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## School Attendance Service

Toolkit

2022/23

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# Mission Statement

Together in truth and faith we learn and grow as God's family

At St Francis, we show the joy of being the children of God:

## TRUTH

Truth and love are at the heart of our school

## FAITH

By following in Jesus' footsteps, our faith is strengthened

## LEARN

We promote and nurture the uniqueness of every child while striving for excellence in God's presence

## GROW

As part of the family of St Francis we grow closer to God through our daily words and actions

# **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SERVICE TOOLKIT**

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## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SERVICE TOOLKIT

The School Attendance Service work with schools and families to ensure regular school attendance, by breaking down barriers to education and by recognising the Local Authority statutory responsibilities. The service fulfils both the Local Authorities statutory and non-statutory functions in relation to compulsory school age children and young people.

Our objective is for all children and young people to access their entitlement to quality education in Leeds schools and make progress to the best outcomes in attainment and personal achievement. The School Attendance Service has created this Toolkit to provide all schools and academies with access to support and advice, based on DFE statutory attendance guidance 2019 and acknowledged best practice around attendance processes.

### Section 1 Context of Attendance – Roles and responsibilities

#### 1.1 Parental duty and context of school attendance

The duty of a parent in relation to the education of their children is found in the Education Act 1996 Section 7 of the Act which states:

**“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable:**

- **to his or her age, ability and aptitude; and**
- **to any special education needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.**

The expectation in law is that most parents will ensure access to full time education in school. Poor attendance is known to lead to less positive outcomes with children and young people missing out on learning and access to specific support where this is needed.

The government expects schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

**(DFE School Attendance Guidance 2020)**

We recognise that there are many issues and variable contexts in the life of a child/young person that can result in poor attendance. Leeds City Council believe that it is imperative

that we all work together to tackle the underlying causes that lead to poor attendance, being aware of the negative effect on the likelihood of positive outcomes for the child where education is missed.

The School Attendance Service are experienced in supporting schools to raise overall and individual pupil attendance. The Service provides:

- advice to schools on methods to improve school attendance
- advice on attendance register coding
- direct work with parents/carers and pupils (where requested)
- the statutory role for Leeds City Council where specific or irregular attendance leads to legal intervention
- training for schools on a range of attendance matters
- safeguarding visits to children missing education whereabouts known prior to joining a school role

## **1.2 Expectations of schools**

The DFE School Attendance Guidance 2020 provides advice to schools and the LA on maintaining high levels of school attendance. Schools are encouraged to read alongside this, the statutory guidance on parental measures for school attendance and behaviour.

All Schools need to ensure that they follow their own Attendance Policy and procedures offering support to the pupil and family to improve attendance prior to referral to the School Attendance Service.

## **1.3 Statutory responsibilities undertaken by the School Attendance Service**

**Legal Intervention.** The local authority has a statutory responsibility to uphold the law and the rights of children and young people to access education. Where necessary, this includes taking legal action against parents under sections 7, 19, 436A, 437-39, 443-447 of the Education Act 1996 and sections 8-10 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Team Managers will quality assure all legal cases transferred from schools and academies against our Code of Conduct and our ethical responsibility of legal action being in the public interest.

Children Missing Education from school include those that fail to join the school roll after a place has been allocated and those that stop attending and cannot be traced. All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify the local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points.

All schools must follow the Leeds City Council CME procedures, completing the CME forms and emailing them to the local authority.

- Academies to email the completed form to [CME@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:CME@leeds.gov.uk)

- Maintained schools to email the completed form to [schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk)

CME referral forms will **not** be accepted unless reasonable enquires have been made by the school **and** a home visit has been undertaken.

## **1.4 Children Missing Education**

Please note the form and information are subject to change. Please check CME information on [leedsforlearning](http://leedsforlearning.co.uk) for their current form and guidance:

CME Resources: <https://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Page/15731>

CME Training and Events: <https://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk/Training?Id=2452>

## **1.5 Core roles undertaken by the School Attendance Service**

**Children Missing Education (CME whereabouts known).** Children new to the city or no school place offered. Attendance Improvement Officers will work together with parents, schools and the admissions department to secure a school place.

