoring attendance

To help monitor attendance and absence levels, schools should:

- ensure that registration procedures are used consistently throughout the school
- ensure that appropriate codes are used to record pupil attendance and absence
- have a system in place to keep track of pupils during the day and help reduce/prevent post-registration truancy, eg by having *spot checks* or using a *lesson monitoring* system; this should include pupils on roll but attending other educational provision or on temporary part-time provision
- provide support and guidance to staff on what their roles and responsibilities are in respect of attendance and safeguarding; how to analyse attendance data and understand its impact on attainment and progress; and how to complete registers and follow up absences
- provide clear information and accurate data to support services, so that they can intervene more quickly and effectively when concerns about poor attendance/punctuality arise
- report the school's attendance percentage for overall and persistent absence via the school's prospectus and website

- report annually to parents/carers their children's individual attendance rates.

Target setting

The legal requirement for all schools to agree and set an annual target for attendance with their local authority was rescinded by the Department for Education in 2011, but with an expectation that all schools would continue to set themselves challenging annual targets to reduce their overall and persistent absence.

The learning, behaviour and attendance advisers, part of the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS), can advise individual schools on the setting of targets in respect of persistent absence and/or overall absence at individual, group or whole-school levels.

Targets for schools and education centres for overall and persistent absence rates should be set to:

- 1 challenge schools to be on or below the national average absence figure
- 2 challenge schools to be on or below their comparative schools within the same free school meal band median (as set out in a school's Raiseonline data)
- 3 show a sustainable and decreasing absence school trend
- 4 challenge schools to narrow the gaps between the disproportionate absence rates of vulnerable groups, such as special educational needs (SEN), free school meals (FSM) and ethnicity.

The national average absence rate for all schools can be found at:

- the DfE website for statistics – search *Statistical first release pupil absence in schools in England*, see: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics#latest-statistical-releases. These reports summarise the national trends gained from the school/centre census returns on pupil absence. There are four separate statistical first releases for pupil absence across the year
- Hampshire County Council's website, through the following two links:
 - www.hants.gov.uk/education/dait/absence-spec – see separate links for primary, secondary and special school trends
 - www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance – click on the link for *Absence data*. There are also documents containing pupil absence data for Hampshire County Council districts available from this website.

Section 2: how to improve attendance (including the role of the headteacher, school staff and governors) and attendance policies

How to improve attendance

Schools can improve attendance by ensuring that pupils, parents/carers and staff are made aware of:

- 1 the legality of regular attendance and punctuality
- 2 how attendance correlates directly to attainment
- 3 their responsibilities for ensuring regular and punctual attendance.

Bespoke support for schools on how to improve attendance strategically is available from the learning, behaviour and attendance advisers. The advisers are part of the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) and are part of Hampshire County Council's sold service. Support documents and further schools' guidance are available through their website: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-team and the Moodle: hias.hants.gov.uk/bal.

For both attendance and punctuality the role of the headteacher is to:

- ensure that a member of the school's leadership team has lead responsibility for attendance and can influence the school's policies and procedures
- ensure that the impact of pupil/staff absence and lateness is regularly discussed at relevant staff meetings, both curriculum and pastoral, and is regarded as an area for school improvement
- ensure that information about the school's expectations and targets are included in the school prospectus, home school agreement, website, open days and transition days
- use newsletters and other communications to remind parents/carers how they can help their children achieve and maintain good attendance and punctuality. (Any such communications should, whenever possible, be translated into other *mother-tongue* languages which parents/carers can read or a summary interpreted at a meeting with parents/carers.)
- consider attendance a topic for staff training – to aide staff understanding of why some pupils do not attend, how to support pupils with differing reasons for absence; and how to use absence data to narrow differing rates of pupil progress
- promote awareness at class and whole-school level by including relevant data in regular, eg weekly, staff bulletins
- have systems in place for recording accurate and up-to-date absence data
- ensure that secondary school staff in particular take a register for each lesson to prevent pupils truanting from individual lessons
- have procedures in place to identify and quickly follow up all absences, and that any interventions are monitored effectively
- ensure appropriate staff, eg class/form teachers, have an opportunity to get to know their pupils so that they can be aware of anything that might affect a pupil's attendance.

