



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING  
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE





# CONTENTS

## ATTENDANCE POLICY A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1.1 Aims and Objectives	3
1.2 Policy Focus and Target Audience	4
1.3 Guiding Principles	4
1.4 Legislative and National Policy Context	4
1.5 Other Guidance and Policy Informing the Policy	6
1.6 SBC Supporting Documents	7
1.7 Defining Attendance	7
1.8 The Impact of Low Attendance	8
1.9 Groups Who Are More Vulnerable to Low Attendance	9
<b>2. Promoting Good Attendance</b>	
2.1 Positive Approaches to Promoting School Attendance	11
2.2 Whole School Ethos and Culture	12
2.3 Nurturing Schools	13
2.4 Meeting Learners Needs	14
2.5 Additional Support for Learning	14
2.6 Parental Engagement	15
2.7 Pastoral Care	16
2.8 Curriculum Design	17
2.9 Setting Expectations and Self-Evaluation	18
2.10 Roles and Responsibilities	19
<b>3. School Attendance Procedures</b>	
3.1 Recording Attendance	21
3.2 Early Learning and Childcare Settings	22
3.3 Authorised Absence	23
3.4 Medical and Dental Appointments	23
3.5 Supporting Children and Young People with Prolonged Ill Health	23
3.6 Diverse School Communities	24
3.7 Unauthorised Absence	25
3.8 Compulsory Measures	26
3.9 Children or Young People Missing from Education for Extended Periods	27
3.10 Attendance Beyond Statutory School Leaving Age	28
<b>4. Alternative Attendance Arrangements</b>	
4.1 Home Education	29
4.2 Flexi-Schooling	30
4.3 Flexible Curriculum	30
4.4 Build-Up Timetables	31
4.5 Hosting Arrangements	33
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: Relevant National Legislation, Guidance and Useful Resources	34
Appendix 2: Measures for Compulsory Compliance	35
Appendix 3: Procedure for Calling a Cluster Attendance Panel	38
Appendix 4: Scottish Borders SEEMiS Absence and Attendance Codes	41
Appendix 5: Monitoring and Tracking Procedures for Schools – Flow Chart	45
Appendix 6: Attendance Support Plan (template)	46
Appendix 7: Absence Letters	48
Appendix 8: Consultation with Children, Young People and Parents/Carers	57

## ATTENDANCE POLICY A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Regular attendance is essential for children and young people's academic attainment, achievement, social development, safety, and wellbeing. Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is committed to ensuring that all children and young people attend school regularly.

Scottish Borders Council has statutory duties within the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to ensure that all children and young people within compulsory school age receive regular and appropriate education. For most children and young people engagement will be achieved through attendance at their local school, for some it may be through flexible programmes involving the wider community and organisations.

This policy sets out the positive approaches, partnerships, and expectations to promote engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders. It details the procedures in responding to concerns around attendance and where needed, the flexible attendance arrangements ensuring we are getting it right for every child in Scottish Borders.

## 1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of this attendance policy are to:

- Support schools to build an inclusive and nurturing environment that encourages children and young people to attend school willingly.
- Ensure a commitment to maintaining open communication between schools, parents/carers, and children and young people regarding attendance matters.
- Ensure that all children and young people attend school regularly.
- Provide support to children and young people and their families to improve and maintain good attendance and returning to school after a period of absence.
- Address the potential impact of external factors on attendance, such as transportation issues, health concerns, or socio-economic challenges.
- Ensure clarity and consistency for all stakeholders in matters related to school attendance.
- Identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from school.
- Reduce the number of children and young people who are persistently absent from school.



## 1.2 POLICY FOCUS AND TARGET AUDIENCE

This policy and associated guidelines apply to all learning environments in Scottish Borders and are relevant to all children and young people. Staff, stakeholders, and partner agencies are included within the scope of the guidelines. In addition, staff in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings may find this policy useful as an indicator of good practice in the promotion of attendance and the prevention and reduction of absence.

## 1.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This attendance policy is based on the following principles:

- All children and young people have the right to a quality education that meets their individual needs and the right to attend school regularly. Education authorities have a duty to provide this. These are key components of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and The Promise Scotland.
- Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to provide efficient education to their child until they reach school leaving age.
- All children and young people need to be included, engaged, and involved in their learning. Children and young people should be given opportunities to fully engage and participate in the life of their school to encourage good attendance.
- Attendance is a shared responsibility between children and young people, parents/carers, schools, partners, and the local authority who should all work collaboratively to promote and support good attendance.
- Open and transparent communication between all stakeholders is essential to promote good attendance.
- Schools and settings should actively engage with parents/carers to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are understood and addressed.
- Children and young people who are absent from school should be supported to return to school as soon as possible.
- There should be a clear and consistent approach to attendance management. The foundation for schools, learning establishments and education authorities is a focus on positive relationships and an inclusive ethos and culture that promotes good attendance. Attendance should not be considered in isolation.

## 1.4 LEGISLATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The legislation and policies in Scotland which underpin our approach to promoting engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders include but are not limited to:

### **Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (2008, 2022)**

Our national commitment to provide all children, young people, and their families with the right support at the right time so that they can reach their full potential.

Provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people.



### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992)**

Recognises education as a key social and cultural right and has a crucial part in the alleviation of poverty and inequality:

- Article 28 (Access to Education) states that every child has the right to an education.
- Article 29 (Aims of Education) states that children's education should help them develop their personalities, talents, and abilities.

### **Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (2019)**

Promotes a relational approach to consider what schools and local authorities can do to promote good attendance and manage absence to ensure all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved in their education.

### **Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions (2017)**

Provides guidance on approaches that can be used to prevent the need for exclusion, ensuring all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved in their education and summaries the legislative duties placed on Local Authorities regarding exclusion from school.

### **The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Records) (Scotland) Act 2002**

Schools must make reasonable adjustments for the needs of disabled children and schools must not discriminate against disabled children. The Education Authority must prepare and implement an accessibility strategy to increase access to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, to school buildings and to information.

### **Education Scotland Act (1980)**

States that it is the duty of parents to provide an education for their child. They can provide that education by sending the child to school or by other means (section 30<sup>1</sup>). Local authorities have duties placed on them which say: "pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents." It is incumbent on local authorities to listen to and act upon the decisions that parents make about where they wish their child to be educated.

### **Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000)**

States that it is the "right of every child to be provided with school education by, or by virtue or arrangements made, or entered into, by, an education authority." The act underlines the importance of considering the views of children and young people stating that the local authority shall "have due regard...to the views of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person."

### **Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004, 2009, 2018)**

Outlines the concept of Additional Support Needs and places duties on local authorities to identify, meet and keep under review the needs of pupils for whom they are responsible.

### **The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, 2023)**

This document explains what people need to do to keep children safe in Scotland. It covers the various levels of support that all children should get, from the basic support everyone gets to the extra support needed to protect children from serious harm. The document makes it clear that children's wellbeing and safety are closely linked. It also emphasises how important the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach is for protecting children.

<sup>1</sup> [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)



### **The Promise Scotland (2021)**

Outlines Scotland's promise to care-experienced children and young people – that they will grow up safe, loved, and respected so they can reach their full potential. The guidance is built on the five foundations of family, voice, care, people, and scaffolding.

### **Curriculum for Excellence (2004)**

Aims to provide a coherent, flexible curriculum for all children and young people aged 3-18 years. The curriculum comprises the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people wherever they are being educated. Entitlement includes: a coherent curriculum from 3-18 years; a broad general education until S3; a senior phase after S3 and personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the curriculum and support in moving into a positive and sustained destination beyond school.

### **The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)**

Has wide reaching powers to promote the Scottish Government's aims to encourage effective and targeted services for children and families as well as the promotion of children's rights. Through the GIRFEC National Practice Model, the Act promotes cross-boundary models of service delivery to make best use of expertise and resources in an integrated way with the wellbeing of children and young people being paramount. The wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included) promotes an integrated approach to ensure the wellbeing of all children and young people. Introduced increased provision of early learning and childcare and a range of corporate parenting responsibilities to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in care.

## **1.5 OTHER GUIDANCE AND POLICY INFORMING THE POLICY**

### **The National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (2014)**

Sets out the Scottish Government's vision and priorities for children's progress in learning. The Framework, updated annually, is key in driving work to continually improve Scottish education and address the poverty related attainment gap, delivering both excellence and equity.

### **Equality Act (2010)**

Simplified and strengthened previous protections for children and young people with 'protected characteristics' (e.g. age, race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation) from discrimination. This strengthened inclusion in education for all children and young people regardless of their additional support needs or disability.

### **European Convention on Human Rights (1953)**

Article 2 of Protocol 1 in the convention stresses a child or young person's right to an education: "No person shall be denied the right to an education."

### **Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues (2023)<sup>2</sup>**

This report is the result of 'deep dive' analysis led by Education Scotland. It describes the issues affecting attendance and outlines the support available to local authorities.

<sup>2</sup> [Improving attendance: Understanding the issues \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/publications/2023/01/Improving-Attendance-Understanding-the-Issues/)

## 1.6 SBC SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

This policy is supported by and should be used in conjunction with other relevant policies and frameworks including:

- SBC Child's Planning Manual, including supporting documents and appendices.<sup>3</sup>
- SBC Inclusion Framework and Policy, including supporting document and appendices.
- SBC Partnership with Parents Framework <sup>4</sup>
- SBC Nurturing Approaches Guidelines
- SBC Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy <sup>5</sup>

## 1.7 DEFINING ATTENDANCE

The Scottish Government (2019) defines attendance as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school (or setting), including:

- Attendance at school
- Learning outwith the school provided by a college or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school.
- Educational visits, day, and residential visits to outdoor centres.
- Activities connected to psychological services.
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events.
- Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school.
- Study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable.
- Sickness where special arrangements have been made to receive education elsewhere e.g. receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services.
- Work experience and work-based learning.

Schools should seek to ensure that children and young people attend school or another learning environment for the national recommended **25 hours in primary schools** and **27.5 hours for secondary schools**.

<sup>3</sup> [childs\\_planning\\_manual\\_2021 \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/child-planning-manual-2021)

<sup>4</sup> [Partnership with Parents Framework | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/partnership-with-parents-framework)

<sup>5</sup> [scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/570/respectful-relationships-and-anti-bullying-policy](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/570/respectful-relationships-and-anti-bullying-policy)

## 1.8 THE IMPACT OF LOW ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is crucial for children and young people's education and future life chances. Evidence demonstrates that when attendance falls below 90%, there is a significant impact on a child's learning, achievement, and development. An attendance rate of 90% (missing 19 days of school) is the equivalent of missing one school day every two weeks. When averaging 90% attendance over the course of their school career, by the time a young person has reached S3, they will have missed the equivalent of an entire year of school. Research shows that low attendance can lead to:

- Lower academic attainment and achievement. <sup>6</sup>
- Difficulty maintaining friendships and relationships and becoming socially withdrawn. <sup>7</sup>
- Increased risk of becoming involved in antisocial or offending behaviour. <sup>8</sup>
- Higher likelihood of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness in adulthood. <sup>9</sup>

Even one day of absence can negatively impact a child's learning. The Scottish Government recognises 90% attendance as a minimum standard, but schools should aim for all children to achieve 100% attendance whenever possible.

Impact of Time Lost in School		
Attendance Percentage	Number of days missed	Potential Impact
100%	0	Gives a child/young person the best chance of success.
95%	9	
Under 90%	19	Less chance of success due to low attendance. A young person could drop a whole grade in secondary school. Serious implications on learning and progress.
Under 85%	27	
Under 80%	More than 36	
Under 75%	More than 47	

School staff should closely monitor attendance, be alert to any patterns or changes, and work with children, young people, and their families to address issues early on. Schools should take a proactive, supportive approach to promote good attendance and help children and families overcome barriers.