**Elective Home Education (EHE).** When a parent/carer has elected to home educate and failed to provide evidence of a suitable education, the case is referred to an Attendance Improvement Officer to work with the family to complete the forms providing evidence of education or return the child to school. If this is not successful, then the School Attendance Order process will commence.

## **1.6 Medical Needs**

### **Guidance and good practice recommendations on the recording of school attendance for children and young people with short and long term medical conditions – October 2019**

This guidance is provided to support the implementation of DFE statutory guidance and best practice regarding school attendance processes for pupils with

1. Short term medical illness
2. Long term medical conditions including where the child or young person may regularly attend clinic appointments.

This guidance has been developed with health care professionals, Medical Needs Teaching Service, School Attendance Service and in response to the young people's feedback from 'In Your Shoes' events and the Youth forum. This updates information sent out in the previous year.

The guidance outlines

1. Parents responsibilities

2. Schools/Academies – best practice
3. Health care professionals responsibilities

### **Parents' responsibility**

1. Under 1996 Education Act parents responsibility to ensure that their child accessing education either through school or otherwise. If the child is ill the parents are expected to provide access to medical support for the child and let the child's school know that they are unable to attend due to a specific medical reason and communicate regularly with the school. The school will code the non-attendance as authorised if they have clear medical evidence.
2. Where children have medical/dental/hospital appointments, parents need to bring to the school evidence of dates of appointments for non-attendance on this specific dates and time to be correctly coded. Wherever possible parents/carers are expected to return the child to school after an appointment to reduce their time away from learning to the minimum.
3. Where there is a long-term medical need or condition, parents should communicate regularly with healthcare professionals and school regarding any concerns over school attendance to ensure that the support received is meeting the pupils' needs. Pupils with long term medical conditions will often be best placed to provide information to the school about how their condition affects them and what adjustments are needed to support their attendance and learning.

### **Local Authority advice on best practice for schools and academies**

The principle of best practice is to ensure that there is an understanding between the school and the family on the context of the medical need and the specific needs of the child at that time. The coding for non-attendance due to illness is below and is the same for short and long term non- attendance.

1. Where the child has a long-term condition, schools are advised to designate a member of staff to work with the health care professional, parent and child to complete an Individual Health Care Plan.
2. Best practice would be to have a designated person such as SENCO or Learning Mentor or Head of year as this person that parents and health care workers can communicate with and who will understand and advocate for the young person's needs.
3. The purpose of the plan is to ensure schools know how to support the child in school effectively and would be reviewed regularly – at least once a year but also if medical needs/medication changes schools are encouraged to have open communication with health professionals to ensure that absence is recorded accurately. The named health professional should be named on the pupil's individual health care plan, this will support communication around attendance.

4. All school staff working directly with the pupil should be aware of pupils' medical appointments and ensure that pupils have opportunity to access missed work and teachers input.

## **Attendance Codes**

### **Use of 'I' coding (Authorised absence) for illness:**

- Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness.
- Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness.

### **Use of 'M' coding (Authorised absence) for medical appointments:**

- Pupils with medical conditions who are attending planned appointments should be recorded by school as an authorised absence 'M' (Medical appointments) on the register. Parents should provide evidence of the appointment in advance of the date.
- Pupils should be encouraged to attend school before or after their appointment if appropriate and it is expected they should be in uniform to return to school. Where this is not possible due to distance/travel time school can record the absence for both sessions as 'M' at the discretion of the head teacher.

### **Use of 'V' Coding (Present Mark)**

- Where there is information provided by parent that the appointment is for a specific educational session with medical practitioners where there is a set of learning activities – (as for example learning about issues regarding their illness and treatment) this can be recorded as present mark 'V'.