The role of school staff is to:

- promote a welcoming atmosphere which makes all pupils feel safe and valued
- encourage and promote good relationships between themselves and parents/carers
- include parents/carers in meetings about their child's attendance and involve them in any initiatives introduced by the school to promote attendance

- ensure that pupils can access lost learning through periods of absence or irregular punctuality, and that absence data is used to identify pupils with potential gaps in learning or progress
- ensure that all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs, Traveller pupils, pupils who speak English as an additional language, or pupils eligible for free school meals, receive suitable teaching
- set short and long-term attendance targets for individual pupils, groups of pupils and the school as a whole
- reward good attendance and punctuality by linking them to the school rewards systems, homework diaries and records of achievement
- have procedures for helping pupils reintegrate into school or class after long periods of absence or programmes of intervention
- ensure that any concerns about attendance and/or punctuality which cannot be resolved internally are discussed with colleagues from appropriate support services/agencies
- ensure that they deal fairly and consistently with authorised and unauthorised absence
- ensure there is good liaison with colleagues at the previous school when a pupil transfers to a new school
- ensure that parents/carers are made aware of any attendance concerns through phone calls, letters, and homework or pupil diaries.

The role of governors is to:

- ensure that they receive regular attendance reports from the headteacher
- ensure they set challenging targets for attendance and punctuality, and consider having a named governor with lead responsibility for attendance
- consider the inclusion of a governor as a member of a school attendance panel or family group conference which deals with the poor attendance of individual pupils.

Attendance policies

Although not statutory all schools should have a policy on attendance. This policy should outline the key roles which staff, governors, the LA, parents/carers and pupils themselves have in promoting and maintaining regular and punctual school attendance.

The wording in an attendance policy should be clear and the policy itself well publicised. It should include details of procedures for registration, for following up absence and for preventing truancy after registration. The policy should be reviewed regularly. Refer to Section 12 on how to produce an attendance policy. For further advice, guidance and a Hampshire County Council model template for a school attendance policy, please visit the Learning, Behaviour and Attendance Team website: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-team.

Incentives for good attendance

Most schools have schemes for rewarding good attendance. The most successful schemes include:

- fair and consistent procedures which are adhered to by all staff
- consultation with pupils about the form of rewards
- short-term targets that are easily achievable
- a method for pupils to monitor their own attendance and punctuality
- a clear understanding amongst pupils and parents/carers of the attendance and punctuality levels needed to achieve a reward
- a clear timetable for presenting rewards, for example each week, half term or full term
- the appointment of a member of staff with responsibility for ensuring that awards and certificates are available.

Rewards can motivate all pupils and it is therefore advisable to reward not just 100% attendance, but also pupils with high levels of attendance, no unauthorised absence, or those who have made significant improvements in attendance and/or punctuality. For ideas on incentives and rewards' schemes please contact your learning, behaviour and attendance adviser.

Section 3: supporting pupils when they return from absence

Supporting a pupil after a period of absence requires careful planning. Schools should have agreed procedures which help pupils return to school and all staff should be familiar with them. Sensitivity is vital and all staff should subtly welcome the pupil back. Procedures for dealing with pupils who return after an absence not only help the pupil involved, but also reduce disruption to other pupils.

Prior to the pupil's return it is important that a:

- return date is set in advance and all relevant staff are alerted, particularly the pupil's class teacher/form tutor, subject teachers and, if appropriate, the learning support team
- named person is appointed to co-ordinate support for the pupil upon his/her return
- special timetable or a phased return with learning support is considered.

Upon the pupil's return it is recommended that:

- staff, particularly class/form teachers, discretely welcome the pupil back to school and help him/her to settle back in
- departmental/subject staff have specific procedures in place to enable the pupil to catch up with any work he/she may have missed.