<sup>6</sup> Klein & Sosu (2023) Determinants and consequences of school absenteeism ([glowscotland.org.uk](http://glowscotland.org.uk))

<sup>7</sup> Gottfried, M. A. (2015). Chronic absenteeism in the classroom context: Effects on achievement. *Urban Education*, 54(1), 3-34.

<sup>8</sup> Dräger, J., Klein, M. and Sosu, E. (2023) 'The long-term consequences of early school absences for educational attainment and labour market outcomes'. Charlottesville, VA, p. 1-44.

<sup>9</sup> John, A. et al. (2021) 'Association of school absence and exclusion with recorded neurodevelopmental disorders, mental disorders, or self-harm: a nationwide, retrospective, electronic cohort study of children and young people in Wales, UK', *Lancet Psychiatry*, 9, pp. 23-34.



## 1.9 GROUPS WHO ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO LOW ATTENDANCE

Groups more vulnerable to low attendance include:

- Children and young people impacted by poverty. <sup>10</sup>
- Secondary-aged young people: an attendance rate of 89.1%, compared with a rate of 92.0% for all pupils in 2020-21. S4 attendance was the lowest at 87.2%.
- Children and young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities: Outcomes for these children and young people are among the worst in Scottish education. Their school attendance rates are the lowest of any ethnic group and exclusion rates are the highest. <sup>11</sup>
- Children and young people who have been excluded: Exclusion is associated with poor mental and physical health, substance use, antisocial behaviour, crime, low academic achievement, unemployment, and homelessness. <sup>12</sup>
- Children and young people with additional support needs: Children and young people with additional support consistently have lower attendance rates than pupils with no additional support needs. <sup>13</sup>
- Certain types of support needs are more likely to have lower rates of attendance. For example:
  - o Children and young people who have experienced care (looked after) have lower attendance rates than all pupils in all school sectors <sup>14</sup>
  - o In secondary schools, the difference in attendance rates between looked after children and all pupils was greater than in primary schools and special schools in 2020-21. Looked after pupils had an attendance rate of 83.4%, compared with a rate of 89.1% for all pupils. <sup>15</sup>
  - o Young Carers: Around 7% of young people in Scotland have caring responsibilities, although it is likely this is an underestimate <sup>16</sup>. Over a quarter of young carers aged 11-15 regularly miss school <sup>17</sup>
  - o Anxious children and young people: Research suggest the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated absence issues particularly for those with pre-existing anxiety. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government (2021) Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government (2017) Included, Engaged, and Involved part 2: Preventing and Managing School Exclusions

<sup>12</sup> Lereya, T. and Deighton, J. (2019) Learning from HeadStart: the relationship between mental health and school attainment, attendance and exclusions in young people aged 11 to 14. London: EBPU

<sup>13</sup> School attendance and absence statistics [Scottish Government]

<sup>14</sup> Children's Social Work Statistics Collection [Scottish Government].

<sup>15</sup> School Attendance - Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21 [Scottish Government]

<sup>16</sup> Executive Summary - Young carers: review of research and data [Scottish Government].

<sup>17</sup> Young carers: who are they and why do they need support? | Action For Children

<sup>18</sup> McDonald, B., Lester, K. J., and Michelson, D. (2023) 'She didn't know how to go back: School attendance problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - A multiple stakeholder qualitative study with parents and professionals'. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 93, pp. 386-401







## ATTENDANCE POLICY A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

# 2. PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE


Children and young people are more likely to be motivated to attend school when they feel fully included and engaged in the wider life of the school. Families are likely to encourage full attendance where they feel part of the school community and where schools work alongside them as equal partners. Promoting good attendance requires schools to ensure positive relationships within an inclusive ethos and culture. Schools should engage positively with parents/carers to ensure good learning, teaching, and assessment with a key focus on supporting additional support needs. They should collaborate with community partners to ensure that children and young people and their families are supported. By promoting good attendance and addressing issues early, we can help give every child the best start in life.

## 2.1 POSITIVE APPROACHES TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The following key principles promote effective whole school approaches to ensuring good attendance:

- Welcoming educational establishments which prioritise positive and nurturing relationships underpinned by high expectations and core values.
- Children and young people are fully included and engaged in the life of the school and understand that school absence affects attainment, achievement, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.
- Schools understand what barriers can be in place for children and young people's attendance, and work to understand and address these.
- Schools have supports and strategies in place for children and young people who have additional support needs.
- Promoting attendance is part of regular conversations with parents/carers and children and young people and there is a mutual understanding that school absence affects attainment, achievement, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.
- Schools work collaboratively with families and partners to understand and address any barriers to attendance for individual children and young people and intervene at the earliest stage to address any emerging patterns of non-attendance.

**"My school makes me feel important and welcome. I want to come to school."  
(Primary School Pupil)**

- 
- Schools have in place clear and consistent procedures for monitoring the attendance of all children and young people (appendix 5)
  - Schools have clear and consistently applied procedures for following up on unexplained absence. Staff understand absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and recognise their role in keeping children and young people safe.

## 2.2 WHOLE SCHOOL ETHOS AND CULTURE

Creating a positive whole school ethos and culture is essential for good attendance <sup>19</sup>. This means ensuring every child feels included, respected, safe, valued and celebrated for their achievements. To create this positive environment, everyone in the school community should understand wellbeing, focus on building good relationships and respect children's rights.

**“The school building is calm and ordered and a good place to be. Nurturing environment and small schools mean young people are known.” (Secondary school parent)**

The overall feel of the school has a significant impact on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health.

When a school uses universal programmes to improve social and emotional skills, it can improve and maintain a positive ethos which can help improve both attainment and attendance (Banerjee et al, 2014 <sup>20</sup>; Freeman et al, 2016 <sup>21</sup>)

Attendance issues are closely linked to relationships, behaviour, and wellbeing in school. To improve attendance, schools should focus on building good relationships, finding solutions together, restorative approaches and teaching about children's rights. When children and young people know their rights and are included in decisions about their learning, they are more likely to want to attend school.

Nurturing approaches and nurture groups can help children and young people feel more connected to their school. Some may have had difficult experiences that affect them at school. By understanding this and providing extra support, schools can help these children and young people feel safer and more included.

Preventing bullying is important for maintaining good attendance, as some children and young people miss school because of bullying. Schools anti-bullying approaches should be based on the national framework for anti-bullying [Respect for All](#) and [SBCs Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy](#).

<sup>19</sup> [Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour - gov.scot](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Working with 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' \(SEAL\): associations with school ethos, pupil social experiences, attendance, and attainment](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Relationship Between School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Academic, Attendance, and Behavior Outcomes in High Schools](#)



## 2.3 NURTURING SCHOOLS

Nurturing approaches are based on attachment theory. This theory says that early experiences with key adults' shape children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. When children feel safe, secure, and comforted by adults, they are more likely to explore and learn.

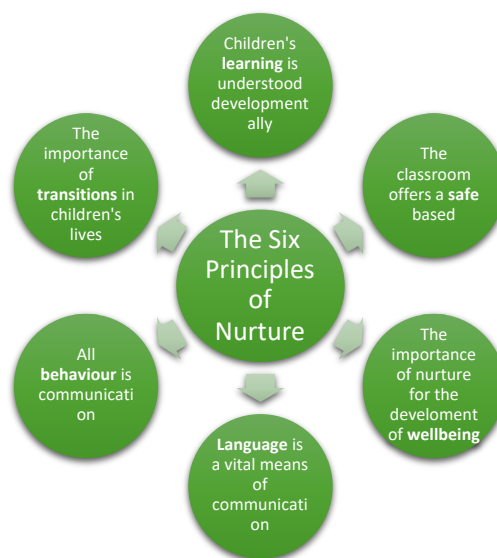
Children develop internal working models based on their earliest attachment experiences. These models guide their behaviour and development in all future relationships. They help children predict and choose behaviours based on their previous expectations. Children may not be aware of these models, but they show their experience through their behaviours.

Whole school nurture is a broad approach that can be used to support any child or young person facing a barrier to learning. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) states that additional support needs may arise from a range of factors and may be short-term or long-lasting. Nurturing schools create positive environments with a focus on warmth, empathy, and attuned interactions between staff and pupils. They provide structure and have high expectations for all learners, recognising that all children and young people can reach their full potential with the right balance of care and challenge.

Research shows that whole school nurture supports:

- Improved skills for learning (Gerrard, 2005)<sup>22</sup>
- Improved language and literacy skills (Hosie, 2013)<sup>23</sup>
- Improved behaviour and social skills (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005<sup>24</sup> ; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007<sup>25</sup> )
- Positive changes in social and emotional functioning at home (Binnie & Allen, 2008<sup>26</sup> )
- Early nurturing intervention leads to significant gains in social functioning and academic performance (Scott & Lee, 2009<sup>27</sup> ), which are maintained over time (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002<sup>28</sup> ).

The approach to [Nurture in Scottish Borders](#) is detailed in the SBC Nurturing Approaches Framework, available on the staff intranet.



<sup>22</sup> [Do nurture groups improve the social, emotional, and behavioural functioning of at-risk children?](#)

<sup>23</sup> [An Evaluation of the Impact of Nurture Provision upon Young Children, Including their Language, and their Literacy Skills: UEL Research Repository](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies](#)

<sup>25</sup> [The effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress: evidence from a national research study](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Whole school support for vulnerable children: the evaluation of a part-time nurture group](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Beyond the 'classic' nurture group model: an evaluation of part-time and cross-age nurture groups in a Scottish local authority](#)

<sup>28</sup> [The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education](#)



## 2.4 MEETING LEARNERS NEEDS

Schools should understand and work to address the specific challenges faced by certain groups of children and young people. These challenges can make it harder for them to attend school regularly.

The Scottish Government report, [Achieving Excellence and Equity 2021 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#) shows the differences in attendance rates for different groups of learners. In 2018/19:

- The overall attendance rate for Scotland was 93%
- Primary schools had a higher attendance rate (94.5%) than secondary schools (90.7%)
- Children living in the 20% most deprived areas had an attendance rate 4.9% lower than those living in the 20% least deprived areas.
- Looked after children had a lower attendance rate (86.8%) compared to all pupils (93%), with the biggest difference in secondary schools.

The Scottish Government report, [Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential 2020](#) highlights the barriers to attendance for children and young people with additional support needs. National attendance for all pupils is 94.1%, while for pupils with additional support needs it is 91.2%.

When looking at barriers to attendance, schools should be aware of the challenges faced by groups of children, young people, and families and those with protected characteristics, including:

- Care experienced children and young people.
- Those with additional support needs.
- Young carers or impacted by the care of a family member.
- Those from Gypsy / Traveller communities.
- Children receiving support from Children's Services, including those on the Child Protection Register.
- Those with health care needs.
- Those experiencing socioeconomic deprivation.
- Children and families from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Those who identify as LGBTQI+

Schools in the Scottish Borders recognise that low attendance can often be related to, or a sign of, an additional support need. They will use the [SBC Child's Planning Manual](#) to identify any barriers to learning and provide appropriate support to agree and maintain a suitable attendance pattern.

## 2.5 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 requires education authorities and other agencies to make provisions for all children and young people who need extra support to overcome barriers to their learning. Additional support may be needed to overcome needs arising from their learning environment, disability or health, family circumstances, or social and emotional factors, including mental health concerns. Under the Act, every looked after child is assumed to have an additional support need, unless an assessment concludes otherwise.

<sup>29</sup> [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Providing additional support can help children and young people engage more fully with school and promote good attendance. Schools should recognise that poor attendance can often be related to, or be a sign of, an additional support need. They should use the SBC Framework for Staged Intervention ([SBC Child's Planning Manual Section 2](#)) to ensure any barriers to learning are identified and appropriate support is provided.

A Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP)<sup>30</sup> may be required when a child or young person needs significant long-term additional support from SBC as well as from another agency, such as health or social work services. The CSP outlines the educational objectives to be achieved and the additional support that needs to be coordinated to help the child or young person achieve these objectives.

