



# Achieving High Attendance

**Guidance for Schools & Alternative Provision  
Academies 2015 Update**

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# **Achieving high attendance: Guidance for Schools and Alternative Provision Academies**

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## **Section 1: Purpose of this Guidance**

The guidance is for Schools, Academies and Alternative Provision Academies (APAs) in Cornwall. Throughout this document the term 'schools' will include academies and APAs.

This guidance provides an overview of procedures to be followed when a pupil's absenteeism requires legal intervention, as well as offering guidelines around supporting parents and students when attendance is falling.

The guidance aims to:

- Outline the legal measures available to help reduce levels of pupil absence
- Advise on the processes in place that support schools in taking legal action

Missing education leaves children at risk of not achieving their potential. Regular school attendance also plays a key role in effective safeguarding. All schools must have robust procedures in place for monitoring pupil admission, attendance and punctuality.

# Achieving high attendance:

## Guidance for Schools and Alternative Provision Academy's

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### Section 2: The law

The law defines compulsory school age as between 5 and 16 years old.

#### Parents

Parents<sup>1</sup> must secure appropriate full-time education for children of compulsory school age. The education must be suited to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child may have. Parents can secure education for their child by registering the child with a school or in some other way. A child who is registered with a school must attend regularly and punctually.

#### Children's Services Authority

As a local authority (LA), Cornwall Council must ensure that:

- There are enough school places for the children in its area
- Parents secure full-time education for their children

#### Schools

Schools must:

- record attendance at the start of the school day and during the afternoon on a paper or computer register
- inform the LA if:
  - a pupil fails to attend regularly
  - a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row. The school should tell the LA why the pupil is absent if it knows.
- record in the register whether absence is authorised or unauthorised

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<sup>1</sup> In this guide, we use 'parents' to mean 'parents, parent, carers or carer'

- publish the percentage and number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the governor's annual report and prospectus
- comment on any unauthorised absence in pupils' annual reports
- allow Cornwall Council to inspect the register during school hours.

## Legislation

If a child is not receiving full-time education, or if a pupil who is registered with a school repeatedly fails to attend, then Cornwall Council can use:

- the Education Act 1996, sections 437 and 438 (school attendance orders)
- the Education Act 1996, section 443 (offence of failing to comply with school attendance order)
- the Education Act 1996, section 444 (offence of failing to ensure that a child attends school regularly)
- the Children Act 1989, section 36 (education supervision orders)

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## Section 3: Registers

The register is a legal document. We may need to use it as evidence in court. You must have clear procedures for completing the register. Teachers must fill it in neatly and accurately.

### Completing the paper register

Teachers must:

- complete the register in ink
- not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when they call the register
- Not leave any spaces in the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly, distinguishing between the original entry and the correction. Both the original entry and any correction must be preserved
- Not allow pupils to mark the register
- Mark pupils who are present / (*am*) and \ (*pm*)
- Mark pupils who are absent O. Your school can use different colours for authorised and unauthorised absence
- Mark pupils who arrive late but before the register is closed *L*
- Mark pupils who arrive after the register is closed *U* (see Section 3 for more information).

You should display instructions for filling in the register on its inside cover.

### Computerised registration systems

There are many computer based systems but not all will suit a particular school's needs.

#### Advantages of computerised systems

- The DFE requires all school to publish their previous year's attendance statistics in their annual reports. Computerised systems can help with this.
- Computerised systems contain up to date information and are easy for staff to access.

- Computerised systems free up staff time by removing the need for tutors and year heads to carry out complicated calculations.

### **Deciding to introduce a computerised system**

We advise you to:

- Ensure that all staff are committed to computerisation
- Decide who will be responsible for managing the system
- Plan the training for all staff
- Inform staff of the benefits of the system, while acknowledging that there may be difficulties adjusting to it
- Support all staff, especially those who will be most affected, for example office staff and form tutors
- Decide how you will use the information the system produces.

### **Introducing a computerised system**

Piloting the system, for example with one year group, can help iron out initial problems without disrupting the whole school. It can also enable a group of teachers to develop expertise and act as mentors for other staff.

Staff are likely to need extra time to set up the system and agree procedures.

### **Using the schools information management system (SIMS)**

Some schools are using SIMS on its own, while others are using both SIMS and a paper system. We advise you to consider which option is better for your school. SIMS requires good procedures. Ideally, a named person in the school office should be responsible for the day-to-day management of SIMS.

## **Issues**

### **Data input**

Information from the SIMS register sheets can be entered into a computer manually or with a scanner. It can help if a member of the office staff takes on this task.



## **Printing official registers**

Official registers should be printed each month and filed. It can be helpful for tutors to receive printouts of their group's attendance each week for monitoring and tracking purposes.

## **Registration certificate**

This is a printout of an individual pupil's attendance record. It is an effective way of sharing information about pupils' attendance with parents. Some schools target pupils with less than 90 per cent attendance during any one term.

## **Use of data**

Arrangements should be made to display or circulate information about absences to the appropriate member of staff so that they can be followed up.

## **Fire drill**

Consideration should be made as to how computerisation will affect fire-drill procedures. It is important to consider your fire-drill routines carefully and adapt them if necessary.

## **Avoiding Problems:**

### **Failure to return registers**

Tutors should return registers immediately after registration. This will prevent delays in entering the information onto the system.

### **Failure of the scanner to read sheets**

The scanner will not read unclear marks. This problem will not be detected until the register is printed. To prevent delays tutors should be given clear instructions for filling in the sheets.

### **Failure to mark at registration**

It is important to mark all pupils at registration. The register should not be left open in case a pupil arrives later. Leaving the register open can cause serious problems later, for example if parents query their child's attendance.

## **Entering a reason for absence**

It is important to enter the reason for any absence on the absence form as soon as possible. There should be a clear procedure in place for following up and entering information about unexplained absences to avoid the number of these absences accruing as the term progresses.

## **Organisation of the register**

Initially, the SIMS sheets and the information produced by the computer can seem more difficult to interpret than the old registers. Tutors will need a well-organised register folder where everything is easy to find, for example a folder with clear A4 pockets.

