
ATTENDANCE DEFAULT POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Review: January 2022



ATTENDANCE DEFAULT POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

1. Aim

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure consistency in dealing with all issues of attendance and absence;
- ensure the accurate recording of pupils' attendance and absence in accordance with Scottish Government guidance;
- improve overall attendance and punctuality of all pupils at school;
- ensure that attendance and engagement are priorities for pupils, parents/carers, staff and partner agencies to enable all pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Sections 1 and 2 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 make provision in relation to the right to an education providing:

Section 1

It shall be the right of every child of school age to be provided with school education by, or by virtue of arrangements made or entered into, by an education authority.

Section 2

(1) Where the school education is provided to a child or young person by, or by virtue of arrangements made or entered into by an education authority, it shall be the duty of the authority to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential.

(2) In carrying out their duty under this section, an education authority shall have due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the views (if there is a wish to express them) of the child and young person, taking into account the child or young person's age and maturity.

- 2.2 Under Section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 parents have an unqualified legal duty to provide efficient education for every child of school age by causing them to attend a public school regularly or by other means. Most parents seek to do this by enrolling the child in a Local Authority managed school.
- 2.3 It is the Education authority's legal duty to serve a notice on the parent requiring them to explain the reason for their child's absence from school if they consider that a parent has committed an offence under section 35 of the same Act in relation to a child resident in their area. (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 36)
- 2.4 Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that where a child of school age who has attended a public school on one or more occasion fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly at said school, then unless the education authority have consented to the withdrawal of the child from the school (which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld) a parent will be guilty of an offence.
- 2.5 In terms of s.135 (1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 the definition of a parent "includes guardian and any person who is liable to maintain or has parental responsibilities (within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995), in relation to, or has care of a child or young person.
- 2.6 Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, amended section 14 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 defines that Education Authorities are under a duty to make special arrangements to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment in relation to pupils unable to attend a suitable educational establishment as a result of their prolonged ill-health.
- 2.7 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009) places duties on education authorities, to make adequate and efficient provision for such additional support as is required by each child or young person having additional support needs for whom the authority is responsible, unless the authority does not otherwise have power to do so, or it would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred. The legislation also makes provision for the education authority to request other agencies help and for

other agencies to comply with such requests subject to certain statutory exceptions. A very wide range of factors may lead to children and young people having a need for additional support. Additional support may be required for a child or young person who is not a regular attendee and therefore poor attendance must be seen as an additional support need.

- 2.8 The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 seeks to improve the way services work together to support children, young people and their families.
- 2.9 In order to decide whether a child is failing to attend school regularly, the education authority requires to distinguish between attendance and absence, and between authorised absence and unauthorised absence. These are practical decisions, rather than distinctions based on statutory provision. Education Authorities operate in terms of guidance, currently contained in the document Included, Engaged and Involved, Part1: Attendance in Scottish Schools (Scottish Government 2007)

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Angus Council is committed to working with all parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people receive an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve.
- 3.2 Non-attendance may be an indicator of issues or difficulties a child or young person is experiencing. The impact of non-attendance and non-engagement with learning significantly increases gaps in knowledge and understanding and the likelihood of young people leaving school without securing a positive destination. For some, life presents particular challenges which may impact negatively on attendance and engagement. Attendance at school therefore requires to be approached within the wider framework of inclusion and wellbeing, taking into account the holistic needs of the child/young person.
- 3.3 Attendance at school should also be considered in the wider aspect of educational provision in conjunction with policy and procedure in relation to Corporate Parenting responsibilities,

[Children Missing from Education](#), the development of [Positive Relationships](#), Transition Planning; [Young Carers](#) and [rights of families to Home Educate children and young people](#).

- 3.4 Child Protection is of paramount importance and non-attendance at school may indicate a child is at risk. In this situation [Child Protection](#) takes precedence over the Attendance Policy.
- 3.5 Education Authorities are under a duty in relation to pupils unable to attend a suitable educational establishment as a result of their prolonged ill-health. In such circumstances schools must make special arrangements for the pupil to receive appropriate education.
- 3.6 It is expected that all schools will promote a culture which encourages pupils to attend school. Central to that aim is the development of an ethos which consolidates early and effective partnerships with parents to address jointly any emerging attendance problems.
- 3.7 The attendance policy and operational procedures provide a framework to assist Head Teachers in managing non-attendance issues within the context of a legal framework.