Guidance on planning to meet additional support needs is available in the Supporting Children's Learning Statutory Guidance<sup>31</sup>.

## 2.6 PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Parental engagement is particularly important for good attendance. The Scottish Borders approach to school-parent relationships can be found in the [SBC Partnership with Parents Framework](#). Positive relationships in education start in the early years through informal, casual contact when parents drop off and pick up younger children. Making the most of these early opportunities can lead to long-term relationships based on trust and mutual respect. These positive relationships can continue throughout a child/young person's school years. Clear plans for transitions at all stages would support positive relationships. These plans should start as early as possible and include families and all appropriate support.


"Keep open communication with me about my child's attendance and raise any issues early."  
(Primary school parent)

Schools should have regular contact with parents through different ways of communicating. Parents are key partners in their child's education. It is especially important that they know their responsibilities and are encouraged and supported to help their child attend school. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 30, says that parents have a legal responsibility to provide efficient education to their child until they reach school leaving age. They can do this by making sure their child attends school regularly. Collaborating with parents to ensure positive and trusting relationships is vital to promote the benefits of regular attendance and reduce any barriers.

When talking about attendance with parents, it is important to be practical and recognise the challenges that can be part of family life, such as balancing work commitments or dealing with financial challenges. Schools should work with partners to ensure that any barriers for families are supported and addressed as early as possible. Some schools have found that breakfast clubs improved attendance as they helped families with morning routines. Other schools have found that supporting parents with their own literacy or numeracy has helped them feel more confident in engaging with their child's learning, which has then improved the child's attendance.

<sup>30</sup> Chapter 5: Co-ordinated Support Plan - Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017 - gov.scot

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/\\_pages/1/](https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/_pages/1/)



The 'Cost of the School Day' initiative has helped raise awareness of the financial barriers for families that might impact on them coming to school. It should be clear to parents and children/young people that consequences for lateness will be respectful and considerate of any family circumstances. When school staff become aware of any difficulties, they will do what they can to help in partnership with other services. Schools can find more information on local Cost of the School Day approaches in the SBC Inclusion Policy (available on staff intranet).

"As a working mum I have 2 children to drop off for breakfast club, I am able to drop both of them off at the same place. This makes getting to work on time much easier!" (Primary school parent)

When care experienced children and young people are moving placement, they may have to travel longer distances or adjust to new routes. The designated senior leader for care experienced children and young people in the school should ensure that support is in place as early as possible to ensure continuity.

Parents should be given clear information, updated regularly, about their responsibility to inform the school if their child will be absent and to provide current emergency contact information. It is helpful for schools to have an answering machine to receive communications from parents outside school hours.

To promote good attendance, schools should engage with their wider parent body to better understand any potential local barriers. This should include engagement with families from a wide range of backgrounds. The Parent Council can support engagement with the wider parent body around attendance issues and be involved in developing and implementing initiatives to encourage regular school attendance.

Information for parents on school attendance and absence is available on [Parentzone Scotland](#).

## 2.7 PASTORAL CARE

All school staff have a role in promoting good attendance and helping to reduce absence. Staff with pastoral care responsibilities should:

- Be aware of early signs or concerns that may cause absence, so support plans and adaptations can be arranged as needed.
- Make sure absence does not become a pattern or habit after a specific issue.
- Develop positive, trusting relationships with pupils and parents to prevent difficulties and ensure any difficulties are discussed and resolved.
- Respond quickly to absence, to ensure children and young people are safe and well.
- Follow up on absence, so the school and partners can respond effectively.
- Support reintegration into learning when returning from absence.

"If there is something worrying me, my teacher can speak to my parents to help fix the problem." (Primary school pupil)

Pastoral care staff should establish links with partner agencies to strengthen support for children, young people, and parents. Education authorities can support school-based teams by having appropriate structures for centralised support to schools.



Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) for all staff on areas like promoting positive relationships, parental engagement, and learner participation can help schools develop practices that support good attendance. CLPL that explores systems and processes to monitor and improve attendance can also be helpful. There should be a focus on the underlying reasons for absence (which may include mental health), especially for those working more directly in this area, such as home-school link workers or family support workers.

Pastoral care staff have a key role in monitoring, assessing, and supporting absence. Where possible, they should identify patterns and underlying causes of absence so these can be addressed quickly. Other school staff and agencies may also contribute to this assessment.

## 2.8 CURRICULUM DESIGN

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) promotes flexibility, creativity, and innovation in the curriculum, allowing schools to personalise learning journeys to meet the needs of all children and young people and reduce pressure on those in the Senior Phase. Schools must support children and young people's engagement and attendance by offering a coherent curriculum that builds skills in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. This should include a range of work-based learning, wider achievement, and qualifications beyond the SQA menu of choice. Partners from within and SBC should support schools in providing support packages to engage children and young people.

Throughout the Broad General Education (BGE) and when making subject choices in the Senior Phase, children and young people should be encouraged to participate fully in their learning and the wider life of the school. Self-evaluation using 'How Good is Our School? 4'<sup>32</sup> (HGIOS 4) can help schools assess the effectiveness of their school improvement approaches across various quality indicators and develop a strong culture of learner participation and engagement.

Building on the foundations of CfE, Developing the Young Workforce<sup>33</sup>, Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, encourages schools to offer flexible programmes of skills development and vocational experiences to meet individual needs. In partnership with agencies such as Skills Development Scotland, Borders College, DYW Borders and local businesses, schools may develop learning programmes with vocational and work experience elements to ensure young people are fully engaged and develop the skills needed for the world of work, including regular school attendance.

To support children and young people's attendance, schools can offer a range of wider achievement programmes and access to apprenticeships or work-based learning. Based on appropriate assessments, schools may consider using individualised, planned support packages to promote good attendance. Educational provision delivered by partners outside school should be overseen by school staff and included in a learner's attendance records in line with this policy.

"(I would like) a variety of clubs to do and this could be on a Monday because there aren't really any clubs on a Monday."  
(Secondary school pupil)

<sup>32</sup> [How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot)

<sup>33</sup> [DYW - Scotland - Home](https://www.dyw.gov.scot)



## 2.9 SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND SELF-EVALUATION

Scottish Borders schools should have a clear vision and strategic plan to promote and manage attendance. This should include:

- Identified staff to support tracking and monitoring attendance.
- Robust systems for tracking and monitoring attendance.
- Clear procedures for responding to absence.

Schools and settings should use self-evaluation to ensure they meet the needs of all children and young people and promote good attendance for everyone. This is especially important for children and young people who face barriers as outlined in section 2.3.

The [Attendance Self-Evaluation Tool](#) developed by Forth Valley and West Lothian <sup>34</sup> can be used by schools to review and develop their strategic approach to promoting good attendance. Education Scotland has produced [Guidance](#) to support the use of the tool.

The tool uses level five illustrations, features of highly effective practice, and challenge questions from various quality indicators in HGIOS 4 related to promoting and supporting attendance. This allows schools to:

- Reflect on their work.
- Evaluate their work.
- Use evidence from these activities to plan future improvements.

Education Scotland's [Promoting attendance: self-reflection questions for educational settings](#) has been developed for use alongside Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1. They have also produced a series of [Supporting Attendance Workshops](#) to support the ideas discussed in their 'Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues' report <sup>35</sup>.

In addition to co-producing policies and procedures, schools can encourage good attendance by raising the profile of attendance and absence within school communities and in school documents like the School Handbook or using social media.

Many schools link incentive schemes with good attendance. Engaging with children and young people can help determine if such incentive schemes are helpful and what incentives, if any, are appropriate. Schools should be sensitive when using incentive schemes to support attendance and recognise that low attendance is often not under a child or young person's control. Using incentive schemes inappropriately can demotivate and sometimes distress children and young people who have been unable to attend school for complex reasons.

Promoting good school attendance can occur authority wide. Key figures such as elected members, senior managers from the wider local authority, and community groups should be involved in raising the profile of the benefits of good attendance. Promoting good attendance and recognising improvements can help convey positive messages about children and young people to the wider community. SBC's quality assurance processes enable senior managers to develop an overview of attendance across their schools and support schools in developing good practices for promoting attendance and responding effectively to absence.

<sup>34</sup> [Using the Forth Valley and West Lothian attendance toolkit | Education Scotland](#)

<sup>35</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/media/3kdenpq4/improving-attendance-understanding-the-issues-101123-pw.pdf>

Scottish Borders Council and individual schools set stretch aims to raise expectations, ensure continuous improvement, and address poverty related gaps in attendance. A plan should be developed to meet the stretch aims which includes methods of measuring progress and regular evaluation. Schools may consider collaborating with other schools in their cluster or regional area to share and develop effective practices around promoting good attendance.

Scottish Borders Council sets the **minimum** attendance threshold between 85 – 90%, though this may vary depending on the individual circumstances of the child, young person, and family. While the specific stretch aims may vary across schools based on their context and data, clear processes should be in place to ensure parents and partners are informed and appropriate support is provided when attendance falls below the agreed level.

## 2.10 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Promoting good attendance and addressing absence is a shared responsibility among children and young people, parents/carers, schools, partners, and the local authority. Each stakeholder has a role to play in ensuring that all children and young people attend school regularly and receive the support they need to overcome any barriers to attendance. This section outlines the specific responsibilities of each stakeholder group in promoting good attendance and addressing absence. By working together and fulfilling these responsibilities, we can create a supportive environment that encourages regular attendance and helps all children and young people reach their full potential.

### Children and Young People

- Children and young people have an age-appropriate responsibility to attend school regularly and on time.
- Children and young people have an age-appropriate responsibility to communicate with their parents/carers, who in turn should notify the school if they are going to be absent or late.
- Children and young people should make up any missed work as soon as possible.
- Children and young people should participate in school activities and events.
- Children and young people should respect the rights of other children and young people and staff.

### Parent/Carer

- Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that their child attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents/carers should notify the school office if their child is going to be absent from school or late.
- Parents/carers should support their child to make up any missed work.
- Parents/carers should attend school events and meetings when invited.
- Parents/carers should work with the school to improve/maintain their child's attendance.

### Classroom Teacher

- Classroom teachers have a legal responsibility to accurately record and monitor attendance.
- Classroom teachers should work with children and young people and their parents/carers to identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from or late to school.
- Classroom teachers should provide appropriate support to children and young people to improve attendance.
- Classroom teachers should report any concerns about attendance to the headteacher.



## Pastoral Leaders

- Pastoral leaders have a responsibility to provide or seek support for children and young people who are absent from school or late to school.
- Pastoral leaders should work with children and young people and their parents/carers to develop a plan to improve attendance when necessary.
- Pastoral leaders should monitor attendance and act, in line with school and local authority guidance when necessary.
- Pastoral leaders should liaise with other professionals such as, children and families social work, educational psychology, health colleagues and other partners to provide additional support to children and young people and parents/carers when necessary.
- Headteachers/Pastoral Leaders have a responsibility to ensure accurate attendance records and should advise business support colleagues on appropriate use of Seemis absence codes.

"The school is always happy to talk to me about when she's not coming to school; I get a call as soon as she's not coming to school to discuss why she's struggling to come in."  
(Secondary school parent)

## Headteachers

- Headteachers have a responsibility to ensure that the school has an effective attendance policy and procedure and that staff comply with all legal requirements.
- Headteachers should monitor learner attendance and act, in line with school, local authority and national guidance.
- Headteachers should ensure that support is provided to children and young people and their parents/carers to improve attendance when necessary.
- Headteachers should liaise with other schools, local authority to share good practice on attendance.
- Headteachers/Pastoral Leaders have a responsibility to ensure accurate attendance records and should advise business support colleagues on appropriate use of Seemis absence codes.