Section 4: electronic registration systems

Electronic registration for recording pupil attendance is now common place. Registration may be recorded directly into the online system in the classroom, or via a paper based system which is subsequently electronically recorded by the school office.

The advantages of electronic registration are that:

- it facilitates staff who produce the termly census data returns required by the Department for Education
- data is always up to date, and can be used to report the attendance and punctuality for whole school, year, class, vulnerable groups and individual pupils
- absence data is always up to date and can be accessed by all staff (depending upon access permissions), supporting schools in their safeguarding duties for all pupils on roll
- it can reduce time spent analysing attendance data through the access to many pre-designed reports
- School Information Management System (SIMS) data views can be customised so that pupil attendance patterns can be seen graphically, instantly identifying pupils where attendance percentages may become a concern or are well below expected levels.

Before introducing electronic registration it is essential to:

- decide who is responsible for the system
- provide training for register users
- provide training for those responsible for analysing the data
- decide what data is required and at what intervals it is to be reported upon – reports may be run weekly, termly, etc
- decide how electronic registration will impact on current fire drill/evacuation procedures
- create a school policy around electronic registration – timescales for registers to be completed (either online directly or returned to the office for data input), recording late marks, recording missing marks, unexplained absences, etc.

In Hampshire, SIMS is currently used in many schools and new users may benefit from training and technical advice, which is available from Hampshire County Council IT (Schools). For advice and courses, see:

www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.

Appendices: support services

Below is an outline of services in addition to schools which work with children and their families to maintain good pupil attendance and punctuality.

Family support workers accessed through your district Local Attendance Panel, co-ordinated through your district locality team

Locality teams and school clusters work together to identify multiple issue cases at tier 3. This is just under the statutory social care threshold. Attendance may be one of the issues identified, but if it is the single issue then this will not meet the threshold for family support worker involvement. The main focus of family support workers is to deliver input on parenting. Schools can request the involvement of a family support worker by using the locally agreed individual cluster arrangements.

The Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) in each district meets monthly (or as often as required), to discuss whether cases of poor attendance at school reach the threshold for legal action. There must be at least 20 unauthorised absences in 100 sessions. Schools are required to demonstrate what measures they have taken to try to improve the attendance, and evidence that would be required for court must be presented at the ALP (copies of letters, chronology, etc – please see specific guidance). It is essential that an up-to-date attendance print-out is brought to the ALP.

Legal Intervention Team

There is a Legal Intervention Service in the east and in the west of the county, and a total of 2.5 legal intervention court officers (LICOs) for the whole of Hampshire. It is their job to carry out the legal process when it has been agreed by ALP, from chairing Education Planning Meetings and preparation of court documents, to appearing in court and subsequently monitoring the recorded attendance. They also implement the process for penalty notices. They do not undertake any family work. They are also available to offer a telephone advice service to schools. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/families/cs-caf/locality-teams.

Learning, behaviour and attendance advisers

A key role of learning, behaviour and attendance (LB&A) advisers is to work with schools and education centres in helping them develop effective policies and practice in relation to behaviour and attendance. They can give general advice, support and guidance to all schools about matters relating to pupil attendance.

The LB&A advisers also work closely with schools and centres to develop the quality of teaching and learning, and raise awareness of meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils in the classroom to narrow gaps. Effective and personalised learning, positive behaviour and good emotional health and wellbeing in schools can impact positively

on pupil attendance. See: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance.

Educational Psychology Service

This service provides assessment, consultation, advice and training in approaches to behaviour management, academic attainment and learning needs, as well as to the behaviour, social and emotional development of pupils, all of which can impact on pupil attendance.

Educational psychologists can also offer therapeutic approaches and specific advice regarding individual plans for pupils where attendance is an identified concern due, for example, to a pupil's emotional vulnerability. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/educational-psychology.

Primary Behaviour Service

The Primary Behaviour Service provides early intervention and preventative work with pupils, families and school staff, to promote positive learning environments both at home and in school. This can assist pupils in overcoming barriers to learning and hence facilitate regular attendance. See: www.hants.gov.uk/education/parents-info/pbs.htm.

