



Attendance Policy

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Success Starts by Being at Provision

1.0. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to set out clearly the Local Authority (LA) Policy in relation to provision attendance by working in partnership with provisions, and on ensuring a whole-child approach to both promoting regular attendance and reducing persistent absence.

Throughout this document ‘provisions’ refers to the responsibilities of the provision and in particular to an identified person in the provision who has delegated responsibility for managing provision attendance and exploring all strategies for improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. This person could be the Senior Attendance Lead, or other designated member of staff.

Attendance at provision is underpinned by a range of statutory requirements. Parents/Carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring those children of compulsory provision age receive a suitable education, either by compulsory attendance at provision or otherwise. (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996)

1.1 The Importance of Regular Provision Attendance

The importance of regular provision attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a pre-requisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for provisions, governors, LAs, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend provision regularly pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them; they may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil group may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Attendance is increasingly regarded as a measure of the quality of the education offered by a provision and the government has indicated that all provisions should be aiming for a minimum target of 95%. The Government threshold for Persistent Absence is set at an attendance rate of 90% (and below).

Provisions should endeavour to encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many pupils as possible, but they will need to balance this with measures to address the needs of those children who do, for whatever reason, find it difficult to attend. A whole-provision approach to attendance will focus primarily on promoting attendance but should also address the issue of truancy and condoned absence where it occurs. In addition provisions should ensure that pupils who fall into the ‘persistent absentee’ category should be closely monitored and appropriate support offered.

The whole-provision approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other provision issues including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-provision links, etc.

Provision Policies should include contingency plans for supporting pupils in unprecedented situations, e.g. the coronavirus pandemic and associated closure of provisions. In circumstances such as those experienced during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the LA will work in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England regarding any decisions at a local (and national) level affecting a geographical area, and will support provisions and individual settings following the appropriate advice and guidance.

1.2 Legal Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:-

The parent of every child of compulsory provision age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at provision or otherwise.

Section 444 further states that: - “The parent of a child of compulsory provision age registered at provision and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law. An offence is **NOT committed if it can be demonstrated that:-**

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence),
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause,
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong,

The Act also places a legal obligation on:-

- Provisions to register attendance and notify the Nominated Attendance Person within provision of a child who is absent from provision without authorisation for 10 or more days. The LA must be notified of any episodes of absence of 10 days or more under the ‘Child Missing Education/Children Not Receiving Education (CME/ CNRE)’ protocol.
- The Director is to ensure that two provision registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions (under the Pupil Regulations Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006)

A Framework for a Whole-Provision Attendance Policy

The framework for a whole-provision attendance policy is based on the 5 ‘Ps’ - namely, Philosophy, Principles, Procedures, Performance and Practice.

2.1 Philosophy

Access Educational Provision is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that, if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a provision, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our provision to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful provision career. Our provision will actively promote and encourage the goal of 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils.

Our provision will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-provision links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and work in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at the pupil resuming full attendance and consistent punctuality.

2.2 Principles

The provision will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and associated education law,
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session,
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence,
- promote positive staff attitudes and support to pupils returning after absence,
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by the provision Director
- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed,
- have in place procedures which allow absentees to catch up on missed work without disrupting the learning of other class members, consider remote learning opportunities where necessary,
- take responsibility for Children not Receiving Education (CNRE), so that provision are in regular contact with the pupil and parent, ensuring the pupils safety, working together so that the pupil can resume full time education,
- monitor and regularly review those pupils subject to a modified timetable, ensuring it is a short term intervention and have a clear plan for reintegration back into full time attendance at provision.

2.3 Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- follow 'first day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone/text message, or if the parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information,
- following 3 days of consecutive absence an unannounced home visit will take place to ensure the welfare and safety of the child.
- where there are safeguarding or similar concerns regarding the pupil/family additional services should be contacted immediately if the provision is unable to make contact with the family. (e.g social care, strengthening families)
- invite the parents into provision for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting should include the Provision Director, parent, pupil. The aim of this meeting will be to

identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending provision. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding provision attendance,

- support the pupil's re-integration where a pupil is returning to provision after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence then a 'Reintegration Plan' can be implemented. The plan should include all members of the provision staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupils needs as possible
- provide Early Help advice and support to the family, undertaking an Early Help Assessment if appropriate and make a referral to Strengthening Families if it is felt the family would benefit from additional support.

In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the provision staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education.

2.4 Performance

It is important to set realistic targets for both attendance and persistent absence; these targets will be set during the autumn term of each academic year, in consultation with the Governing Body. The Governing Body must approve the provision target for attendance to be set for the following academic year and will be recorded in the governing body minutes. Ideally, the target should be sent to the Attendance Support Team by the end of the autumn term at the latest. In compiling an 'Action Plan' the provision will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the provision will consider the impact of the work on provision attendance by whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Persistent absence has reduced
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- Re-integration plans, where implemented, have been successful
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within provision
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in provision assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PHSE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons

2.5 Practice

The provision will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data & comparing it against both the local and national average, and considering the performance of key groups in comparison to the national data for that particular group.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-provision attendance
- Recording (and retaining) carefully, all telephone messages/email or contact from parents
- A signed copy of any correspondence to parents is retained by the provision

3.1 Keeping the Registers

The status of the register

The register is a legal document which can be maintained in paper or electronic format. Registers, attendance & absence codes must be recorded accurately and any paper copies must be marked in ink. The register, or content recorded within it, may be requested in a Court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end-of-term reports, to records of achievement, and to leavers' references.