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## **Section 4: Authorised and Unauthorised absence**

Pupil attendance and absence has to be legally recorded in accordance with the fixed codes set out within the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

**Schools, academies and APAs can only consider/request legal action for non-attendance at school when the absence is unauthorised.**

### **Should an absence be authorised or unauthorised?**

An absence should not automatically be recorded as authorised because it is covered by a note from the pupil's parent/carer.

It must only be recorded as authorised if:

- The pupil has been granted leave of absence which has been approved beforehand by the school (this includes Traveller absence) or
- The pupil is unable to attend either because of sickness or some other unavoidable cause or on a day that the pupil's and parents/carers' religion sets aside for religious observance.

Once authorised, an absence may not subsequently be amended to unauthorised.

## **Lateness: when it is not authorised?**

Lateness before the close of registration is recorded as (L) and counts as a present mark. If a child is late after the register is closed without an acceptable reason, then a U code should be entered. This counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session. If a child is persistently late after the register has closed and does not have genuine reasons, then legal action can be taken on the basis of the number of U codes accrued. A school can consider issuing a Penalty Notice in these circumstances, providing it meets the criteria in the Cornwall Code of Conduct. Please see Section 6 for more information on Penalty Notices.

## **What schools should do in the event of pupil absence and what help is available.**

All schools should try to determine the reasons for any absence. Where there continues to be concern, schools should meet with parents/carers to discuss the reasons for the absence and to plan strategies for improvement and agree a plan of action.

As an outcome of the meeting there should be a clear plan of action within the school and at home. The plan should set out what is expected of the child, the parents/carers, the school and supporting agencies. It should be shared with each party.

There will be cases where, despite intervention, there has been no satisfactory improvement in a pupil's attendance and unauthorised absences continue to accrue. The case should then be discussed with the Education Welfare Service who will offer advice on how to proceed.

## **Medical Absences**

Where medical issues affect a child's absence, schools should ensure that they are meeting the educational needs of that child. Guidance is available for all schools at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/306952/Statutory\\_guidance\\_on\\_supporting\\_pupils\\_at\\_school\\_with\\_medical\\_conditions.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306952/Statutory_guidance_on_supporting_pupils_at_school_with_medical_conditions.pdf)

If a child has persistent absence due to medical issues, then schools should work with families and professionals to support access to education. Should a school feel that they have reason to believe

absences are not justified, they can request medical evidence before authorising further absences.

## **Travelling Families**

The absences of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised (T) if it is believed that the family intends to return. Further advice is available from our Traveller Education Service.

## **Family holidays and extended holidays during term time**

Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school.

But parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised.

You should not allow an absence for a family holiday unless the situation is exceptional. You must not set blanket policies for deciding which situations are exceptional. You must consider each situation individually.

If a pupil goes on holiday during term time without permission, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised (G). Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school, in accordance with Cornwall Councils Code of Conduct regarding Penalty Notices. More information on penalty notices can be found in Section 6.

We provide a sample guidance sheet (see Appendix 2) that can be used on request forms for term-time leave. This allows parents to understand the importance of not taking leave and warns them of potential action that could be taken against unauthorised leave.

## **Changes of address / Missing Children**

If you suspect that a pupil's family has moved away from the area without giving you its new address, you must tell the EWS. The school and /or the EWS must make a reasonable attempt to find out where the pupil has gone, by following the Child Missing Education (CME) Protocol (see Appendix) If you are unable to find out where the pupil has gone, you must take the pupil off the school roll after four weeks. You can then record the time since the pupil last attended school as authorised absence.

The EWS provides schools with information from other LAs about missing children. You should tell the EWS if you admit a child who may have been missing. (See Appendix for CME Protocol)

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## Section 6: Legal Measures available to school for non-attendance

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at school for tackling persistent absence or lateness:

- Voluntary Parenting Contracts (set in Education Planning Meetings) EPMs
- Parenting Orders (as a result of a Magistrates Court appearance)
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders (Application to Family Court)
- Prosecution (Only the Local Authority can prosecute parents/carers)

Parenting contracts are available as a measure to support improved attendance for children of non-compulsory school age, until a child turns 5 in Reception Year, in a 6<sup>th</sup> Form or a maintained Nursery.

### Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice for non-attendance can be issued when a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non-approval of a parent/carers request for leave of absence
- A holiday that has been taken without permission

For 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions, where the parent has been previously warned.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 and 2007 require that all persons issuing a Penalty Notices do so within the Local Authority's Code of Conduct available at :

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/education-welfare/education-related-penalty-notices-for-truancy/>

A Headteacher or other authorised person (as defined by Cornwall Council's Code of Conduct) can make the decision to issue a Penalty Notice. Under the Code of Conduct, the Local Authority coordinates the issuing of Penalty Notices on behalf of schools and academies. Once issued, the Local Authority will track the payment and liaise with the school for further actions.

Where a head teacher requests a Penalty Notice, they should have undertaken the following actions:

- a) Issued a Penalty Notice Warning on a first offence or request for leave if not to be authorised.
- b) Consider whether a Penalty Notice is an appropriate intervention, referring to the Code of Conduct.
- c) Request the LA to Issue a Penalty Notice following a second offence or where leave was taken following a warning being given on a refusal.

Penalty Notices are also considered by the Education Welfare Service at Education Planning Meetings as a possible measure to address truancy or parentally condoned absences.



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## **Section 7: Recording, monitoring and setting targets**

### **Recording attendance**

If you record information about attendance effectively, you will be able to:

- report to parents
- report to governors
- provide the LA with the information it needs to monitor your performance
- provide the information required by the DFE
- find out how you can improve attendance
- set targets for individual pupils, teaching groups, year groups and the school as a whole

### **Monitoring attendance**

To monitor attendance effectively, you should:

- use the same registration procedures throughout your school
- use different codes for authorised and unauthorised absence
- keep track of pupils during the day
- have a system, possibly spot checks, to tackle truancy after registration
- provide guidelines for form tutors on keeping registers and improving attendance
- appoint senior and experienced teachers as form tutors. You may wish to appoint new teachers as co-form tutors and provide training before they take on the role alone.
- Provide clear information to the EWS so that it can detect patterns of absence quickly and intervene early

### **Setting targets**

The DFE requires LA's to set targets for reducing absence. In addition, a school must set targets to reduce unauthorised absence 'significantly' if unauthorised absence at the school has been above the national average for the past two years.