4 DEFINITION OF ATTENDANCE

- 4.1 In terms of Scottish Government guidance, attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school which includes:
 - attendance at school;
 - learning out with the school provided by a college, Extended Support or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school;
 - educational visits, day and residential visits to outdoor centres;
 - interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events;

- debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school;
- activities in connection with psychological services, learning or behaviour support ;
- receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services;
- work experience

5 Promoting Attendance

5.1 Our vision is that all schools in Angus will promote attendance, manage absence and support every pupil to achieve. All schools should:

- Have an attendance policy;
- Have rigorous and reliable attendance monitoring and recording processes;
- Have an early and staged response /intervention to school absence;
- Promote, celebrate and reward positive attendance patterns;
- Promote an ethos of safety, support and care for all pupils and families;
- Engage in partnership working with pupils and parent to raise awareness of responsibilities and expectations regarding school attendance;
- Engage in partnership working with community services, and voluntary agencies to provide alternative learning experiences and further education.

6 RECORDING AND CODING INFORMATION

6.1 **An Education authority shall require all schools within its area to keep an attendance register of every pupil** (The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975). This information constitutes the certificate of

attendance presented to the Authority Attendance Sub-Committee and subsequent court proceedings or the Reporter to the Children's Panel where it may be considered as evidence for compulsory measures of supervision or other action.

- 6.2 A pupil should normally be regarded as absent from school when he or she is not in attendance for a period greater than half of the morning or afternoon session.
- 6.3 Recording of absence should take place at least twice each day in primary school and period by period in secondary school to enable an accurate record of attendance to be kept. Codes for use when recording attendance/absence and lateness can be accessed directly from SEEMiS. (Appendix I)
- 6.4 In line with Scottish Government guidance, for the purposes of national reporting, every absence is categorised as either authorised or unauthorised. Two additional categories have been established that fall out with the normal categories of attendance and absence, these are:
- exclusion and
 - extended leave with parental consent (see also 6.9).
- 6.5 Schools should be able to evidence all meetings and interventions relating to attendance and late coming. Copies of all relevant notes, minutes, correspondence and referrals relating to time-keeping, truancies and non-attendance should be retained. High standards of pastoral care will enable staff to respond quickly to and follow up on absence, ensure children are safe and well, develop positive relationships and be aware of Children Missing within Child Protection procedures.
- 6.6 **Lateness** - Persistent lateness may be a sign of difficulty that the school can then try to support.
- 6.7 **Authorised Absences** - Schools may authorise absence when they are satisfied by a legitimate reason, provided usually by the parent or self-certified (via a note, email or phone call) or may be provided by another service provider (via a note, appointment card or phone call), such as:
- Illness where no learning provision is made;

- Medical and dental appointments to be recorded in separate category;
- Meetings prior to, and in, court;
- Attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Care Review, or appointment with another service provider, e.g. social worker;
- Religious observance;
- Bereavement;
- Weddings or funerals of those close to the family;
- Arranged absence in relation to children in Gypsy/Traveller families;
- Participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school;
- Lack of transport – including due to bad weather;
- Exceptional domestic circumstances;
- Only those family holidays agreed by the school to be taken in exceptional circumstance;
- Period of exclusion to be recorded in a separate category;

6.8 III Health - Where children are too ill to attend school, alternative arrangements must be in place, through outreach teaching or other provision.

6.9 Gypsies and Travellers - Children who are part of a gypsy or travelling family may travel as part of their tradition, their absence should be authorised at their "base school".

6.10 Religious Observance - Children of all faiths may take authorised absence to enable them to participate in religious observance.

6.11 Holiday during term time - Schools will not normally give a family permission to take pupils out of school for holidays unless under exceptional circumstances. E.g. parents are members of uniformed services such as Police, Fire Service, Armed Services etc.