An accurate, timely and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a provision are to be addressed. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the provision day.

Registration **may** be perceived as a task to be completed as quickly as possible. All staff involved with the registration process should be aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance. The Director should not relegate it to the bottom of the list of priorities.

Every entry on the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date in which the entry was made, N.B every amendment to the admissions register and attendance register must include: the original entry; the reason for the amendment; the date on which the amendment was made; and the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

3.2 Marking the Register

(See also DfE guidance 'Provision Attendance - Guidance for maintained provisions, academies, independent provisions and local authorities – August 2020 (plus the addendum to this guidance)' and DfE guidance 'Provision attendance parental responsibility measures')

- a) **No pupil should be marked present unless actually present in the room when the register is taken** or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.
- b) Spaces must not be left in the register.
- c) Registers should be closed at an agreed time each day. AST have circulated LA guidance in line with DfE guidelines. These suggest that registers are closed 30 minutes after the start of the morning session.
- d) Where a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupil should be marked as late 'L' – code, but counted as present for that session.
- e) Where a pupil misses registration (arrives after registration has closed) absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence – 'U' code.
- f) Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, s/he should be recorded as late if arriving before the register closes, but coded as an authorised absence for the session e.g. M for dental or medical appointment if arriving after the register closes.
- g) Pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances.

- h) Attendance data from registers should be monitored appropriately.
 - i) The decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of ten provision days from the date of the absence. If no reason has been provided during this time the absence should be recorded as unauthorised.
- a. The provision should follow up any absences to:
 - b. 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 provision's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the Provision Census.

Appendix 1

Guidance Notes for Parents requesting Leave in Term Time

1. Parents wishing the provision to consider granting leave in term time should read these notes carefully and then complete and send to the Director the request form below. This form should be sent to the provision in time for the request to be considered **before** the desired period of absence. (Parents are strongly advised not to finalise any planned absence before receiving the provision's decision regarding their request). In any event the request form must be received by the provision at least four weeks before the leave in term time requested dates to allow sufficient time for appropriate consideration.
2. The granting of leave of absence in term time is, by law, a matter for consideration and decision by the Director. There is no automatic right to any leave in term time. The Department for Education (DfE) and Local Authority (LA) policy is that leave should not be taken in provision term time. Where such requests are made, for the leave to be granted, the Director should decide if there are **exceptional circumstances**.
3. Each case will be considered individually and on its own merits. Parents need, therefore, to consider very carefully before making any request for leave in term time the demands of the National and wider Provision Curriculum especially at the Key Stage assessment stage. In considering a request, the provision may also take account of: -
 - **the exceptional circumstances stated that have given rise to the request;**
 - **the age of the child;**
 - **the stage of the child's education and progress and the effects of the requested absence on both elements;**
 - **the overall attendance pattern of the child;**
 - **the nature of the visit.**
4. Where parents have children in more than one provision a separate request must be made to each provision. The Director/Headteacher of each provision will make their own decision based on the factors relating to the child at their provision. It is possible that because of these factors different decisions may be made. It is hoped that if this situation arises parents will be persuaded to accept the reasons for refusal given and, thereby, withdraw any other requests.
5. Where requests for a grant of leave in term time are received from only one parent the response letter – agreeing or refusing – will be either addressed to both/all parents where they live at the same address or to each where they do not. This is to ensure, particularly in the case of a refusal, that both

or all parents are fully aware of the consequences of ignoring a refusal as the refusal letter clearly states that each parent may receive a penalty notice.

6. Should the provision decide to grant the leave but, the child **does not return to provision at the time s/he was expected to** (i.e. following the expiry of the granted leave in term time period) and, no information is available to the provision to explain/justify the continuing absence or, make known the whereabouts of the child, **his/her place at the provision could be lost.**
7. Should the Provision decide **not to grant the leave** and parents still take their child out of provision the absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** which may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine of £60 per parent per child. This fine will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the £120 fine within the period 22 to 28 days may lead to Court proceedings, which could ultimately result in a fine of up to £2500 and/or imprisonment of up to three months.

Appendix 2

Request for Leave during Term Time

Date.....

To: The Headteacher of:.....
(Provision)

I request permission for leave in term time from provision for my child:

(full name)

from (date) to (date) for provision days.

My child will be accompanied during the leave by:

(parent/care..... and (parent/carer).....

The **exceptional circumstances** and reason for this request are: -

(If necessary, please continue on a separate sheet and attach it to this form)

I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other provision(s) as follows

Child(ren) (full name(s))

Provision(s)

.....

Name of 1st Parent/Carer(s) Signed

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Name of 2nd Parent/Carer(s) Signed

Current address.....

Mobile No:.....

Please return the completed form to the provision office. The provision will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether your request is authorised or not. Please do not confirm any holiday booking until you have confirmation of permission for the leave in term time from the Director.

For Office Use Only

Date request for leave in term time received by provision

Current Attendance.....% Last Year's Attendance.....%

Number of provision sessions previously taken as leave in term time

Re: **Siblings:** other provisions confirmed?

What action are other provisions taking?

Leave in term time Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is **agreed/is not agreed** for the above pupil to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Signed Job Title.....

Print Name Date

Notification of decision: Date letter sent to parent