We recommend that **all** schools set yearly targets for increasing attendance and reducing unauthorised absence.

We can help you meet your targets by:

- Arranging for the EWS to meet the Headteacher to draw up a plan to increase attendance
- Meeting the Headteacher each year to consider whether the targets have been met

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## Section 8: Attendance Strategies

We encourage all schools to devise strategies to achieve their attendance targets.

### Attendance policies (also see Appendix 4)

All schools should publish a policy on attendance. This should involve school staff, the EWS, governors, parents and pupils. The policy should be clear and well publicised. It should set out clear procedures for registration, for following up absences, and for preventing truancy after registration. You should update the policy regularly.

It is essential to have an effective policy on bullying to go with your attendance policy.

### Aims of attendance policies

Your policy should aim to:

- Promote a welcoming atmosphere that makes pupils feel safe and valued
- Encourage good relationships between the school and parents
- Stress the importance of good attendance
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and absence followed up quickly
- Ensure that all pupils receive suitable teaching and receive rewards for success.

### Content of attendance policies

Your policy should ensure that:

- Attendance and punctuality is a high priority
- Legal requirements are met, especially the requirement to identify unauthorised absence
- Attendance figures are accurate and up-to-date

Procedures are in place to detect and quickly follow up unexplained absences, patterns of absence and truancy after registration.

- Procedures are in place to follow up long absences and repeated short absences
- Short and long-term targets are set for individual pupils, as well as groups of pupils
- Good attendance and punctuality is rewarded, linked to the school merit system, homework diaries and records of achievement
- Procedures are in place for helping children settle in after long absences
- Measures are taken to ensure that all pupils benefit from attending school, including pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language
- Class teachers get to know the pupils and are aware of anything that might affect their attendance
- School staff meet the EWS regularly
- There is good communication with other agencies, including the Traveller Education Service, Cornwall Educational Psychology Service, the health service, social services (including the Education Support Service and Inclusion Project officers), the police, the youth offending teams and Connexions
- Staff deal with authorised and unauthorised absence fairly
- There is good liaison when a pupil changes school
- Parents and governors are aware of attendance matters
- Good practice is shared with other schools.

## **Raising awareness of attendance**

You can improve attendance by making sure parents, pupils and staff are aware of its importance and of their responsibilities.

### **Parents**

- Use newsletters and other communications to remind parents how they can help the school to achieve good attendance and punctuality. You should translate these into other languages that parents read.
- Include information in your prospectus about your expectations for attendance.
- Involve parents in meetings about attendance
- Involve parents in initiatives to encourage attendance

- Invite parents to assemblies that focus on attendance and reward good attendance
- Invite the EWS to parent's evenings to give advice on attendance and other welfare matters.

## **Pupils**

- Make it clear that registration is important
- Give rewards for good attendance, such as certificates, mugs and badges, to individual groups and classes (see Appendix 8)
- Use assemblies to discuss attendance, present statistics and reward good and improved attendance
- Arrange displays around the school showing attendance rates and targets
- Use homework or pupil diaries to inform parents of pupils' attendance and any rewards they have earned
- Deal with poor attendance in a way that is effective and fair.

## **Staff**

- Discuss attendance at staff meetings
- Arrange special meetings on attendance
- Make attendance the theme of INSET days and other training for staff. The EWS may be able to attend and share good practice from other schools. This will help staff to understand why pupils do not attend school. It will also train them to deal with different kinds of absence in different ways
- Make attendance the special responsibility of a senior member of staff who can influence the school's decisions.
- Publish the attendance rates of each class in weekly bulletins for staff.

If you wish to develop initiatives to improve and promote attendance in your school, there are additional suggestions in the Appendix.

## **Pupils returning after an absence**

You should have procedures to help pupils catch up when they return after an absence. We suggest that:

- Pastoral staff, particularly the form tutor, take special responsibility for encouraging pupils to attend school and helping them settle back in
- Subject departments have procedures to help pupils catch up
- New staff receive training in helping pupils with poor attendance.

## **Practices for dealing with absence**

- If a pupil is absent without explanation, contact the parents as soon as is possible, preferably on the first day
- If a pupil is absent for more than three days without an explanation, write to the parents. Keep a copy of the letter and record the date it was posted.
- If a pupil returns from absence without a letter of explanation, write to the parents asking why the pupil was absent
- Date and initial notes from parents, records of telephone calls and medical certificates. Store these in a secure place, as they may contain sensitive information
- If an explanation for absence is not satisfactory, or if the absence continues, invite the parents to school to discuss any difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending. You should do this as soon as possible, so that the problem is tackled early
- If a child is repeatedly late, contact the parents. Repeated lateness can affect a pupil's education as much as poor attendance
- Update your absence records each week to detect short but frequent absences

## **Secondary schools**

Secondary schools may need to take extra steps, including:

- Taking a register for each lesson, to prevent truancy from individual lessons
- Using the senior management team to deal with pupils who are late.

## **Head of year or house**

In secondary schools, heads of year or house should take special responsibility for attendance. This should involve:

- Checking the registers each week
- Working with tutors to devise and act upon plans to tackle poor attendance
- Contacting the parents of pupils with poor attendance and discussing the problem with the EWS.

## **The role of parents**

It is the parent's responsibility to tell the school as soon as possible why a pupil is absent and to provide any further information that the school needs. Each school should make its own arrangements for parents to report absences. These should take into account the school's policy and of any special situations of individual pupils.

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## Section 9: The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The main role of the Council's EWS is to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. The EWS does so in partnership with school and parents. The EWS provides different levels of Service Level Agreements (SLA).