## Business Support

- Business support staff should maintain accurate attendance records and ensure compliance with data protection.
- Business support staff should maintain open communication with parents/carers, including phone calls, emails, 'Xpressions' app etc.
- Business support staff should liaise with school staff and other stakeholders to ensure accurate records.

## Local Authority Officers

- Local authority officers have a responsibility to provide support and challenge to schools to improve attendance.
- Local authority officers should work with schools to identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from or late to school.
- Local authority officers should ensure that schools meet statutory entitlements and quality assurance procedures are in place to monitor this.
- Local authority officers should liaise with other agencies, such as the children and families social work and the NHS, to ensure that additional support is provided to children and young people when necessary.



## ATTENDANCE POLICY A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

# 3. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

## 3.1 RECORDING ATTENDANCE

### Registers of Attendance

There is a legal responsibility for schools to complete and maintain accurate registers of school attendance. Class teachers are responsible for completing registers for the children and young people attending their classes. In SBC, registers should take place using SEEMiS Click & Go at least twice per day in primary schools and period by period in secondary schools. To ensure accurate recording of attendance and absence, reference should be made to the SEEMiS absence codes (appendix 4).

It is important that information is used to inform immediate follow-up action so that developing patterns of attendance and absence inform intervention where necessary. Delays between class level recording and further action should be minimised by the efficient transfer of information.

Schools, having due regard to the welfare, wellbeing and health and safety of children and young people, must always be able to account for those present or out on an organised activity.


SBC is required to report on school attendance statistics regularly and often at short notice to the Scottish Government.

### Lateness

Schools should have a method of recording the attendance of children and young people who are late. Accurate recording of lateness is just as important as attendance. Lateness should be recorded on SEEMiS Click &Go in the following way:

**Primary:** If a child arrives late to either morning or afternoon opening, this should be marked using LAT.

**Secondary:** If a young person arrives after school start time but in time for the **beginning** of a period, they should be marked present from when they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code for the preceding time.



For example: young person arrives at the beginning of period 4 because they had a dental appointment:

- Period 1-3: PER (medical appointment)
- Period 4: Present

If a pupil arrives after school start time and **during** a period, they should be marked LAT in the period they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code the preceding time.

For example: young person slept in and arrived during period 2:

- Period 1: OUA (unauthorised)
- Period 2: LAT

As with absences, codes should be updated at the end of the day once a reason for absence/lateness has been established. If a reason cannot be sought, this should be marked as **unexplained (UNA)**.

Schools should monitor persistent late coming and seek to identify any patterns. This should be linked to other relevant information and be used to inform appropriate intervention.

### **Copied Records and Shared Placements**

Children and young people who are on shared placements with Leader Valley School and associated enhanced provisions have copied records on Seemis. These children and young people remain on the record of their base school and the seemis records is shared with Leader Valley. It is the responsibility of the base school to update Seemis attendance and absence records accurately. Leader Valley and associated enhanced provisions are responsible for reporting on pupil non-attendance to the base school. In all instances the Copied Records Protocol (available on the staff intranet) should be adhered to.

## **3.2 EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE SETTINGS**

There is no statutory requirement for parents/carers to send their children to an early learning and childcare (ELC) setting. However, local authorities are required to provide ELC, and schools are required to keep an attendance register of every pupil to record if children are present<sup>36</sup>. This applies to early learning and childcare where it is delivered as part of the entitlement for eligible young children. In addition, all ELC providers registered with the Care Inspectorate are required to maintain a record of children's attendance to show the total number of children in 'daycare of children' premises at any one time.

This has implications for practice in providers in the private, third or childminding sectors delivering funded early learning and childcare, and where there are blended placements, whereby education authorities should establish systems and procedures, e.g. links and communication between blended placements and clear responsibilities on settings delivering funded early learning and childcare to record, monitor and report changes in attendance. Providers in the private, third or childminding sectors delivering funded early learning and childcare need to work in an integrated way to ensure that a child's attendance is monitored, and any concerns shared and acted upon.

SEEMiS Early Years will provide the functionality for settings to record and monitor the attendance of children registered for funded early learning and childcare.

Section 3.2 is adapted from: [Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance \(Scottish Government, 2021\)](#)

<sup>36</sup> Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975

### 3.3 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

The school's senior leadership team can authorise absence when they are satisfied by a legitimate reason for the request, usually by the parent/carer (via note, email, or phone call). Reasons for authorised absence can include:

- Illness
- Medical and dental appointments
- Meetings prior to, and during court appearances and other legal processes
- 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 close friends and 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 severe weather
- Family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma
- Period of exclusion to be recorded in a separate category.
- Extended leave with parental consent including some young carer activities.

### 3.4 MEDICAL AND DENTAL APPOINTMENTS


Parents and children and young people should continue to be encouraged to arrange such appointments, whenever possible, outside of school hours. On occasion, it may be necessary to attend medical, dental, and other health related appointments such as hospital appointments during school hours, which schools should record within a Medical and Dental category in 'authorised absence.'

In many areas of Scottish Borders, keeping health appointments may require significant travel and cause more disruption to school attendance. Schools should use their partnership with child health services to ensure that there is a flexible approach to appointments to avoid disruption for children and young people during critical times, such as during exam periods. In some circumstances, schools may arrange for medical and dental services to be provided on site within schools.

### 3.5 SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PROLONGED ILL HEALTH

For some children and young people, their learning is interrupted due to prolonged ill health. This can be for a single block of time or for several episodes. Although not an exhaustive list, this can be because of accidents or trauma, chronic, long-term, life-limiting, or terminal conditions, mental health issues, and conditions that require repeated medical intervention, such as dialysis.

A child or young person absent from school through ill health may receive treatment in various settings, such as a paediatric hospital, an adult hospital, a mental health facility, their own home, or in a different school. In some cases, this may mean that the child or young person travels to a hospital located beyond the Scottish Borders area. Education may be provided in all these settings, and the responsibility for doing so remains with Scottish Borders Council as the child or young person's home local authority.



The main emphasis in the initial period of absence will be on the child or young person's recovery of fitness and health, and the time for this will vary. However, where possible, absence should not lead to a reduction in education provision that would have a detrimental effect on the child or young person's progress. Legislation requires local authorities to make special arrangements for children absent from school through ill health without undue delay through outreach teaching or other special provisions such as hospital education services.

It is important that schools identify what kind of work the child or young person can manage, in what format the work needs to be presented, and what kind of contact the child or young person needs with school. This should include both academic support and social support from peers. If appropriate, SBC's Inspire Learning digital approach to education should be used in these circumstances. Where appropriate provision is in place, schools should record this as attendance. Where it is not in place, this is still categorised as authorised absence. However, alternative arrangements must be made to ensure that children or young people can access their entitlement to education.

Where a child or young person's illness is known, or thought, to be likely to extend beyond 5 days, education should proceed immediately, if medical assessment permits. This is particularly important for children and young people who require recurrent admission to hospital, even for short periods.

Where there is less certainty over the possible length of any absence, education outside of school should commence at the earliest opportunity and certainly no more than 15 working days of continuous absence or 20 working days of intermittent absence.

Schools should work closely with parents/carers and appropriate professionals to help facilitate the child or young person's return to school, which may take place on a phased basis over a period and determine what supports will be required once they are back in school.

Further information on supporting children and young people impacted by prolonged ill health can be found in the Scottish Government's 'Guidance on Education of Children Absent from School Through Ill-Health.'<sup>37</sup>

## 3.6 DIVERSE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Some groups of children and young people may need authorised absence due to their religious or cultural practices or their family's mobility:

Children and young people of all faiths may take authorised absence to participate in religious observances.

In some cultures, family weddings or funerals are significant events that may require children or young people to travel (e.g., overseas) or participate in extended preparations. If this lasts for more than four weeks, the school will normally have the right to remove the child or young person from the roll to avoid being penalised in terms of its attendance record. However, in these circumstances, children or young people should be considered as **'Z (EXL) - Extended Leave with Parental Consent'** which allows them to remain on the school register ready for their return, without the school being penalised.

Some families may travel as part of their tradition, for family connections, or work commitments. The Scottish Government guidance 'Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures'<sup>38</sup> provides further information on supporting inclusive educational approaches for children and young people from travelling cultures, including culturally sensitive approaches to managing attendance.

<sup>37</sup> [Education of children unable to attend school due to ill health: guidance - gov.scot](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures: guidance - gov.scot](#)

The correct SEEMiS code to use when a pupil is travelling for cultural reasons is code 24 [**A (ABS) – Other Authorised Absence**].

When children are travelling and families plan for them to attend another school, the parent/carer should enrol the child at the new school. The new school will then request the Seemis record from the former school. Schools should work with travelling families to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in these circumstances. Please note that this Scottish Borders guidance differs from the national guidance to simplify approaches, reduce administration for schools and ensure accurate Seemis records are kept.ase school.'

If the school has not been notified that children or young people from travelling cultures are leaving to travel, the school should record their absence as '**TBC – To be Confirmed**' until school have confirmed that they are travelling.

## 3.7 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Schools should record an absence as unauthorised when no satisfactory reason has been provided. The SEEMiS code '**TBC - to be confirmed**' should only be used temporarily until the actual reason for absence is known, as it will count as **UNA – unexplained or truancy** if not updated. Unauthorised absence can include:

### **Family Holidays During Term Time.**

Family holidays during term time should not be recorded as authorised unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances include where a parent's employment, such as armed forces, emergency services, or professions requiring extended periods away from home, prevents them from taking leave during school holidays.

### **Absence with Parental Awareness in Specific Circumstances.**

Sometimes parents allow absence because they believe their child will benefit from an alternative activity or because they are in dispute with the school. In these cases, clear school policies, regular communication of expectations, and early contact with parents to build relationships and restore trust are important.

### **Occasional Absence without Parental Awareness.**

Schools should give clear messages that occasional absence is unacceptable and respond quickly by contacting parents. Effective supervision, monitoring of attendance, and providing a welcoming environment can help minimise this type of absence.

### **Longer Term Absence – School Related Issues.**

Children/young people may be absent due to unhappiness with school life, such as struggling with learning, conflict with teachers or peers, feeling distressed by the school environment, bullying, or feeling stigmatised. Identifying and addressing the underlying causes is essential.

### **Longer Term Absence – Home and Wider Community Issues**

Absence may be linked to challenging family circumstances, anxiety, mental health issues, substance misuse, or community issues. Schools should work with the child/young person, family, and other agencies to provide appropriate support.

Schools should be aware of the impact that early adversity and trauma can have on children and young people. Any approach to promoting and supporting attendance should be sensitive to the child or young person's needs and background. Care experienced children and young people are more likely to have experienced early adversity and trauma at some stage in their life and this may be ongoing.



## Absence Relating to Substance and Alcohol Use

Substance use may affect attendance through intoxication, addiction, or avoidance of others involved in supply. Staff should be aware of signs for concern and collaborate with other agencies to support affected children and young people.

## 3.8 COMPULSORY MEASURES

SBC is committed to ensuring that efforts to improve outcomes for children and young people involve an appropriate and proportionate level of intervention. Measures for compulsion are expensive processes which are time consuming and can lead to further unnecessary interventions into family life. Compulsory measures can be used when multi-agency efforts through the Child's Planning Manual to improve attendance have been exhausted. Further details of measures can be found in **Appendix 2**.

In addition to the universal activities a school can implement to improve and maintain overall attendance (see section 2), targeted activities to increase attendance and engagement prior to implementing compulsory measures can include:

- Attendance letters to a young person (aged 12 and over) and parent/carer (Appendix 7) and ongoing monitoring of attendance patterns.
- Use of the SBC Attendance Support Plan (Appendix 6)
- Universal plus meeting and plan.
- Meeting Around the Child (MAC) and Child's Plan.
- Nurture Groups.
- Involvement of relevant partner agencies such as health, Children and Families Social Work, commissioned services, education psychology service, or home school link worker.
- Curriculum adaptations to improve engagement such as short-term wellbeing focussed work or work-based learning.
- Build-Up Timetable (see section 4.4).
- Hosting arrangement, in agreement with all parties (see section 4.5).
- Referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel (Appendix 3)

Under Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, non-attendance at school without reasonable excuse is an offence. 'Where the child is of school age... On one or more occasions fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly then his parents shall be guilty of an offence against this section.' Under the Act 'reasonable excuse' is defined as:

- 'There is no school within walking distance of the child's home and the education authority has not provided transport or other appropriate arrangements to enable the child to attend school regularly.'
- 'The child has been ill and therefore unable to attend school.'
- 'There are other circumstances which in the opinion of the education authority or the court afford a reasonable excuse.'