6.12 Unauthorised absences - Schools must record absence as unauthorised when this falls out with any of the categories specified above.

6.13 Looked After at home[LAC] / Looked After away from home[LAAC] - The designated senior manager within the school should be aware of any particular issue which may impact on attendance and should look to find ways of supporting the child or young person through these.

6.14 Family returning to country of origin - If this lasts for more than four weeks, the school would normally have the right to remove the pupil from the roll in order not to be penalised in terms of its attendance record. However in these circumstances, pupils should be considered as "Extended leave with parental consent". This allows them to remain on the school register without the school being penalised.

6.15 Children Missing from Education - Where a family's whereabouts are not known and extensive local authority searches and risk assessments have been carried out, schools should follow the Pupils Missing from Education Procedures.

6.16 Taking a child out of school during the normal school day/early departures - Parents/carers will be encouraged to make non-school appointments, where possible, out with the normal school day.

Parents/carers, who have to take a child out of school for an appointment should, where possible, notify the school in advance. If a parent/carer wishes the child to be released into the care of another adult then the parent must notify the school that this is the case. The school must appropriately log all such notifications.

Where the child is being collected, the parent / authorised adult will be required to sign the child out, indicating when the child will return.

The same basic process applies to children who have to be taken out of school during the school day because they are unwell.

7 OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

7.1 On first day of absence

Schools are required to inform parents/carers of the need to contact the school as early as possible, and before 9.00 am on the first day of absence, if their child is going to be absent from school.

When a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parent/carer, the school shall attempt to contact the parent/carer, using the Group Call system, by 10 am on the first day of absence.

Parents/carers will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers for use by the Group Call system. Parents/carers will be responsible for responding promptly to contact from the school.

Where a parent/carer/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school and acknowledges the notification from the school, the parent/carer/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the school; and

Where it is not possible to reach the parent/carer or emergency contact – and the Head Teacher **has concerns** about the situation – the Head Teacher or senior colleague should liaise with **Social Work Children's Services** **03452 777 778** as soon as possible to jointly consider and agree the appropriate response e.g. to take no immediate action but keep the position under review, send a letter to the parents, carry out a home visit or, in exceptional cases, make a referral to the Police.

If the pupil is a looked after child, contact should be made with the child's Social Worker without delay. If the child's Social Worker is not available, contact must be made with the duty worker from that team. If the duty worker is not available then the Team Manager or Senior Practitioner. If a parent advises you that his/her child will be absent from school for a fixed period of time, the information should be noted and, if the child does not reappear on the day indicated by the parent, the school should take the initiative by contacting the home and enquiring about the child's health and his/her likely date of return.

If the parent is unable to give an indication as to the likely duration of the period of absence during the initial contact, the school should

telephone the parent on the child's third day of absence to enquire as to his/her health and likely return date.

Where children return to school following a period of absence and no information is received from the parent/carer then letter / email **A1** should be issued. If no reply is received to that letter then letter / email **A2** should be issued as a follow-up.

Where email is used you must establish that parents have been notified (for example by securing a read receipt for the email), otherwise it would have to be a hard copy letter.

7.2 Ongoing Absence

Key staff in school should monitor attendance regularly and identify periods of recurring absence including those which are self-certified by parents.

Where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 85%, is frequent and/or unreasonable, a letter should be sent to raise the awareness of the parent/carer to the level of absence and the impact it is having on the pupil's progress at school/early learning and childcare setting. (Template letter /email **A2**).

Exceptions to this would be where attendance has dropped below 85% only:

- as a result of the exceptional circumstances of an authorised parental holiday; or
- as a result of an exclusion; or
- where it is likely that a medical condition or domestic circumstance, known to the school, will regularly and repeatedly impact on a pupil's attendance or is sufficiently complex and significant to warrant discretion.

Schools should note that the principal purpose of this letter/email is to ensure that parents are aware of their child's absence(s). Should these methods of communication fail to elicit an appropriate response (after three calendar days), then move on to send Letter / email **A1**.

This is a formal process which must be followed if major difficulties with non-attendance are to be addressed.