All schools, regardless of whether they hold an SLA or not, must refer any child to EWS where the child:

- Is removed from school to be Electively Home Educated. More information is available at: <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/elective-home-education/>
- Has been 'missing' from school and no contact can be made with parents. (See Appendix )

### How can the EWS support school attendance?

The EWS can help you if you cannot find out why a pupil is absent or if you cannot ensure that a pupil attends regularly. An educational welfare officer (EWO) can contact the child's family and can offer advice if a child is absent without good reason.

Initially, schools are responsible for identifying and dealing with absence. You must tell the EWS if a pupil is frequently absent (for example for more than one day a week) or if a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row.

It is important to work in partnership with the EWS. School staff and the EWO should understand each other's role and responsibilities. Staff such as year heads should set aside time to meet the EWO.

As well as advising staff on individual cases, the EWO may:

- Help to explain the importance of attendance to staff, pupils, parents and governors
- Take part in joint initiatives with the school, including personal and social education, group work with poor attenders and liaison between primary and secondary schools.



## **Referrals to the Education Welfare Service (Full SLA):**

All schools should have procedures in place to address poor attendance. This section provides details on how the EWS manages referrals:

### **Stage 1: Referral to the Education Welfare Service**

Before making a referral to the EWS, you must try to contact the parent to resolve the problem.

You may choose to make a referral to the EWS if you are concerned about a pupil's absence. You may make a referral to the EWS if a pupil has had 10 or more unauthorised half-day absences during any 100 half days.

You must make the referral on form EWS1 (see Appendix 1). You must give the EWS details of the pupil's attendance for the past 100 half days.

### **Stage 2: Action plan**

On receiving a referral, an EWO will try to contact the pupil's parents within five working days. On contacting the parents, the EWO will normally arrange a home visit to assess the situation. The home visit usually takes place within a further five working days. The home visit should result in a plan setting out actions with timescales and their intended results. The EWO will try to agree the action plan with the family, the school and any other agencies involved and the plan will set out the roles and responsibilities of each. The EWS will produce the action plan within five working days of the home visit and will send a copy to the school as soon as possible.

The EWS records information about all referrals for non-attendance, including the pupil's attendance for the most recent 100 half days. This enables the team manager to monitor the effectiveness of the service by comparing attendance before and after the EWS became involved.

### **Stage 3: Internal review of attendance**

Starting 10 days after the receipt of the referral, the EWO monitors the pupil's attendance for 100 half days. If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half day's unauthorised absence during this period, the EWS may close the case. You can refer the case back to the EWS at any time.

If a pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence, the EWS will arrange an internal attendance review as quickly as possible (normally within two weeks). At the review, the EWO will discuss the

case with the Senior EWO/ Principal EWO and consider whether to start legal action. If the EWS decides not to start legal action, it will take some other action. For example it may call a family group conference, which must take place within six weeks of the review (see Appendix 3).

#### **Stage 4: First warning**

If the EWS decides to take legal action, it will send a first warning letter within five days of the review. The EWO will then monitor the pupil's attendance at least every two weeks for 10 weeks.

If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days of unauthorised absence in the next 100 half days, the EWS may close the case. You can make another referral to the EWS at any time.

If the pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence during the next 100 half days after the first warning, the EWS will hold an educational planning meeting within two weeks.

#### **Stage 5: Final warning**

The Educational Planning Meeting (EPM) will normally involve social care, the pupil, the pupil's family, the school and any other agencies involved. The meeting normally takes place at the pupil's school but it will be arranged and chaired by a senior EWO. At the meeting, the EWS will consider the case, consult social care about applying for an education supervision order, and decide whether to take legal action.

In some cases, the EWS will try other ways of improving attendance before serving a final warning. But it will serve a final warning within two weeks if a pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence during the next 100 half days. The legal action that the EWS will consider at an EPM will include:

- Applying for an education supervision order (the Children Act 1989, section 36)
- Prosecuting the parents (the Education act 1996, section 444).
- Issuing a Penalty Notice under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 and 2007.
- Issuing a Caution under Police & Criminal Evidence Act (1984).

#### **Stage 6: Prosecution**

If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days of unauthorised absence in the 100 half days after the final warning, the EWS may close the case. The school can refer the case back to the EWS at any time.

If the pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence, the EWS will prepare the papers for a prosecution immediately.

If a Parenting Order is recommended or given by the court, the EWS will inform Social Care.

### **Recording and monitoring cases**

The EWS will keep a record of each pupil who is referred for poor attendance. The record will include:

- The pupil's personal details
- The pupil's year group
- The date of the referral
- The stage that the case has reached
- The number of unauthorised absences

The Headteacher can ask to see this information on a monthly basis.

If the case is active, the EWO will monitor attendance at least once every fortnight.

### **Referring a case back to the Education Welfare Service**

If a school has to refer a closed case back to the EWS within 100 half days, the EWS will return to the stage at which the case was closed.

### **Termly register checks**

At least once each term the EWO must check the registers and give the team manager details of any pupils who have taken 20 or more unauthorised absences in any 10-week period.

### **Prosecution of parents of Year 11 pupils**

The LA can take legal action against the parents of any child of compulsory school age who is not attending school regularly. But it does not have to take legal action.

If the attendance of a Year 11 pupil has not improved after a final warning, the EWS will look at the individual situation, taking advice from the school and the Cornwall Council's Legal Department.

If a Year 11 pupil has less than one and a half terms of school left the EWS is unlikely to start a prosecution, though a Penalty Notice can be considered as an alternative in certain circumstances.

### **Applications for Education Supervision Orders**

A copy of our procedures for applying for education supervision orders is available from the EWS. Supervision of Education Supervision Orders currently resides with the Local Authority and Education Welfare Officers are trained to provide this role under the SLA.

### **School Attendance Orders and failure to comply with them**

We may issue a school attendance order if a child is not on the roll of any school and is not receiving suitable education elsewhere. We may prosecute parents who do not comply with a school attendance order.

A copy of our procedures for school attendance orders is available from the EWS.