Where a child or young person fails to attend school regularly without a reasonable excuse, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011<sup>39</sup>. This option may be appropriate where there are a range of other concerns which together with non-attendance, form grounds for referral.

Before reaching a decision to proceed to an initial referral to the Children's Reporter, schools will work together with Children and Families Social Work and other partners to complete a thorough assessment, through the Child Planning Manual, to ensure that all other options (such as those above) have been exhausted.

<sup>39</sup> [Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)



**Prior to any referral being made to the Children’s Reporter schools must involve Children and Families Social Work.**

If the Reporter considers that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, the matter will be referred to a Children’s Hearing for a decision.

Attending a children’s hearing can be a stressful experience for a child or young person, and there is little evidence that imposition of legal sanctions improve attendance. It should therefore be seen as last resort.

## 3.9 CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE MISSING FROM EDUCATION

There may be occasions where a child or young person goes missing from education for an extended period and the education authority has made extensive unsuccessful attempts to contact a family. In these circumstances, school staff should refer to sections 4.315 and 4.316 of [the National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland \(2021, updated 2023\)](#).


There are many complex reasons why a family cannot be contacted. Often, staff in schools are aware of individual circumstances and family connections which will enable them to find children or young people quickly. Children or young people may simply have moved schools or have moved homes, and when the new school is contacted, information can be transferred to help the child or young person settle quickly.

**Advice for Schools**

- If a child is absent from school, and the school has not been notified of this absence, it should be assumed the child is either missing or absent without parental awareness.
- Make efforts to contact parents, and failing this, other emergency contacts.
- If unable to establish contact with the parents, action must be taken to satisfy the school and the education authority that the child or young person is safe and well.
- Pass the record of absence to a member of staff with responsibility for attendance (e.g. senior manager, pastoral care staff, home-school link worker) to consider next steps.
- This staff member should determine further action needed, considering:
  - The age of the pupil
  - Any additional support needs
  - Any current concerns about the child/young person
  - Whether to contact the school’s child protection coordinator
- For looked after or vulnerable children, follow up immediately if they do not attend school. Contact the social worker if the child is looked after at home.
- Ensure the school has up-to-date contact information for parents and social workers.

**Advice for Local Authority Officers**

- Maintain clear guidance on attendance policy and procedures for when children go missing from education.
- Ensure schools are aware of the role of the Children Missing from Education (CME) Coordinator.
- Work in line with the [Children Missing from Education Service Guidance \(2022\)](#).
- The CME Coordinator can request a SEEMiS search within the local authority area for an alternative enrolment.
- For children believed to have moved elsewhere in Scotland, contact the CME Scotland service to request an all-Scotland local authority school search.
- Cooperate with other local authorities across Scotland to prevent and reduce numbers of children missing from education.



Sensitivity should be given to children or young people in Gypsy/Traveller families (see section 3.6 diverse school communities). There are other circumstances which might lead to children or young people being missing from education for an extended period. These might include female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child sexual exploitation, in cases where awareness has been raised of factors that might lead schools to believe this could be a concern for children and young people.

## 3.10 ATTENDANCE BEYOND STATUTORY SCHOOL LEAVING AGE

School leaving dates are set by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. There are two dates: 31 May and the first day of the Christmas holiday period (or 21 December, if earlier).

### **Summer Leaving Dates**

- Young people who turn 16 between 1 March and 31 May can leave school on 31 May.
- Young people who turn 16 between 31 May and 1 October can also leave on 31 May.

### **Winter Leaving Dates**

- Young people who turn 16 between 1 October and the first day of the Christmas holiday period can leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).
- Young people who turn 16 after the winter leaving date but before 1 March can also leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).

Young people who choose to stay in school beyond the leaving age, and their parents, should be encouraged to commit to full attendance, defined as "participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school."

Scottish Borders schools will use the flexibilities of Curriculum for Excellence and the support provided by Developing the Young Workforce programmes to work with young people and their parents/carers to plan a learning programme that best suits the individual's personal development and encourages them to work towards their next step beyond school. Ongoing support and encouragement should be provided to ensure sustained commitment and engagement.

For young people in their sixth year, there is a balance between continued achievement and the desire for increased independence in preparation for post-school destinations. It is recommended that a sixth-year student's timetable should provide a minimum of two-thirds of the full-time timetable, including National Qualification classes and opportunities for wider achievement.

Attendance must also be monitored to ensure proper entitlement to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a means-tested weekly payment designed to help overcome financial barriers that may prevent young people from staying in school. For more information and to apply for EMA please see [Education Maintenance Allowance | Scottish Borders Council](#).

## ATTENDANCE POLICY A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## 4. ALTERNATIVE ATTENDANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Curriculum for Excellence allows schools to personalise learner journeys to meet the needs of all children and young people. When an alternative to traditional school attendance is requested, it should be considered in relation to the child or young person's wellbeing needs and supported by the Child's Planning Manual. Decisions to grant alternative attendance arrangements should be underpinned by a child or young person's right to education as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

### 4.1 HOME EDUCATION


Parents can request to withdraw their child from a Scottish Borders school for full-time home education or part-time flexi schooling. Under section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents must seek local authority consent before withdrawing their child from school, and Scottish Borders Council must not unreasonably withhold this consent. Parents/carers wishing to make a request for home education should consult the Scottish Government's Home Education Guidance<sup>40</sup> and access [Scottish Borders Council: Home Education](#) for more information.

When considering these requests, Scottish Borders Council is guided by Article 18 of the UNCRC, the child or young person's voice, and a child-centred approach, as well as the duties, obligations, and rights of parents and its own legislative and policy position.

Parents may choose to withdraw their child from school for several reasons, including:

- Following a particular educational or ideological philosophy
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Dissatisfaction with the system
- A child's reluctance to go to school or problems at school (e.g. bullying)
- Geographical factors (remoteness or mobility for work or cultural reasons)
- Addressing a child's additional support needs in a particular way
- As a short-term intervention for a specific reason

<sup>40</sup> [Home education guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)



Parents do not have to provide a reason for choosing home education, but it is helpful for the school and Scottish Borders Council to understand their reasons. Consent is given based on how the parents intend to educate their child at home, not their reason for doing so.

In some circumstances, parents do not need consent to home educate their child, such as when the child has never attended a local authority school, has finished primary but not yet started secondary school, or if the school they were attending has closed.

For children with Additional Support Needs, Scottish Borders Council has no legal duty under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and subsequent amendments to provide additional support to children who are educated at home. The parent is responsible for meeting these needs.

## 4.2 FLEXI-SCHOOLING

A flexi-schooling arrangement means that the local authority alongside parents/carers agree to have joint responsibility for educating the child or young person. The child or young person would attend school some of the time (e.g. certain days, or certain subjects) and be educated at home the rest of the time. Flexi-schooling is different from a build-up timetable where the local authority remains responsible for all the child or young person's education. The local authority and schools consider requests for flexi-schooling on a case-by-case basis considering the specific strengths and needs within each situation.

The child or young person's attendance pattern must be accurately recorded on SEEMiS using the code '**SNA – Should Not Attend**' for the periods that it has been agreed that the child or young person should not attend.

Flex-schooling arrangements should be monitored and reviewed on at least an annual basis and recorded on SEEMiS Wellbeing Application and pastoral notes.

## 4.3 FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM

A flexible curriculum provides the duty of education in a variety of settings or contexts to meet the needs of the child or young person. Where flexible curriculum arrangements are required, they should be planned and regularly reviewed. Digital technology and Inspire Learning can be used as the basis for planning, reviewing, and maintaining connection. The views of the child or young person and their family are central to this process. Arrangements should be informed by an understanding of their strengths and aspirations as well as a robust understanding of their needs.

Flexible arrangements should be approved by the school and may involve other providers such as therapeutic interventions, skills development, or work-based learning in local community settings such as third sector organisations or local employers.

## 4.4 BUILD-UP TIMETABLES

Scottish Borders Council recognises the right that all children and young people have to an education which meets their needs. For most children and young people this will be through full time attendance at school. The following processes and considerations for Build-up timetables are adapted from the Appendix 1 of the SBC Inclusion Policy.

### When Should a Build-up Timetable be Considered?

In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a **temporary**, build-up timetable to meet a child or young person's individual need. For example:

- Where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and build-up timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package.
- Where a child or young person has significantly disengaged with school and there is a significant impact on their learning.

A build-up timetable is considered at Stage 3 of SBC Framework for Staged Intervention and should only be considered after strategies at Stages 1 and 2 have been exhausted.

Build-up timetables should be considered as a short-term intervention and where there is a clear vision or rationale to re-track a pupil into the mainstream school community.

**In order to monitor, review and quality assure build-up timetables, schools are required to submit details of a child or young person's timetable and attendance support plan (appendix 6), including the reasons for a build-up timetable, start date, review date and proposed end date of the timetable to the Education Duty Manager.**

### The Purpose of a Build-up Timetable is to:

- Build a temporary, bespoke support package around the needs and interests of the child/young person.
- Create a safe, consistent environment with familiar staff.
- Help the child/young person to re-engage in education and build up to full time attendance.
- Foster trust and improved relationships with key adults who are supporting the child/young person.
- Promote improved communication and partnership working with parents/carers and partner agencies.

### Key Points

- A build-up timetable should be a response to a Meeting Around the Child or Young Person (MAC)
- A parent/carer must consent to a build-up timetable, and this should be recorded in the minutes of a meeting.
- Decisions should be made with the child or young person, parent/carers and other multi-agencies involved with the child and young person.
- The timetable should be for a limited period. The suggested maximum length of a build-up timetable is 6 - 8 weeks.
- Arrangements for a build-up timetable should be regularly reviewed every 2 - 4 weeks.
- All parties should clearly understand the objectives of any build-up timetable.
- A parent/carer must be clear they are taking responsibility for the pupil when he/she is not in school and guarantee that the pupil will be supervised off site.
- Attainment, achievement, and attendance must be monitored, tracked, recorded, and reviewed throughout.



## Considerations Before Planning

- Maintaining a sense of belonging to the school is essential and the use of the school campus should be prioritised.
- Planning for the reintroduction of classes to the timetable should ensure opportunities to identify and address gaps in learning and to ensure coverage of topics, learning themes and learning opportunities missed are addressed.
- A commitment to maintaining and sustaining the planned timetable is important and it must be recognised that interventions take time to work. Setting a date at the outset for review and avoiding reactive responses to initial challenges are key to maintaining this as a strategic intervention.
- The voice of the child or young person should be integral to the plan – Person Centred Planning may support this, or your Educational Psychologist may be able to support or advise on this.
- The impact of a build-up timetable on the home life of the child or young person should be considered and carefully considered. It should not put a child, young person, or family at greater risk i.e. any child protection concerns or care placements.
- External Partners - The risks around using external partners to support the timetable should be carefully considered and the following considered:
  - o Are they a sustainable option?
  - o Do they have a clear, agreed educational outcome?
  - o Is there a shared understanding of what success will look like for the child or young person?
  - o What are the expected/anticipated timescales?
  - o Are they PVG checked and Child Protection trained?
  - o How will attendance/non-attendance be recorded and shared to ensure safeguarding?
  - o How will they report on progress towards the agreed outcome/ target?
  - o Are there hidden costs or transport implications?