### **Use of 'B' coding (Present Mark)**

- Hospital Admissions – During an admission to hospital if a pupil receives education and this is confirmed by the health practitioner, the education can be recorded as 'B' (Off-site educational activity) for 1 session per day.
- Medical Needs Teaching Services (MNTS) – When a pupil is receiving tuition from the MNTS in an alternative setting including the pupils home this should be recorded as 'B'

## **Healthcare professionals' responsibilities**

1. It is expected that the appropriate health care professional will provide parents/carers with medical appointment letters and specific educational session information – for parents to share with schools.
2. That the appropriate health care professional will liaise with the child/young person's school to improve communication regarding their medical condition/needs and attend a plan meeting at least one a year if required. Best practice is for there to be a connection between a named person from Health Services and a named person in the school.
3. That all health care professionals encourage parents, children and young people in the value of regular school attendance at all medical appointments – and support the return to school after a medical appointment if appropriate.

**For further information and any queries on attendance coding please refer to**

Leeds City Council School Attendance Service via [www.leedsforlearning.co.uk](http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk)

**Or contact**

School Attendance Service  
Children and Families  
Leeds City Council  
Tel: Office number - 0113 3786955  
Email: [schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk)

**Further information and details on DFE policy guidance can be found at links below**

- Department for Education: School Attendance. July 2019  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/818204/School\\_attendance\\_July\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf)
- Department for Education: Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions. December 2015  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/638267/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/638267/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions.pdf)

## Section 2 – Penalty Notices (PN)

### 2.1 Example Leave of Absence request form for schools - Appendix 1

### 2.2 Evidence required when submitting a penalty notice application (e-form) for an unauthorised holiday or declined exceptional leave (which was applied for).

The penalty notice application should be submitted by eForm within 10 working (school) days of the child returning to school and include the registration certificate showing that the child has returned to school following the unauthorised holiday or declined exceptional leave. *This registration certificate needs to be signed and dated (with their name printed underneath) by the Headteacher.*

If the leave period is prior to a school holiday, the application should be sent to us once the child returns to school. The exception to this would be when the child has moved to a new school, in this case we will request the return mark from the new school.

**All evidence showing how the school knew that the child was on holiday as outlined below, must be kept on record in school and be available for the School Attendance Service, if required for any further action.**

The evidence can include a copy of:

- An application for a leave of absence completed by the parent/carer
- A letter of request from the parent/carer
- A letter sent to the parent/carer declining the application for leave and stating that the absence will be unauthorised if taken (signed by the headteacher)
- Record of verbal communication from the parent confirming the reason for leave
- Record of attempted home visits during the leave
- If no application was made - A letter to parent/carer stating that you believe the child was on holiday because..... the letter must also explain that the absence will not be authorised and a fine may be issued. It is then the parent/carers responsibility to provide evidence that they were not on holiday or that it was exceptional circumstances.

**If a PN is not paid we will contact you for the above evidence if needed.**

The child must be of statutory school age at the time of the offence.

The registration certificate needs to show 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 12 week period

Penalty Notice Applications flowchart – **Appendix 2**

If you have any further questions on penalty notices, please email [penaltynoticesattendance@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:penaltynoticesattendance@leeds.gov.uk) or call our team on 0113 3786955.

## **2.3 Requests for planned leave in exceptional circumstances**

This guidance aims to help headteachers, governing bodies, and parents/carers understand what could be deemed as an exceptional circumstance. To ensure that, as far as possible, a clear and consistent approach to leave in term-time is adopted.

From 1st September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 made clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 apply to all maintained schools, academies, free schools and independent schools.

Headteachers may, on occasions, make a judgement that there are genuine and exceptional circumstances pertaining to a request to take a pupil out of school during term time.

**Headteachers should consider all requests for term time leave on their own merits.**

There is no formal list of exceptional circumstances, but examples could include:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- leave for armed forces personnel who are prevented by operational duties to take their leave at any other time
- leave of absence already granted by a previous school.
- Shift patterns, some industries and smaller businesses continue to utilise staggered, fixed leave periods for employees. This is an issue for parents/carers to raise with their employers, and for Headteachers to consider.

In considering any request for leave, the DfE advise that the following considerations are made to help inform decisions and policy. These should be communicated to parents and carers.

*Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.*

In Leeds, we also advise schools to consider the timing of the leave in the school calendar and that a planned request for leave during key transitions or exam periods should always be declined

Other categories of absence that should **never** be considered exceptional are:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Birthdays
- Trips to see sporting or musical events
- Day trip
- Shopping or visit to hairdresser
- Over-sleeping

- Taking a long weekend
- Family celebration

### **Example good practice letters for sending to parents**

Letter re - Leave of absence not requested – **Appendix 3**

Letter re - Leave of absence requested for a holiday – **Appendix 4**

Letter re - Leave of absence requested some authorised – **Appendix 5**

Letter re - Leave of absence requested none authorised – **Appendix 6**

## **2.5 Submitting a Penalty Notice Application for a Fast Track**

Please submit applications for Fast Track Penalty Notices by secure email to [SchoolAttendanceService@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolAttendanceService@leeds.gov.uk). A registration certificate signed and dated by the Headteacher (with their name printed under the signature), needs to be included in the application.

Fast Track application form - **Appendix 7**

If you require further information about Fast Tracks, please see training sessions available on <http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk>

## **2.6 Withdrawing a Penalty Notice**

To withdraw a Penalty Notice, please complete the withdrawal form and submit it to [PenaltyNoticesAttendance@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:PenaltyNoticesAttendance@leeds.gov.uk)

PN Withdrawal form - **Appendix 8**

## **2.7 Unpaid Penalty Notices**

If a Penalty Notice is unpaid, we will use the signed attendance certificate to prepare a case for magistrates court proceedings under s444 Education Act 1996. All legal action is time limited.

Occasionally, in the case of an unpaid penalty notice for exceptional circumstances, we may also ask for a headteachers Witness Statement to be completed before the case can be submitted for legal intervention.

Link to PN application eForm - [School Penalty Notice Application - Leeds City Council](#)

## **Section 3 - Referrals to School Attendance Service for Legal Intervention**

### **3.1 School Attendance Panel**

In all cases where schools consider legal intervention a minimum of 1 school attendance panel must have been convened. These meetings need to be held and minutes taken whether the parent/s attend the meeting or not. Minutes of a school attendance panel/review meeting must **always be sent to the parents**. If legal intervention is to be considered, the parents must be made aware of this at the school attendance panel and it must be included in the minutes.

Example minutes proforma - **Appendix 9**

### **3.2 School Casework Checklist**

Schools should undertake casework with families and young people who have had irregular school attendance over a period of time, and where all support/interventions have not helped to improve or sustain attendance, e.g. Complex family issues, lack of engagement from parent/carer etc.

Before making a referral to School Attendance Service schools must be able to evidence all interventions with the family. Cases where there is CSWS involvement, must have the agreement of the Social Worker and the local Social Work Manager to be referred for consideration for any kind of legal intervention. When schools forward requests for further action to be taken, casework must continue with the family to try and improve the child's attendance.

Insufficient evidence of support offered to the family will result in the case not being accepted for legal intervention.

Legal intervention request form (including prosecution checklist) - **Appendix 10**

## **Section 4 - Traded Offer and Training Courses**

### **4.1 Traded information**

We offer flexible and bespoke support packages for schools, clusters and educational settings to enable individual children and families to access teaching and learning. These packages are designed to give specific targeted support and training to meet the needs of your school, cluster, or educational setting. If you want to discuss any aspect of the School Attendance Service, please contact us and we will endeavour to meet your needs.

## What Schools Say About our Traded Service

*"We have already noticed an improvement in attendance overall and with key families which I am looking forward to sharing with governors. Thank you for your support". (Headteacher WNW School)*

*"I was impressed by how quickly the team were able to respond to our request for support and the bespoke nature of the support which met our needs at this time. With a new attendance team in place, the day was hugely beneficial in clarifying what we could and should be doing to address our needs to manage and improve attendance. It has enabled us to produce a detailed attendance improvement action plan as an outcome.*

*We were able to have a complete review of our procedures, clarify the legal position and to take advice on some casework. The day was followed up by the provision of key resources which we can utilise straight away". (Assistant Headteacher WNW School)*

*"The 2.5 days Attendance Improvement Officer has regularly and actively supported and advised attendance contact across cluster schools to improve attendance. The cluster priorities attendance work including what the AIO interventions and as such has renewed the annual contract". (South Cluster Targeted Service Leader)*

*"Thank you again for taking the time to meet us, some helpful advice and extremely prompt follow up. It is a great help to me" (Deputy Headteacher ENE School)*

*"We really valued the input from the Silver package last year" (Headteacher South school)*

## **4.2 Traded Services – SLA Pricing**

### **Bronze SLA = £270**

- Telephone advice & support.
- Email response to procedural case enquiries within 3 days.
- Attendance Consultation Visit (1 hour).