### **Supporting Whole School Attendance**

EWS can also support schools in improving attendance, through the following measures:

- Review Attendance procedures and policies
- Advise and provide training to support staff in school in early intervention
- Hold 'Attendance Clinics' for parents where their child's attendance has fallen below 90%, agreeing action plans and setting targets.
- Monitor and track attendance trends and data to advise schools on targeting resources.
- Provide group work, school assemblies and attend parent events.

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## Appendix 1: Form for referring a case to the EWS



### EDUCATION

#### Education Welfare Service (Children, Schools & Families) – Referral

Name of pupil: M/F: Date of birth: Year Group:

Full name of parent/carer: School:

Address:

Home Tel No: Work Tel No:

Others with Parental Responsibility:

Other agencies involved:

Is pupil 'looked after' by Local Authority (LAC): Yes  No  Is pupil a 'young carer' (YC): Yes  No:

Statement of Special Educational Needs: Yes  No  Pending

Stage on Code of Practice:

#### Reason For Referral and Any Other Relevant Information

#### Prior Action Taken by Referrer (include details of contact with parents)

Attendance over the last 100 (half day) Sessions:

Authorised Absence over the last 100 (half day) Sessions:

Unauthorised Absence over the last 100 (half day) Sessions:

Please also attach computer print-out.

Please confirm that the parents have been informed of this referral to the EWS

Referred by: Title: Date: Attendance %:

**NB The information contained in this referral may be shared with the family**

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## **Appendix 2: Suggested guidance on parental applications for a family holiday**

### **Planning your holiday**

We publish the dates of school terms well ahead. This is to help you plan your holidays. When you book your holiday, please check that it does not clash with the school term.

### **The value of regular attendance**

Your child must attend school regularly, especially to gain qualifications for their future employment. Research shows that pupils perform better if their parents or carers emphasise the importance of attending school.

### **Your legal responsibilities**

You have a legal duty to make sure your child attends school regularly and punctually. The school and the local education authority monitor your child's attendance and will take action if it is poor.

### **Absence for a family holiday**

The Government recommends that family holidays are taken outside school terms. Headteachers will sometimes give permission for a pupil to go on holiday during term time. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the holiday, the pupil's past attendance, and the effects the absence will have on the pupil's learning. The Headteacher will not normally give permission simply because holidays cost less during term time.

The Headteacher will not normally give permission for more than 10 days' absence for a family holiday in any school year. Only in exceptional situations will the Headteacher give permission for a longer absence.

### **Applying for absence because of a family holiday**

If you have to take your family holiday during school term, please fill in the form over the page. Please do not assume that you will automatically get permission for the absence because you have filled in the form. Please wait to hear if the Headteacher agrees to your request.

### **Warning**

If you take your child out of school without permission you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may decide to prosecute. A conviction may result in a fine of up to £2,500, a prison sentence of up to three months or both. Alternatively a penalty notice may be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. Parents may be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action.

## **Appendix 3: Initiatives to improve school attendance**

### **Truancy Schemes**

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 16, introduces truancy schemes. A truancy scheme can be requested by the school, the EWS or the police but it must have the support of a police officer ranked superintendent or higher. The superintendent will specify the area and the hours in which the scheme will operate. A truancy scheme allows uniformed police to remove children found truanting in a public place. They must take the children to school or to another place specified by the Local Authority (LA). This requires co-operation between the police, the LA (in particular the EWS) and schools.

Cornwall and Devon Constabulary and Cornwall Council have agreed that both uniformed police officers and EWO's will take part in truancy schemes. These officers stop and speak to children who appear to be of compulsory school age and ask them why they are not in school. They may remove:

- Any child who is not with an adult
- Any child who is not with an adult that they consider at risk.

The police and the EWS record the details of all the children that they stop and pass them on to the relevant school. This information will include the reason given for not being in school. The school and the EWS will then decide what action to take.

Many parents of the children stopped so far have known that they were not in school, although the reasons given for the absence have often been unsatisfactory. We expect truancy schemes to improve attendance by making parents and children aware of its importance.

### **Family Group Conferences (FGC)**

FGCs are arranged by an independent co-ordinator. They usually take place at a neutral place and at a time that is convenient for the child's family. They involve the child, the child's immediate and extended family, and important family friends. Professionals attend for part of the meeting and give the family advice about the choices available to them and services that can help them. The family will have some time on its own to suggest a plan to tackle the child's poor attendance.

## **Decision to call a family group conference**

FGCs can be called for any child whose education is at risk. This may be because of poor attendance or because the child is at risk of exclusion because of behaviour problems. FGCs are preventive. Therefore they are normally for children in Years 1 to 8. But older pupils can also benefit from a FGC, especially those who agree to take part.

## **How family group conferences are called**

Any educational professional who works for the LA or the school can request an FGC. But they can only do so if the pupil and the pupil's family agree. Referral forms are available in schools, local education offices and the Council's Education Department.

## **Advantages of family group conferences**

- The pupil and family are more involved in the decisions. This makes them more likely to carry out actions that they agree to.
- The wider family shares responsibility for helping the pupil.
- The FGC is arranged and paid for by the FGC Service.
- The FGC can lead to better relationships between the school and the family.
- FGCs can result in improved school attendance, better behaviour or both.

## **Further information about family group conferences**

For more information, contact:

Resources Manager West

☎ 0300 1234 101

Location: Front Office

Social Services Office

The White House

24 Basset Road

Camborne TR14 8SL

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## **Appendix 4: Devising an attendance policy**



A written school policy is essential for improving attendance. The policy should be approved by your governing body.

### **Identifying current practice**

Many schools already have effective practices. These can form the basis of a good attendance policy. We recommend that you:

- Appoint a member of your senior management team responsible for identifying current practice.
- Involve all staff in identifying current practice. This will draw attention to practices that differ between years, houses and tutor groups. You can involve staff by:
  - i) Holding an INSET day
  - ii) Calling a staff meeting or setting up a working group
- Involve the EWO. The EWO can help the school to devise an attendance policy and set targets to improve attendance.