## Planning the Timetable

- The timetable should be planned to build on the child or young person's curricular strengths and the positive relationships they have in school from the beginning.
- Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing should be fully incorporated into any timetable offered.
- Restorative approaches and opportunities for restoring relationships should be planned into the timetable as appropriate.
- The responsibility for planning work and activities remains with school – this includes class teachers, subject teachers, support for learning and pastoral staff.
- The timetable should be clearly communicated with all staff.
- Adding opportunities to build and develop confidence and self-worth through reaching set targets, recognising, and celebrating achievement.
- Tracking and monitoring of progress in learning should be maintained including in the wellbeing indicators.
- Recording on SEEMiS should reflect the true picture of the educational provision and prioritise the safeguarding of the child or young person. Please see information below regarding appropriate codes. The full list of SBC SEEMiS absence codes is included in appendix 4.



Description	SEEMiS Code
A medical or diagnosed condition which prevents a child or young person's full-time attendance at school, and they are unable to undertake any other learning when they are not in school. Only to be used when an agreed build-up timetable has been agreed and is in place. Review regularly, as per policy.	<b>BUH</b>
Where a child or young person has become significantly disengaged from school and build-up attendance is agreed as a suitable temporary and short-term intervention for reintegration back into school. There is concern that full time attendance may increase the likelihood of exclusion. Can also be used to support a return to school following a period of exclusion. Only to be used when an agreed build-up timetable has been agreed and is in place. Review regularly, as per policy.	<b>BUX</b>
To be used where a child or young person has refused to attend school.	<b>RFS</b>
Should be used where a child or young person is refusing to attend school due to social anxiety / mental health related reasons but is receiving education provision (e.g. accessing work via school iPad). This code should be used where education provision is provided, and all parties agree with the plan in place. Only to be used as a temporary, short-term arrangement, e.g. prior to arranging a build-up timetable.	<b>RSA</b>

## 4.5 HOSTING ARRANGEMENTS

A hosting formally transfers a child or young person who is experiencing difficulties in their own school (base school) for a placement in an alternative Scottish Borders primary or secondary school (host school) on a temporary basis (with a view to a possible enrolment in the hosting school). It is carried out in a supported way involving both base and host schools and with the agreement of both parents/carers and the child or young person.

The aim of a hosting arrangement is to address barriers a child or young person may be experiencing specific to their base school community. A hosting may be suggested as an intervention to improving attendance, engagement, relationships, or achievement. A hosting arrangement should only be considered in **exceptional circumstances** with due forethought given to the stress that the process can cause to a child or young person and their family. It should only be considered when all other strategies have been exhausted.

The procedures and guidance for hosting arrangements are included in an **SBC Inclusion Policy Advice Note: Guidance on Effective Hosting Procedures** and is available on request from an education officer or the Duty Education Manager.

### Monitoring and Review

The attendance policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure that it is effective. The policy will be reviewed considering any changes in legislation or guidance.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: RELEVANT NATIONAL LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE AND USEFUL RESOURCES

- Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools <https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-1-attendance-scottish-schools/>
- Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions <https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-2-positive-approach-preventing-managing-school/>
- Adverse Childhood Experiences: Action to prevent adverse childhood experiences where we can, and tackle their impact <https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/>
- Attendance Supports for Parents and Carers <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1680243748908302337>
- Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2016 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-2016/pages/10/>
- Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) <https://www.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/children-and-young-people-improvement-collaborative/>
- Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-positive-whole-school-ethos-culture-relationships-learning-behaviour/pages/1/>
- Developing the Young Workforce <https://education.gov.scot/learning-in-scotland/programmes/developing-the-young-workforce-dyw/>
- Education of Children and Young People Unable to Attend School Due to Ill Health: Guidance <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-education-children-unable-attend-school-due-ill-health/>
- Equality Act <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>
- Forth Valley and West Lothian toolkit <https://education.gov.scot/resources/attendance/using-the-forth-valley-and-west-lothian-attendance-toolkit/>
- Getting It Right For Every Child <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>
- Home Education Guidance – Guidance for parents and local authorities on home education <https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/>
- Improving Attendance in Scotland: Understanding the Issues <https://education.gov.scot/resources/attendance/improving-attendance-in-scotland/>
- Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-educational-outcomes-children-young-people-travelling-cultures/>
- National guidance for child protection in Scotland (2021) – Updated 2023 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/>
- National Improvement Framework <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>
- Parentzone <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>
- Promoting Attendance: Self-Reflection Questions for Educational Settings <https://education.gov.scot/resources/promoting-attendance-self-reflection-questions-for-educational-settings/>
- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotland's-children-young-people/>
- Scottish Attainment Challenge <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/>
- Support Attendance Education Scotland Workshops <https://education.gov.scot/media/btddd5ry/supporting-attendance-workshop-5.pptx>
- Supporting Children's Learning <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/pages/1/>
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

## APPENDIX 2: MEASURES FOR COMPULSORY COMPLIANCE

### Attendance Orders

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places a duty on education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36). The education authority notifies the parent that a meeting or hearing is required, and that an explanation for non-attendance must be provided to the authority.

To allow the parent to prepare for the meeting, it will not be held within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification.

### Process:

If the parent fails to satisfy the authority that there was a reasonable excuse for the pupil's non-attendance the authority may:

- Proceed to prosecution through the sheriff court, or
- Report the circumstances to the procurator fiscal, or
- Warn the parent and postpone the decision to report for a maximum of six weeks.
- Call a Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP) to make recommendations to the school, family, and local authority. See appendix 2 for details.

In the circumstance where the education authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the child or young person is of school age (5-16), make an attendance order. An attendance order requires the parent to ensure the child or young person attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children or young people residing in the same neighbourhood).

### An Attendance Order:

- Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child or young person at a school named in the order.
- Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the authority.
- May name a public school, or other school which is willing to receive the child or young person. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.
- Shall not name a special school unless the child or young person has additional support needs requiring specialist support.

A copy of the attendance order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child or young person's regular attendance at the named school.

### Right of Appeal

If parents are unhappy, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the sheriff. The sheriff can amend, confirm, or annul the order. The decision of the sheriff is final.

Parents may wish to seek legal representation when making an appeal to the sheriff. Legal aid may be available for advice and representation, subject to certain criteria for eligibility. Further information is available from the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

### Amending an Attendance Order

If the attendance order is later amended (e.g. a different school is named), the education authority should inform the parent of the proposed amendments and allow the parent 14 days to make objections. If objections are made and not upheld by the authority, the parent can appeal to the sheriff as above.



## Moving Between Local Authority Areas

A child or young person who is the subject of an attendance order may move from his or her home authority to a new authority area. In this case, the new authority may notify the parent of their intention to amend the attendance order by updating the school named in the order to a school which is in the family's new catchment area.

Where a child or young person is attending a school in another authority area and the education authority providing education believes that a parent should explain the non-attendance of a child or young person at school, the authority in which the child or young person resides would be responsible for arranging a meeting or hearing and serving notice on the parent to attend the meeting or hearing for an explanation to be provided.

## Prosecution

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 states that if a parent has not complied with an attendance order, an application may be made to the sheriff court for prosecution (either by the education authority or Procurator Fiscal). If convicted, a parent may be:

- fined (not exceeding Standard scale level 3, currently not exceeding £1000),
- imprisoned for up to one month, or
- both fined and imprisoned.

The education authority may also make a referral to the reporter if compulsory measures are required to support the child.

## Family Separation

In the case of a child or young person whose parents are separated, education authorities should consider the most appropriate means of communicating the process of making an attendance order to parents. It is likely that by the time an attendance order is being considered, there will have been difficulties in the relationship between the school/education authority and the parent. Advocacy or mediation services, where both parties meet voluntarily to discuss their concerns and agree a mutual solution with an independent third party, should be used to ensure that the parent understands the process and has support to express views or appeal. Further disengagement or conflict during the attendance order process will make positive outcomes for the child difficult to achieve.

## Additional Support Needs

Children who have sufficient understanding of the process and who are judged to have sufficient legal capacity (this is presumed from age 12 unless the child does not have a sufficient understanding of the matter being considered) should be kept informed of the process. They may attend meetings or hearings with their parent. Such children should be consulted with the parent on the named school or subsequent amendments. However, the action is clearly being taken against the parent who has legal responsibility for ensuring the child attends school and it is for the parent to appeal, not the young person (a child of legal capacity may appeal in the case of exclusion, see Circular 8/03 Right of appeal against the decision to exclude – paragraph 37). The attendance order should be regarded as a stage in an ongoing process. The child may attend school following an attendance order, but support arrangements and long-term monitoring of attendance and support needs will be required.

## Parenting Orders

Local authorities also have powers to apply to the sheriff for a parenting order under the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004. These orders are for one year and require parents to participate in programmes designed to improve their parenting by receiving support services which previously the parent has refused, and for their compliance to be monitored by a named officer.

The local authority must consult with other agencies in a multi-agency planning process, and consult with the reporter to the children's panel, before considering with its legal advisors whether an application for a parenting order should be made.

If the procurator fiscal raises criminal proceedings in respect of an alleged breach of an order and the parent is found guilty or pleads guilty, he or she will be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (currently £1,000). If the fine is not paid a court must impose a supervised attendance order (SAO). An SAO is a community-based alternative to imprisonment for fine default.

For this type of offence the court can only impose a sentence of imprisonment for the fine default where an SAO has been breached.

Guidance for authorities on parenting orders is available from *Guidance on Parenting Orders: Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004*

### **Referral to the Reporter**

Referral to the Reporter may be an option considered by an education authority in conjunction with other approaches above, or usually separately, as an important stage in engaging the child or young person and the parent in compulsory interventions to improve outcomes for the child. Referral would usually only be made after appropriate measures at a local level have been exhausted.

Where a child is failing to attend school regularly without reasonable excuse, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the *Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011*. However, non-attendance may be a factor considered alongside other grounds for referral where there are a range of concerns about the child or young person. Where the Reporter considers that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, the matter will be referred to a Children's Hearing. The Children's Hearing will make the decision on whether compulsory measures are necessary and if so, what those measures should be.

It is helpful for education authorities and Reporters to work together to make the Children's Hearing aware of the range of approaches that schools, and education authorities may have already tried, to improve a child or young person's school attendance. It is also helpful to consider with other services, which may provide interventions recommended by the Children's Hearing, how reintegration into school can be planned for during their work with the child or young person.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) or Acceptable Behaviour Agreement is a written agreement between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more agencies whose role it is to prevent further anti-social behaviour i.e. a housing association, local authority, police, or school etc.

They are used for young people, but can also be used for adults, and may be used with parents in relation to the behaviour of their children.

A local authority may also apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) under the *Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004*. In these circumstances, a child or young person is likely to already have been involved in the hearings system and will be well known to children's services. The child or young person will be at risk of persistent anti-social behaviour.

Non-attendance at school is not anti-social behaviour, but while a young person is not at school, his or her activities may be part of their involvement in anti-social behaviour, causing significant disruption to the community. Improving school attendance may be made a condition of an ABC or ASBO, and services should work together to ensure that the conditions applied enhance the potential for a young person to be engaged in learning, whether in school or in the community.

Education authorities and schools can make a significant difference to outcomes for children and young people on the cusp of persistent and serious offending by working in partnership with other services to devise flexible and creative approaches to learning opportunities.



# APPENDIX 3: PROCEDURE FOR CALLING A CLUSTER ATTENDANCE PANEL

## Education and Children's Services

### 1. Purpose and Summary

- 1.1. This guidance explains the procedure for calling a Cluster Attendance Panel to manage persistent absence.
- 1.2. It references the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and the Scottish Government's national guidance on managing attendance, Included, Engaged, and Involved Part 1: Attendance in Scottish schools.