Support for children in care, Travellers, young carers and other vulnerable groups

The Children's Services Department provides dedicated additional support to groups of vulnerable pupils. This includes support from:

Specialist education welfare officers for children in care

The Virtual School provides advice and support to carers, social workers, school staff and other professionals for the education of children in care.

In respect of attendance, Hampshire County Council uses a live schools data feed to regularly collect attendance data for all Hampshire looked after children. This data informs the specialist education welfare officers (EWOs) for children in care, who have responsibility for helping to reduce the number of children in care who miss 25 days or more of schooling per annum. The specialist EWOs' target cohorts are those children in care missing between 10 and 25 days of schooling. Actions to reduce the number of days of schooling children in care miss can include short-term direct support to individual pupils.

Action to be taken by schools prior to requesting children in care (CiC) EWO support

Early intervention by a school can often prevent a pupil's non-attendance becoming entrenched. All schools must aim to resolve any concerns regarding attendance and punctuality rates as soon as a problem arises. Schools should seek the co-operation

of the pupil's parents/carers, children's home, key worker/social worker, residential unit, etc, in resolving the pupil's attendance problems before involving a CiC EWO.

Requesting support from specialist EWOs for children in care in cases of non-attendance

Good practice would be for schools to notify the social worker and specialist CiC EWO if a looked after child has reached 10 consecutive sessions' absence. All requests by a school for support from the CiC EWO must have completed the *CiC 1 form*, sending this to your district CiC EWO.

CiC EWO intervention

On receipt of the CiC 1 form, the EWO will initially try to contact the pupil's parents/carers, either by telephone or letter, to arrange a home visit. The CiC EWO will normally visit the child's home/place of residence to assess the situation and the visit will usually take place within five working days of the initial contact.

On most occasions, the home visit will result in an action plan being prepared by the CiC EWO. This plan will include proposed actions, timescales and intended outcomes, and will include details of what is expected from the pupil, the parents/carers, the school and any other agencies involved. It will contain an agreed plan of action and dates by which improvement in attendance is expected. The CiC EWO will try to secure everybody's commitment to adhere to the action plan.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the CiC EWO intervention, the pupil's attendance and levels of authorised and unauthorised absence will be closely monitored by the CiC EWO.

If, after CiC EWO intervention, the pupil's level of unauthorised absence reduces to a satisfactory level compared to the level prior to the intervention, and this level of attendance is maintained, the CiC EWO will liaise with the school and continue to monitor the pupil's attendance for as long as necessary.

If, however, the pupil's level of unauthorised absence does not reduce to a satisfactory level within the agreed timescale, a decision will be made by the Virtual School about what action should then be taken. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/families/caring-for-children/children-looked-after.

Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)

The Hampshire Traveller Achievement Service is located within EMTAS – see: www.hants.gov.uk/education/ema. Part of its core service is to improve access, engagement and participation of Traveller children, young people, parents and carers.

EMTAS provides a range of services to support schools to meet the needs of children from Traveller backgrounds (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage, Showmen, Circus and New Travellers). Services include:

- the support of traveller education officers who assist with admission into school and provide a link with parents, carers and communities – they can also provide

advice and guidance on settling in, induction and transition (time allocation is identified according to need)

- up to 10 hours of support from a traveller teaching assistant (TTA), which can include in-class support, meetings and contact with parents and carers, together with regular advice and guidance for staff working with a child
- individualised transition programme for Traveller pupils from primary to secondary
- the support of a traveller education adviser to help develop inclusive approaches, foster positive relationships and identify opportunities within the curriculum to value and promote Traveller culture. This may include:
 - support with curriculum planning and implementation
 - advice on distance learning materials to support those pupils travelling
 - support for pupils from Showmen backgrounds who are on school roll whilst they are travelling
 - supporting schools to build strong links with parents and carers
 - input and awareness raising of Traveller culture at school assemblies
 - support for individual pupils in class.