If in the next four week period, the pupil's attendance is still below 85% and there remains a concern about the level of attendance and/or the reason

provided for the absence, a letter/email should be sent to parents/carers inviting them to attend a **Staged intervention meeting** with the school (Template letter / email **A3**).

This meeting should be supportive and should try to discover the reasons behind non-attendance. A plan should be agreed to improve attendance. If the Head Teacher / Depute Head Teacher/Pupil Care and Support Teacher considers that circumstances warrant attendance from the **Children and Families Locality Team** at this meeting for advice/consultation, this should be discussed prior to a meeting being organised. Parents/carers should be notified if the Family Support Team is to be represented at this meeting.

If the parents/carers fail to attend the staged intervention meeting or they do attend the meeting but this has no positive impact on the level of attendance then, following an Assessment of Wellbeing, the school may deem it necessary to progress to **Child's Planning Meeting**

In the event of the problem being resolved for a short period only, it is not necessary to return to the beginning of the procedure. A child's planning meeting should be convened to review the circumstances. Similarly if, at any stage parents indicate a wish to educate their child at home, there is no need to abandon this procedure; in such circumstances schools should follow existing guidance on Education at Home.

7.3 Referral to the Authority Reporter

If it is decided that the lack of attendance would best be addressed by referring the matter to the Authority Reporter, then this should be a joint decision made in collaboration with Children and Families and should be decided following consultation with Legal Services.

7.4 Referral to the School Attendance Sub-Committee

Should the decision be reached that the attendance issue would be best served by a referral to the School Attendance Sub-Committee, then the school should:

- Consult with a Service Leader;
- Send letter / email **A4** to parents;
- Send letter / email **A5** with, Integrated Assessment and Child's Plan;

- relevant correspondence between the parents and the school; letters covering absence and notes of telephone calls;
- A Certificate of Attendance (**A6**) signed and dated by the Head Teacher - SEEMIS print-out;
- It is essential that the attendance data corresponds across all documents. When a date has been set for the School Attendance Sub-Committee, the school must send an appropriate member of staff to present the school's position at that meeting. An updated SEEMIS print-out of the pupil's attendance report must be submitted at the meeting.

A case will be recalled where there has been a continuance for six weeks following the Attendance Sub-Committee meeting. In these circumstances the school should:

- Update the Integrated Assessment;
- include relevant correspondence between the parents and the school, an updated Certificate of attendance (**A6**) – signed and dated by the Head teacher and SEEMIS printouts.

Appendix I

SEEMIS CLICK&GO ATTENDANCE MARKS

Attendance Summary Mark	DESCRIPTION	REGISTER MARK	ScotXed Mapping		Absence Status		EXAMPLES
			Attendance OR No loss of opening	Absence OR loss of opening	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	
I[Bus Late	LTB	✓		✓		If children arrive late because of school transport being held up.
\	School Closure for Bad Weather	CLW	✓		✓		Self Explanatory
]	Transport Failure	TRF	✓		✓		If children cannot go to school because school transport breaks down or school transport fails at the pick up point or school transport cannot get to school because of bad weather but the school is open.
~	In school but not in class	SCH	✓		✓		In the medical room; school library; detention room, etc.
A	Other Authorised Absence	ABS		✓	✓		Religious observance;
		ABS		✓	✓		Bereavement;
		ABS		✓	✓		Debates; sports NOT arranged by or in conjunction with the school;
		ABS		✓	✓		Extended absences of travelling families. Recommend after three weeks Mark Leaver. Schools can use Request Provisional Transfer for P1-P7 when the pupil/s returns to school.
		ABS		✓	✓		Wedding of IMMEDIATE family member;
		ABS		✓	✓		Children's Hearing or court interview.
B	Sickness with educational provision	SEP	✓		✓		Pupil educated while in hospital.