### **Silver SLA = £2120**

- 6 AIO days (in principle 1 day per half term.)
- Telephone advice & support.
- Email response to procedural case enquiries within 3 days.
- Attendance Consultation Visit (1 hour)

**Gold SLA = Bespoke quote according to requirements – min. £4000**

- Attendance Improvement Officer and/or Team Manager Time.
- Telephone advice and support.
- Email response to procedural case enquiries within 3 working days.
- Attendance Consultation

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**Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)**

AIO day rate = £325

**Team Manager (TM)**

TM day rate = £385

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**Training**

Full day      £195  
Half day      £120

Other information

Schools or educational settings that purchase a SLA will automatically get a 10% discount on any further AIO or TM days purchased.

**4.3 - Training Courses**

All courses can be booked at <http://www.leedsforlearning.co.uk>

**Currently all our training packages are virtual and will combine some of the courses mentioned below. Please check leedsforlearning for current training available.**

**Admissions Procedures and Children Missing Education Course**

This course will look at the Admission and Children Missing Education Procedures schools need to follow. It is aimed at front line practitioners and Attendance Leaders wishing to look at the paperwork and the processes. It will serve as an update for staff who are

already familiar with these, but it will also be of interest to those people working in the field for the first time. The course is suitable for staff from primary or secondary settings.

### **Fast Track and Penalty Notices Course**

This course focuses on the issuing of Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave in term time and other attendance initiatives. The course is aimed at front line staff who will be implementing the initiatives but may also be of interest to Attendance Leaders considering whether to run fast track in their school or academy. This course is suitable for staff from primary or secondary settings.

### **Attendance Analysis and Persistent Absence Course**

This course focuses on utilising your attendance data to formulate interventions to improve individual and whole school attendance, which in turn may have a positive impact on persistent absence rates.

### **How to Undertake School Attendance Casework Course**

This course focuses on undertaking casework with families to improve school attendance. The course is aimed at front line staff who will be implementing the initiatives but may also be of interest to Attendance Leaders. This course is suitable for staff from primary or secondary settings.

## **Section 5 – Pupil movement form**

Changes since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 state that all schools are required to;

- Inform their LA in every circumstance when they are about to delete a pupil's name from their admissions register
- Inform their LA of the pupils destination school and parents name, address and phone number if the pupils are moving to a new school
- Provide information to their LA when registering new pupils, including the pupils address and previous school
- All additions to and deletions from the school register must be reported to the LA within 5 days

Please go to leedsforlearning School Admissions page for the Pupil Movement eForms. Link - [Pupil Movement Form - Leeds City Council](#)

## Section 6 SID

### What is SID?

SID stands for schools imported data. SID will pick up information from schools and academies and update information into Synergy. SID started to collect information from schools in September 2019.

### What information is imported?

A variety of information is imported on a weekly basis including sessional attendance figures and exclusions data.

If you do want to raise any queries about SID or find out further information, please contact [cs.systems@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:cs.systems@leeds.gov.uk)

## Section 7 Child Employment and Entertainment Licences contact details

### Directorate:

Children and Families

External Phone: [0113 378 5995](tel:01133785995)

Internal Phone: [85995](tel:85995)

Email: [ASTLicensing@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:ASTLicensing@leeds.gov.uk)

## Section 8 - Team Manager contact details

### School Attendance Service Team Managers

All Managers can be contacted via Tel: 0113 3786955

Or Email: [SchoolAttendanceService@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:SchoolAttendanceService@leeds.gov.uk)