### 2. Legislative framework

- 2.1. Parents who have enrolled their child at a Public School at any time, are then required to ensure their child attends, unless the Education Authority have consented to the withdrawal of their child from education (Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 35).
- 2.2. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places a duty on Education Authorities to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36). The Education Authority notifies the parents that a meeting or hearing is required, and that an explanation for non-attendance must be provided to the Authority. In the Scottish Borders, the meeting is referred to as a **Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP)**.
- 2.3. Where a child is attending a school in another authority area and the education authority providing education believes that the parent should explain the non-attendance of a child at the school, the authority in which the child resides is responsible for arranging a meeting and serving notice on the parent to attend the meeting or hearing for an explanation to be provided.

### 3. Calling a Cluster Attendance Panel

- 3.1. **A Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP) should not be considered until all interventions at school and cluster level have been exhausted.**
- 3.2. Schools should have consulted with Children and Families Social Work and considered the involvement of other partners such as Health, Police, and the Voluntary Sector. Evidence of joint working in the form of Meeting Around the Child (MAC) Paperwork, A Record of Attendance and Support Plans with interventions must be provided to the Head of Service to demonstrate the interventions tried with the child/young person and family prior to a CAP being requested. The Headteacher should provide copies and/or a log of correspondence with the family to indicate the parent's level of engagement.
- 3.3. Where interventions have failed, there is evidence of parental non-engagement or there remains ambiguity and lack of understanding regarding the barriers to attendance, Headteachers should contact the Cluster Lead Headteacher to convene a CAP. The Headteacher will provide the evidence referred to above to the Chief Education Officer for consideration. A CAP should take place at a suitable date within the required time frame.

- 3.4. If the Chief Education Officer agrees to the CAP, he/she will inform the Director of Education and Children's Services in writing of the intention to call a CAP.
- 3.5. The Headteacher should consult with the Clerk to the Council of the intention to hold a CAP and agree a suitable date withing the legally required time frame.
- 3.6. The Clerk to the Council shall serve a formal Notice on the parents informing them of the requirement to attend the CAP. To allow the parents to prepare for the CAP, it will not be held within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification. The parent should be advised in the letter that the CAP will still go ahead if the parent chooses not to attend or respond.

#### **4. Cluster Attendance Panel Membership and Process**

- 4.1. Selection of Cluster Attendance Panel; All members of the Cluster Headteachers, Depute Headteachers, Principal Teachers, Education Officers and all members of the Education Sub-Committee shall be members of a panel including religious, parent and teacher representatives from which the member of the specific CAP shall be drawn.
- 4.2. Each panel shall be selected by the Clerk to the Council or authorised representative in consultation with the chairperson of the panel.
- 4.3. The Clerk to the Council or their authorised representative, in consultation with the Cluster Lead Headteacher, shall appoint the chairperson of each panel. The chairperson should not come from the school the child/young person is currently enrolled in.
- 4.4. **Three members of an individual Cluster Attendance Panel shall constitute a Quorum, at least one of which will be a member of staff from an associated cluster school.**

#### **5. Functions Referred**

- 5.1. The following functions shall stand referred to the panel:
  - 5.1.1. Consider parents who are failing to meet their responsibilities regarding their child's attendance at school if a parent fails to provide a reasonable excuse for the child's absence from school.

#### **6. Powers of a Cluster Attendance Panel**

- 6.1. If a parent fails to satisfy the CAP that there is a reasonable excuse for a pupil's non-attendance at schools, the CAP may:
  - Proceed to prosecution through the Sheriff Court.
  - Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal.
  - Warn the parent and postpone a decision for a six-week period. In this case only, if the child of school age, the panel may make an Attendance Order under Section 38 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980
  - Refer to the Children's Reporter
  - Make non-statutory recommendations to the parent and school to further support attendance.

#### **7. Functions Delegated**

- 7.1. All the functions referred to the Cluster Attendance Panel.

#### **8. Administrative Arrangements**

- 8.1. The Clerk to the Council or their Authorised Representative shall act as Clerk to the Cluster Attendance Panel and the Director of Education and Children's Services, or their representative shall present the case for the Council at any Attendance Hearing.





## **9. Attendance Orders**

- 9.1. In the circumstance where the Education Authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the pupil is of school age (5-16), make an Attendance Order. An Attendance Order requires the parent to ensure the child attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children residing in the same neighbourhood as the child).
- 9.2. An attendance order:
  - 9.2.1. Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child at a school named in the order.
  - 9.2.2. Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the Authority.
  - 9.2.3. May name a Public School, or other school which is willing to receive the child. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.
  - 9.2.4. Shall not name a special school unless the child has additional support needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at the school.
- 9.3. A copy of the Attendance Order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child's regular attendance at the named school.
- 9.4. It is the responsibility of Legal Services to draw up and serve the Attendance Order. The Director of Education & Children's Services should sign the covering letter.

### **Amending an Attendance Order**

- 9.5. If the Attendance Order is later amended (e.g. a different school is named) the Education Authority should inform the parent of the proposed amendments and allow the parent fourteen days to make objections. If objections are made and not upheld by the Authority, the parent can appeal to the Sheriff as below.

### **Right of Appeal**

- 9.6. If parents are unhappy with the making of an Attendance Order, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the Sheriff. The Sheriff can amend, confirm, or annul the Order. The decision of the Sheriff is final.

## APPENDIX 4: SCOTTISH BORDERS SEEMIS ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE CODES

Note - screens and printouts in SEEMiS use either a single letter attendance code (e.g."D") or a three-letter code (e.g. "SEL") - both types of codes are shown in the descriptions below:

Reason and Code	Absence type	Impacts Attendance %
<b>Sickness/Medical or Dental Appointments</b>		
<b>D (SEL) Self Certified Medical</b> – this includes any time where a pupil is off sick, with proof of illness such as a parental phone call to absence line / message on Xpressions Groupcall or parental letter.	Authorised	√
<b>F (MED) Medically Certified</b> - this includes any time where a pupil is off sick or in hospital, certified by a doctor	Authorised	√
<b>B (SEP) Sickness with Educational Provision</b> – Use where a pupil is off sick, and an appropriate level of educational provision is being provided e.g. where a pupil is accessing work via their school iPad.	Attendance	x
<b>P (PER) Medical/Dental Appointments</b> – to be used for all medical/dental appointments outside of school.	Authorised	x
<b>Late Coming</b>		
<b>L (LAT) Late</b> – Use when pupil arrives late during that opening. This is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason. Secondary schools should use the appropriate code for absence in the periods preceding the late arrival.	Attendance	x
<b>K (LT2) – Late 2</b> - Use when pupil arrives late during the second half of an opening. This recording is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason.	Authorised	x
<b>[ (LTB) Bus Late</b> - Use when a pupil arrives late due to late arrival of school transport.	Late	x
<b>Parental Holidays</b>		
<b>G (UPH) Unauthorised Parental Holiday</b> – the following are examples of reasons that would cause a family holiday to be classed as unauthorised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of cheap holidays</li> <li>• The availability of desired accommodation</li> <li>• Holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term</li> <li>• Parental difficulty obtaining leave (with local judgement applied in cases where evidence is provided by the employer that it cannot accommodate leave during school holidays without serious consequences).</li> </ul>	Unauthorised	√

<p><b>E (PHL) Authorised Parental Holiday</b> – The majority of holidays taken within term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence. However, it is acceptable under exceptional circumstances to authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	Authorised	√
<p><b>Z (EXL) Extended Leave with Parental Consent</b> – Should not be considered the same as a family holiday. Extended leave with parental consent will be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence and includes circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term parental placement abroad</li> <li>• Extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school.</li> <li>• Family weddings or funerals or other events and exceptional circumstances which may require children to travel or participate in extended preparations, for cultural reasons or to care for a relative</li> </ul>	Authorised	<p>Not counted as absence or attendance</p> <p>This code reduces total number of possible attendances for a pupil and must be used with care.</p>
<b>Refusal to Attend</b>		
<p><b>7 (RFS) Refusal to Attend</b> – use this category where a pupil refuses to attend school.</p>	Unauthorised	√
<p><b>9 (RSA) Refusal to Attend due to Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing – Educational Provision</b> - to be used where a pupil is refusing to attend school due to social anxiety / mental health related reasons and receiving education provision (e.g. accessing work via school iPad). Note – this code should only be used where education provision is being provided and the pupil, school, parents, and other relevant practitioners agree with the plan in place.</p>	Authorised	x
<b>Other Authorised Absences</b>		
<p><b>A (ABS) Other Authorised Absence</b> – this category covers situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate family weddings</li> <li>• Bereavements</li> <li>• Religious observances</li> <li>• Attendance at court</li> <li>• Attendance at a childcare review</li> <li>• Sporting and cultural events not arranged by school but approved by them.</li> <li>• When children and young people from gypsy/travelling communities are travelling.</li> </ul>	Authorised	√

<b>H (SNA) Should Not Attend</b> - to be used for formal/agreed flexi-schooling arrangements on the days when a child or young person is being educated at home.	Authorised	Not counted as absence or attendance This code reduces total number of possible attendances for a pupil and must be used with care
<b>(TRA) Transport issues</b> - use when severe weather prevents school transport from running or prevents a pupil from attending due to personal transport issues. This will only apply to a full opening (AM and/or PM). The expectation is that pupils would access work from home via their school iPad. Should only be used in exceptional circumstances.	Authorised	
<b>Other Unauthorised Absences</b>		
<b>U (UNA) Absence</b> – Reason Unknown – use when no reason has been given for the pupil's absence. Include all absence for which no adequate explanation has been provided.	Unauthorised	√
<b>@ (TRU) Truancy</b> – should be used for known truancy.	Unauthorised	√
<b>T (TBC) To be confirmed</b> – Default absence code; should be used in all cases where reason for absence is not known. These codes are temporary and should be updated as soon as possible.	Unauthorised	√
<b>N (OUA) Other Unauthorised Absence</b> - Pupil absence without school approval but with parental/carer knowledge; Include any other reasons for unauthorised absence e.g. where a parent is refusing to send their child to school following a dispute with school.	Unauthorised	√
<b>Exceptional Domestic Circumstances</b>		
<b>Q (DCA) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Authorised</b> – covers <b>short -term</b> exceptional circumstances such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The period immediately after an accident or illness</li> <li>• A period of serious or critical illness of a close relative</li> <li>• A domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home</li> </ul>	Authorised	√
<b>R (DCU) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Unauthorised</b> – used for all other unauthorised exceptional domestic circumstances. Use when school and other services have put measures in place to support attendance, but pupil has not attended.	Unauthorised	√

### Build Up Timetables

<b>Y (BUX) – Build-up Timetable (exclusion related)</b> – use where a pupil is attending school on a modified timetable to reduce risk of exclusion and build positive engagement as part of a build-up timetable. <b>Note</b> - this code should only be used in the period after an exclusion where a pupil is on a phased return.	Authorised	x
<b>= (BUH) – Build-up Timetable (health related)</b> – use where a pupil is attending school on a modified timetable to support their health.	Authorised	x
Other Attendance in and out of School		
<b>O (OAT) Provision Elsewhere</b> - used where a pupil is receiving educational provision at another establishment e.g. pupil attending another school for subjects not available, shared placement, educational trips organised by partner organisations, attending Borders College Schools Academy etc.	Attendance	x
<b>~ (SCH) In School but not in Class</b> – used where a pupil is not in their timetabled class but is somewhere else in school e.g. learning support base, attend appointment with partner agency, music instrument lesson or other educational activity based in school.	Attendance	x
<b>S (STY) Study Leave</b> – use from the start of the official exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons in school.	Attendance	x
<b>V (VIS) School Visit/Excursion</b> – use for trips out of school arranged or approved by the school, including visits to further or higher education open days	Attendance	x
<b>V (FLD)</b> – Field trip – use for field trips related to school coursework.	Attendance	x
<b>W (WRK) Work Experience</b> – includes work experience or volunteering, arranged, or approved by the school	Attendance	x
<b>M (MIS) - Missing from class</b> - a high school only code which indicates that a pupil has been marked as absent by a class teacher from one or more periods in an opening. This code is automatically generated by Click & Go and only appears on a pupil's attendance summary printout.	Attendance	x
<b>X (EXC) Exclusion</b> – used for temporary exclusions	Exclusion	√
<b>C (CLO) School Closure</b> - Closure due to weather, elections, emergency closure	Attendance	x

## APPENDIX 5: MONITORING AND TRACKING PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS – FLOW CHART



### RECORD KEEPING

All actions must be recorded on pastoral notes and documents uploaded to seemis wellbeing application.