### **Questions to ask**

We suggest:

#### ***Liaison with primary schools***

- How do we liaise with primary schools about pupils' attendance? Who liaises with whom and how often?
- Do our feeder schools know about our attendance procedures? Do we know about theirs?

#### ***Registers***

- When do we take registers?
- How do we take registers?
- Do we all understand and use the DFE's definitions of authorised and unauthorised absence? Do we explain them clearly to all staff and pupils? (See Section 3)
- What codes do we use for different kinds of absence? (See Section 3)
- Who is responsible for checking that registers are accurate?

### **Statistics**

- Where do we record information about attendance?
- How do we break down the statistics on attendance? Do we break them down by years, houses and tutor groups?
- How do we use statistics on attendance?
- How do we communicate the statistics to staff, pupils, parents and governors?

### **Form tutor's role**

- What is the form tutor's role?
- Does the form tutor discuss attendance at tutor group meetings?
- How does the form tutor deal with poor attenders?
- How does the form tutor encourage good attendance?

### **Education Welfare Service**

- How do we refer cases to the EWO? (See Section 7)
- Do all staff understand how referrals work?
- Do all staff know who the EWO is?
- Do we invite the EWO to pastoral meetings or parents' evenings to raise awareness of attendance?

### **Parents**

- How do we tell parents about our policies and procedures?
- How do we tell parents about their child's attendance and about any concerns we have about absence?

### **Pupils**

- How do we explain our procedures and expectations to new pupils and current pupils?
- Do we discuss attendance at assemblies or tutor group meetings?
- How do we reward improvements in attendance?
- How do we help pupils settle back in when they have been absent?

### **Governors**

- How do we involve governors in attendance?
- Is there a governor with special responsibility for attendance?

### ***Tackling poor attendance***

- Do we act quickly when there are problems with attendance?
- Who contacts parents?
- When do we contact parents?
- What information do we give parents when we contact them?
- When do we invite parents to a meeting and who invites them?
- How do we deal with lateness?
- Who is responsible for making sure that our attendance procedures are working smoothly?
- Do teachers carry out spot checks to detect truancy after registration?

### ***Incentives***

- How do we encourage pupils to attend school?
- What rewards do we give for good, excellent and improving attendance?
- How do we involve parents?

### ***Curriculum***

- How do we make sure that pupils receive teaching in all areas of the curriculum?
- Do we have schemes to help pupils who struggle with reading and numeracy?
- How do we make sure that all pupils receive suitable teaching?

### ***Systems***

- Are there links between our attendance policy and our other policies, for example our policies on bullying and behaviour?
- Do we gather parent's views?
- What links do we have with other agencies?
- Do we need a plan to improve attendance throughout school? Do we have one?

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## Appendix 5: First response to absence

Most absences are short. You can greatly reduce these absences by following up all absences quickly. Research suggests that pupils are less likely to take time off for trivial reasons if they know the school will notice their absence and follow it up swiftly. Schools that contact pupil's homes on the first day of absence have cut short-term absences. This has led to lower rates of absence overall.

We recommend that:

- You remind parents that they have a responsibility to contact the school on the first day of an absence. You should also tell them what will happen if they do not contact the school or if they give an unacceptable reason for the absence
- You follow up absences in a fair way that is clear to all teachers, pupils and parents
- You make your procedures part of your school-wide attendance policy.

### Suggested procedures

- Every parent should provide the school with a contact telephone number. You should consider using this number to enquire about a pupil's absence.
- You should produce a list of all absent pupils as early as possible in the day. You can produce this from a computerised registration system or by highlighting names on photocopied class lists.
- Administrative staff should remove pupils from the list if they arrive late but their parents have telephoned in or if they are continuing an absence that you have already followed up. They should explain this to the form tutor in a note with the register.
- You should contact the homes of pupils who are still on the list as soon as possible. You will need to decide who is responsible for contacting parents. You could train a member of the school's administrative staff to make the calls. Or you could give this responsibility to the class teachers, form tutors or year heads.
- If you cannot contact the parents by telephone, you may send a letter immediately. This should ask why the child is absent,

remind the parents to contact the school immediately if the child is absent again, and ask them to confirm their contact telephone number.

- You should code each absence. Keep a note in the register of each action you have taken to follow up the absence and what the result was.
- You should use your normal procedures to deal with truancy, absence condoned by parents and repeated short absences. You may also refer the case to the EWS (see Section 7).