C	Closed	CLO	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		Election or bad weather for whole school.
D	Self Certified	SEL		✓	✓		Parent information regarding reason for absence.
D	Notifiable Illness (Self Certified)	NIS		✓	✓		Parent information regarding Swine Flu absence.
E	Authorised Parental Holiday	PHL		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	This should be used ONLY in exceptional circumstances. A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.
F	Notifiable Illness (Medically Certified)	NIM		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical Certificate, eg. for Swine Flu absence.
F	Medically Certified	MED		✓	✓		Doctor's medical certificate.
=	Part Time Timetable (Health Related)	PTH		✓	✓		Mark is currently not in use. PLEASE DO NOT USE until notified to do otherwise.
G	Parental Holiday (Unauthorised)	UPH		✓		✓	Holidays within term time.
H	Holiday	HOL	✓		<input type="checkbox"/>		Refers to weekends and school holidays (automatically input by the system).
H	Should not attend	SNA	✓		✓		Legitimate reason for SNA;
		SNA	<input type="checkbox"/>		✓		Staggered P1 and N4 and N5 AM/PM.
H	Should not attend (Notifiable Illness)	NIX	✓		✓		Pupil kept off school due to other family member with, eg. Swine Flu. School closure due to, eg. Swine Flu.
I	In-Service	INS	✓		✓		In-Service mark input in Management/Calendar. Pupils do not lose openings.
J	Late (arrives before mid-opening)	LAT	✓		✓		Late before mid-opening am or pm.

K	Late (arrives after mid-opening)	LT2		✓	✓		Late after mid-opening am or pm.
M	Missing	MIS	✓		✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Used when not in follow-on class in school using period-by-period registration.
N	Other Unauthorised / Unexplained Absence	OUA		✓		✓	Other unknown absence (not including Truancy); School refuser etc.
O	Other Attendance out of School	OAT	✓		✓		College or Sports arranged by school.
P	Medical/Dental	PER	✓		✓		Dental and medical appointments.
Q	Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (Authorised)	DCA		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	The period immediately after an accident or illness;
		DCA		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	A period of serious or critical illness of a close relative;
		DCA		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	A domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation;
		DCA		✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pupils with care responsibilities who are unable to attend school due to such responsibilities, there is an expectation that additional support services will be accessed to support the pupil, and their absence from education will not be long-term and therefore categorised as authorised absence.
R	Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (Unauthorised)	DCU		✓		✓	Pupils with care responsibilities who are unable to attend school due to such responsibilities where additional services have not been accessed and care responsibilities become long-term, the absence should be categorised as unauthorised absence.
S	Study Leave	STY	✓		✓		During national exam timetable only.

T	To be Confirmed	TBC		✓		✓	Used when absence is unknown and MUST be changed when reason for absence is known. Recommend no pupil should have TBC against their name for longer than ONE day. This procedure is in use in primary schools but not in secondary schools. (Secondary schools currently use the TBC mark first, then the ABS mark and finally the correct mark when known.)
U	Truancy	UNA		✓		✓	Truancy (unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of pupil, parent or both);
		UNA		✓		✓	Unexplained absence;
V	School Visit	VIS	✓		✓		Educational visit, eg. theatre, museum.
V	Field Trip	FLD	✓		✓		Day and residential visits to outdoor centres.
W	Work Experience	WRK	✓		✓		Work experience secondary school only.
X	Exclusion	EXC		✓	✓		Exclusion mark can ONLY be entered through the system Exclusions form.
		EXC		✓	✓		Where a pupil is undertaking off-site education as a part measure to address indiscipline, this should be categorised as authorised absence.
Z	Extended leave with parental consent	EXL		✓	✓		Extended overseas education trips not organised by the school;
		EXL		✓	✓		Family returning to its country of origin (to care for a relative, or for cultural reasons).
		EXL		✓	✓		Short-term parental placement abroad. Recommend after three weeks mark as leaver. Schools can use Request Provisional Transfer for P1-P7 when the pupil/s returns to school.

		EXL		✓	✓		Leave in relation to the children of travelling families. Recommend after three weeks Mark Leaver. Schools can use Request Provisional Transfer for P1-P7 when the pupil/s returns to school.
Y	Part Time Timetable (Exclusion related)	PTX		✓	✓		Mark is currently not in use. PLEASE DO NOT USE until notified to do otherwise.