### SAFEGUARDING

If there are child protection concerns, follow CP Procedures. If child is missing from school and no contact from home, contact Children and Families Duty Team on 01896 662787 if there are safeguarding concerns.





## APPENDIX 6: ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PLAN (TEMPLATE)

### Guidance for Use

The attendance support plan can be used to formalise improvements to a child/young person's attendance. It is intended as a document for use by school, team around the child, child/young person, and parent/carer, to be completed in conjunction with the child/young person and family. The plan should be completed alongside the creation of any Build—up Timetable.

The plan can sit alongside any Meeting Around the Child (MAC) or Universal Plus paperwork and plans. The plan is useful to set measurable attendance goals and address barriers to attendance, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties. The plan can be used as evidence of improvement or if evidence is required for further interventions or compulsory measures. It is a requirement that a clear attempt to support attendance by the school has been made prior to referring to the Cluster Attendance Panel.

The plan should be updated with each review. Reviews should take place no later than 6 weeks from the previous meeting and it is advised to set review dates at the creation of the plan. If more than one review is required, further sections should be added.

Completed plans should be scanned and uploaded the SEEMiS Wellbeing Application either in isolation or with Universal plus/MAC paperwork. Plans should also be shared with the child/young person and parents/carers.

<b>SBC Attendance Support Plan</b>									
This plan belongs to Name of child/ young person									
My School									
My class									
People involved in my plan:	Parents/carers ..... School ..... Partners Agencies ..... Other .....								
Reason for my plan/ Barriers to attendance:	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Truancy</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Mental Health/Anxiety</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unexplained Absences</td> <td>Medical/ill health</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Refusal to Attend</td> <td>Family Holidays</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Truancy	Mental Health/Anxiety	Unexplained Absences	Medical/ill health	Refusal to Attend	Family Holidays	Other:	
Truancy	Mental Health/Anxiety								
Unexplained Absences	Medical/ill health								
Refusal to Attend	Family Holidays								
Other:									
Background information to plan:	Current attendance rate ..... %								
Start Date for My Plan:									
Agreed Targets (If Secondary, please attach copy of Build-Up Timetable)	1. .... 2. .... 3. ....								
My Plan will be reviewed on									
Main school contact name, designation, and email.									



**REVIEW 1**

Date of Review: .....

Current Attendance Level: % .....

Have any circumstances changed: YES                          NO

If yes, what has changed? .....

Have targets been met: YES                          NO

If targets have been met attendance will continue to be monitored. Details if targets have not been met:  
.....

New Agreed Targets:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Date of next review: .....

**REVIEW 2**

Date of Review: .....

Current Attendance Level: % .....

Have any circumstances changed: YES                          NO

If yes, what has changed? .....

Have targets been met: YES                          NO

If targets have been met attendance will continue to be monitored. Details if targets have not been met:  
.....

New Agreed Targets:

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

Date of next review: .....

## APPENDIX 7: ABSENCE LETTERS

### Sample Letter 1a – Parent/Carer

Dear (insert parent/carers name)

#### Child / Young Person's Name

I am writing to advise that (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

Attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on a child or young person's learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support (insert child / young person's name) and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will contact you in the coming days to discuss this further with you.

#### OR

We would like to invite you and [insert child/young person's name] to a meeting with [insert staff member's name] on (insert date and time of meeting) to discuss this with you and identify appropriate solution to support (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion / meeting.

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name



## Sample Letter 1b – Young Person over 12 Years

Dear (young person's name)

I am writing to advise that your attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

We are concerned as attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on your learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support you and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will be contacting your parent/carer to share this concern and a discussion or meeting will follow which you will be invited to be part of. This will help us to identify solutions to support improvements in your attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion / meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name

## Sample Letter 1c – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

### Child/Young Person's Name

Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving (child/young person's name) attendance, I write to advise that (child/young person's name) attendance is now XX% in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor (child/young person's names) attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Thank you for working with us to improve (child/young person's names) school attendance. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters arise in the future which might cause an impact on attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name





## Sample Letter 1d – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (young person's name)

Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving your attendance, I write to advise that your attendance is now **XX%** in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor your attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Well done on managing to improve your school attendance and thank you for working with us to support you. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters come up in the future which might cause an impact on your attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name

## Sample Letter 2a – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

### Child/Young Person's Name

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our subsequent conversation / meeting, I am writing to you as we remain concerned about (insert child / young person's name)'s continued pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you (and insert child / young person's name) to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child / young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name



## Sample Letter 2b – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (insert young person's name)

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our conversation / meeting, I am writing to you as we are concerned about your continued pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name

### Sample Letter 3a – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

#### Child / Young Person's Name

I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about (insert child / young person's name)'s continuing pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past twelve-week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance record.

I would ask that you (and your child) attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance we may consider a referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel or Scottish Borders Council's Children and Families Social Work for advice and support. Compulsory measures such as an Attendance Order may be sought and/or a referral to the Children's Reporter may be considered in accordance with The Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36)

An appointment has been made for you (and your child) to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child / young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name



### Sample Letter 3b – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (insert young person's name)

I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about your continuing pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past twelve-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

I would ask that you and your parent attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in your attendance we may consider a referral to other agencies for their advice and support.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation  
School Name

## APPENDIX 8: CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS/CARERS

### Introduction

As part of the development of the new Scottish Borders Council (SBC) attendance policy, a consultation process was conducted to gather the views and ideas of children, young people, and parents/carers on what helps with school attendance. This consultation aligns with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which emphasises the right of children to express their views and have them considered in matters that affect them. The consultation aimed to ensure that the perspectives of key stakeholders were considered in shaping the attendance policy.

### Overview of Statistics

The consultation involved a total of 247 participants, including children, young people, and parents/carers. Focus groups and individual phone calls were conducted by staff members in schools across the Scottish Borders. Children and young people who struggle to attend school, and their parents, were also included in the consultation. The consultation included:

- 18 schools (10 primary schools and 8 secondary schools)
- 21 focus groups
- 194 children and young people
- 53 parents/carers

### Summary of Responses

#### 1. How does your school help you/your child to come to school regularly?

The most common responses were:

- Breakfast clubs (mentioned 8 times)
- Support from staff (mentioned 7 times)
- Regular communication with parents (mentioned 6 times)
- Engaging learning activities (mentioned 5 times)
- Positive relationships with staff and peers (mentioned 5 times)

Schools across the Scottish Borders employ various strategies to encourage regular attendance. Breakfast clubs provide a welcoming start to the day, while supportive staff and engaging learning activities create a positive environment. Regular communication with parents helps to address any concerns and reinforces the importance of attendance.

*"The school helps me come to school through learning and support and going on trips."*  
(Primary school pupil)

*"I feel well supported, as a working mum I have 2 children to drop off for breakfast club, I am able to drop both children off at the same place. This makes getting to work on time much easier!"*  
(Primary school parent)

*"The school sends regular information in the newsletter about attendance, plus I get a monthly letter re attendance and a phone call, though I still find it hard to get my daughter in, school does listen to my problems, and tries to help by finding solutions."*  
(Primary school parent)





## 2. What else could your school do to help you/your child come to school regularly?

The most common responses were:

- More engaging/fun activities (mentioned 7 times)
- Improved communication with parents (mentioned 4 times)
- Increased support for children with additional needs (mentioned 4 times)
- Flexibility in start times (mentioned 3 times)
- More clubs and extracurricular activities (mentioned 3 times)

Participants suggested that schools could further enhance attendance by offering more engaging and fun activities, improving communication with parents, and providing increased support for children with additional needs. Some also proposed more flexibility in start times and a greater variety of clubs and extracurricular activities.

*"Wake up Shake up every day, not just on Tuesdays and Wednesdays"* (Primary school pupil).

*"More variety of clubs to do; for example a sports club that changes every week (one week basketball; one week football; etc...) and this could be on a Monday because there aren't really any clubs on a Monday."* (Secondary school pupil)

## 3. What helps you/your child come to school every day?

The most common responses were:

- Seeing friends (mentioned 18 times)
- Engaging learning activities/subjects (mentioned 11 times)
- Positive relationships with staff (mentioned 8 times)
- Feeling safe and supported (mentioned 6 times)
- Sense of routine and structure (mentioned 4 times)

Participants identified several key factors that encourage daily attendance, including the opportunity to socialise with friends, engaging learning activities and subjects, positive relationships with staff, feeling safe and supported, and having a sense of routine and structure.

*"I look forward to seeing staff (p6) nurture (p4) and spending time with friends (p4)."* (Primary school pupils)

*"Buses mean that young people have to be organised. The school building is calm and ordered and a good place to be. Nurturing environment and small schools mean young people are known."* (Secondary school parent)

## 4. What makes it harder for you/your child to come to school every day?

The most common responses were:

- Anxiety/mental health issues (mentioned 10 times)
- Difficulty with morning routines (mentioned 9 times)
- Bullying or negative peer interactions (mentioned 8 times)
- Tiredness/lack of sleep (mentioned 7 times)
- Challenges with specific subjects or learning (mentioned 5 times)

Participants identified various barriers to daily attendance, including anxiety and mental health issues, difficulty with morning routines, bullying or negative peer interactions, tiredness or lack of sleep, and challenges with specific subjects or learning.

*"My child can be unwell, so health can stop her being in school every day."* (Primary school parent)

*"I dread the thought of catching up after having fallen behind due to non-attendance. Sometimes feels that I physically can't get out of bed. I dread the thought of coming in which physically prevents me from coming to school. This can cause arguments at home."* (Secondary school pupil)

## **5. How can the school help you/your child come to school regularly?**

The most common responses were:

- Improved communication between school and parents (mentioned 8 times)
- More support for children with additional needs (mentioned 5 times)
- Engaging learning activities (mentioned 4 times)
- Addressing bullying and negative peer interactions (mentioned 3 times)
- Flexibility in start times and schedules (mentioned 3 times)

Participants suggested that schools could help improve attendance by enhancing communication with parents, providing more support for children with additional needs, offering engaging learning activities, addressing bullying and negative peer interactions, and allowing some flexibility in start times and schedules.

*"Include everybody when talking about things if things have gone wrong (people hurting others). Mondays are too busy, have something exciting to start the day - Forest Schools, Outdoor Learning, Art, PE, Physical Activity. More science, clubs, technology, physical activity."* (Primary school pupil)

*"Keep open communication with me about my child's attendance and raise any issues early."* (Primary school parent)

## **6. Is there anything else you want to share about going to school every day?**

The most common responses were:

- Concerns about missing learning or activities when absent (mentioned 4 times)
- Importance of school as part of the community (mentioned 2 times)
- Desire for more comfortable uniforms or dress codes (mentioned 2 times)
- Appreciation for school staff and support (mentioned 2 times)

Participants shared additional thoughts on daily school attendance, including concerns about missing learning or activities when absent, the importance of school as part of the community, a desire for more comfortable uniforms or dress codes, and appreciation for school staff and support.

*"Sometimes I worry about missing out on things when I'm not there."* (Primary school pupil)

*"Personally I think children with Autism would thrive if they could attend mainstream but change the curriculum, stop worrying about attainment do more stuff for kids like life skills, car stuff, apprenticeship."* (Primary and secondary school parent)

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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