Support for young carers

The Children's Services Department provides funding for development work in respect of young carers. This development work aims to help raise awareness of the existence and needs of young carers and to help establish support for them. A number of young carer *projects* exist throughout the county. Although each project is unique in the level and type of direct support and advice it can provide to young carers, all projects share the same principle in respect of a commitment to helping ensure that young carers are not disadvantaged as a result of their caring responsibilities. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/youngcarers.

Family Group Conference Service

Family group conferences (FGCs) are a key component of the Children's Services Department's strategy to support families and are co-ordinated through the Locality Team.

FGCs provide children and their families with an opportunity to participate in key decisions which affect a child's future, by acknowledging that families themselves know more about their circumstances and needs than professionals.

An FGC can be requested if a pupil's education is considered to be *at risk*. This may be because of poor attendance and/or because the pupil is at risk of exclusion.

Parents/carers facing prosecution by the local authority for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school will be offered an FGC in the hope that this may help improve the child's attendance and therefore prevent prosecution taking place.

An FGC will only be held with the consent of the child's parent/carer and can be requested by the completion of an FGC referral form. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/families/parent-support/fgc.

School Health Service

The School Health Service can provide advice and support when a pupil is regularly absent from school because of genuine or alleged medical reasons.

Colleagues in the School Health Service are also able to liaise directly with general practitioners about the long-term health care and required educational provision for pupils with long-term medical conditions. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/families/healthyweights/weight-parentscarers.

District managers (Education and Inclusion) and Lead Learning Partners

District managers (DMs) (Education and Inclusion) regularly receive attendance and absence data at both district and individual school levels. DMs are therefore able to brief Lead Learning Partners (LLPs) about potential issues for their schools, enabling them to provide challenge and support to schools through the *single* conversation.

Education Inclusion Service

This service works with schools to secure appropriate curriculum and support for pupils who may miss education because they are at risk of exclusion. The service can also provide temporary alternative education provision for pupils who, due to illness or emotional vulnerability, are unable to attend school regularly. See: www.hants.gov.uk/education/parents-info/inclusion-service.

Supporting Troubled Families Programme

This is a targeted programme to support 1,600 Hampshire families with multiple, complex issues, delivering new solutions to persistent problems and leading to lasting, positive change for families and communities. Central government defines *troubled families* as those who are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, have children who are not in school and/or have an adult on out-of-work benefits.

The programme is delivered through 10 Local Co-ordination Groups (LGCs) based on district council boundaries, headed by a senior responsible officer (SRO). The SRO co-ordinates the local teams and agencies to work with the families involved in the programme.

The focus is on providing early help when a child or family needs support, enabling them to access services that will have the maximum impact. Each family's issues will be targeted as a whole, rather than individually.

Providing intensive and dedicated support in this way will help to:

- lower crime and anti-social behaviour
- improve employability
- build self-esteem and aspiration
- increase family wellbeing
- increase local prosperity
- build safer and stronger communities

- lower future public service costs.

For more information and contact details, please go to www.hants.gov.uk/supporting-troubled-families.

Youth Offending Team and Youth Inclusion Support Panels

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) provides support and advice to children and young people aged from 10 to 17 years, who have been convicted in a youth justice court or have come to the notice of the police for anti-social behaviour. The support offered to a young person by the YOT may be on a voluntary basis or following a *final warning*, although engagement with the YOT may be via a court order, as part of a sentence, in which case engagement is compulsory.

The Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP) aims to prevent children and young people aged from eight to 13 years, who are exhibiting anti-social behaviour, becoming involved with the juvenile justice system by offering them support and advice. Each young person will undergo a full assessment and will have an individual action plan drawn up. Support will be offered to parents/carers as well. All engagement with the YISP is on a voluntary basis and consent must therefore be obtained from both the child/young person, as well as the parent/carer.

Pupils who do not attend school regularly or who are out of school may be at risk either of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or of becoming the victims of crime. The YOT and YISP therefore have significant roles to play in helping to promote regular school attendance. See: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/hampshire-yot.