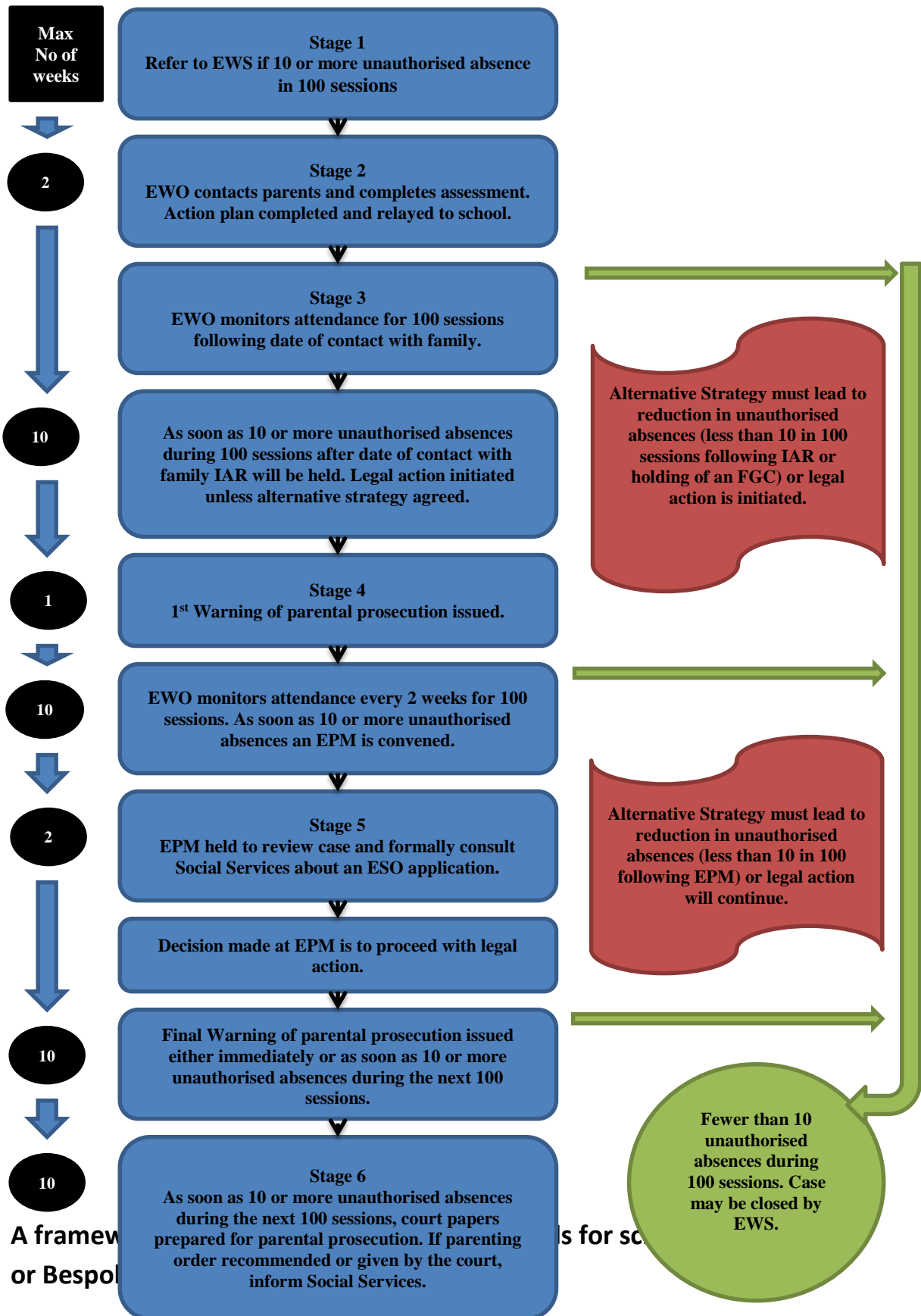
### **Comments**

- You should give staff enough time to follow these procedures.
- Most parents will support the procedures for following up absences if they know about them. Schools need to know where pupils are to make sure that they are safe, as well as to encourage attendance. Parents appreciate contact from the school when they realise that the school is concerned for their children.
- The cost of telephoning parents should fall as parents get used to ringing in and there are fewer absences.
- You will need to pay attention to recording telephone conversations and to communications between administrative and pastoral staff.

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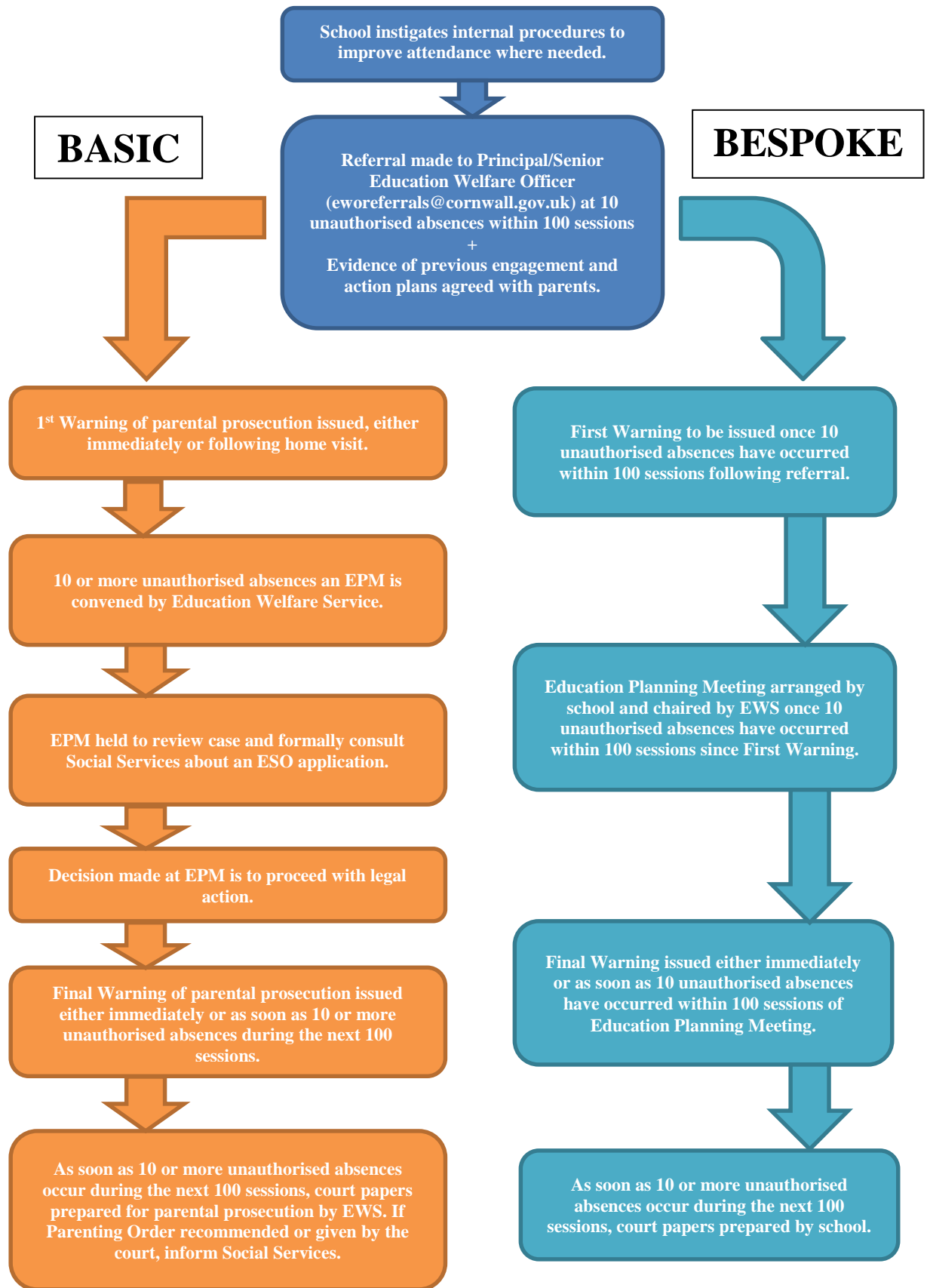
## **Appendix 6: Referral to EWS Flowcharts**

**A framework for managing attendance referrals for schools with a Full Service Level Agreement :**



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## Appendix 7: Attendance codes, Descriptions and Meanings

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised Absence
<b>D</b>	Dual Registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence
<b>G</b>	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>H</b>	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (not medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>P</b>	Approved Sporting Activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
<b>S</b>	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller Absence	Authorised Absence



<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
<b>U</b>	Late (after register closed)	Unauthorised Absence
<b>V</b>	Education Visit or Trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work Experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Non-Compulsory School Age Absence	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced Closure	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil Not Yet On role	Not Counted in Possible Attendances
<b>#</b>	School Closed To Pupils	Not Counted in Possible Attendances

More information and advice on the use of absence coding can be gained from the Education Welfare Service and by referring to the current Government Guidance at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/361008/Advice\\_on\\_school\\_attendance\\_sept\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/361008/Advice_on_school_attendance_sept_2014.pdf)

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## **Appendix 8: Child Missing Education (CME) Protocol**

## **Education, Health and Social Care**

### **Guidance on Children Missing Education**

#### **Introduction**

This guidance is intended to inform Local Authority (LA) Officers, Schools, Governing Bodies and other involved agencies about the procedures to be followed in order to identify and maintain contact with children missing education.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information. This principle underpins this guidance and there is an expectation that all agencies will work together to ensure children are safely on school rolls.

The Government has placed a duty on Local Authorities (Education and Inspection Bill 2006) to make arrangements to establish, (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age and not receiving a suitable education. This duty is now supported by statutory guidance.

#### **Procedures for Locating Missing/Lost Pupils**

Cornwall Local Authority (LA) is concerned about any child or young person who is missing from education. Every Local Authority is required to have systematic arrangements in place to identify children missing from education, so that suitable provision can be made for them. Where children are missing from school their educational attainment may be at risk as well as their safety and welfare.

#### **Cornwall LA is committed to ensuring:**

- That all pupils who go missing or are lost from schools in Cornwall and move to other areas are speedily located
- Support is given to other LAs to locate their own missing/lost pupils

#### **Who are Children Missing Education (CME)?**

Children of compulsory school age who are:

- Not on a school roll
- Not being educated other than at school e.g. privately or in alternative provision
- Identified as having been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more)

#### **Why Do Children Go Missing from Education?**

There are a number of reasons why a child may not be accessing education and hence be deemed missing. These include a child who:

- Fails to start appropriate provision and hence never enters the system
- Ceases to attend, due to exclusion or withdrawal
- Fails to complete a transition between providers (e.g. being unable to find a suitable school place after moving to a new LA, failing to make a successful transition at Year 6-7)

There are also a number of more serious circumstances by which a child could go missing from education and as a result all children and young people who go missing from education in Cornwall are deemed to be at risk. A child missing education could be a missing child.

### **Identifying Children Missing Education**

To reduce the risk of children and young people becoming lost to the education system, Cornwall LA has established a pupil tracking system in order to:

- Locate, monitor and track all school aged children who are not on a school roll
- Act as a link with other statutory bodies and services to ensure that all children missing education are promptly identified and re-engaged with educational provision
- Implement a range of systematic processes and procedures to track potentially vulnerable children who leave Cornwall with an unknown destination.

### **Transfer of Information**

The DofE has developed a secure internet site for the transfer of information Common Transfer Files (CTF) from school to school (s2s) when a child moves school. On the home page for s2s there is a description of the process.

### **How Can Schools Help?**

Schools are asked to complete a referral form to their Education Welfare Officer should they become aware of the arrival or existence of a child in Cornwall not in education (See Appendix 3). This will help ensure that vulnerable children and young people in Cornwall do not "slip through the net".

When a pupil is expected to join the school either at a normal time of starting (e.g. nursery, reception or Year 7), or at any time and s/he does not arrive, the school should normally make contact with the parents by telephone or letter. If no contact is made the school should ask the admissions department if the child has registered elsewhere.

If a pupil is absent from school for a prolonged period or fails to return from a holiday the school should follow the normal procedures for investigating pupil absence.

If a pupil “disappears” without warning the school should immediately notify the Education Welfare Service.

If the Education Welfare Officer, after completing the missing children check list, (Appendix 1) concluded all the enquiries and the child remains missing, the school should discuss the removal of the child from the school register with the Education Welfare Service. If agreed, and removal complies with Legislation, DofE Guidance and local arrangements, the school should send the pupils Common Transfer File (CTF) to the DofE S2S (School to school) site.

Should the child be on the Child Protection Register or should the school have a particular child protection concern about the child, the school should immediately notify the local Social Care duty team.

Whenever a pupil joins or leaves the school then a Common Transfer File (CTF) must accompany him/her.

### **Enquiries From Other Local Authorities**

Where another LA contacts Cornwall seeking help regarding a missing child, the Children Missing Education Officer will search for the missing pupil on the Education Management System (EMS) data base. If the child is found, the enquiring LA will be contacted.

### **Note**

Should a child leave a Cornwall school in order to be home educated by his/her parents, go to an independent school or to a school outside England, the school, on receiving written confirmation of the parents intentions should remove the child’s name from the school roll and notify the Local Authority. The school should then send the CTF to the DofE S2S database, so that the CTF goes in the data base of pupils who have moved outside the maintained system.

### **Alternative formats**

If you would like this information in another format please contact:  
**Cornwall Council, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY**

Telephone: **0300 1234 100** email: [enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk)

[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

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