

Attending School Matters

Education Services





Attending school matters

Inverclyde Council is committed to improving the life chances of all school pupils and to working in partnership with parents/ carers to enable their children to achieve success at school and in their future lives. For children and young people to enjoy school and to achieve their full potential regular attendance is essential. Absence from school disrupts learning, whatever the cause and pupils who miss school regularly are more likely to become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour. Good attendance is central to our aim to help pupils become confident individuals, effective contributors, responsible citizens and successful learners. Given the close link between attendance at school and development of these four capacities, schools adopt pro-active strategies to promote good attendance for all pupils. Class teachers have initial responsibility for promoting good attendance and punctuality.

Procedures to improve attendance

Where non-attendance is a factor affecting a child's learning, support will be initiated through incremental steps when it is established that a pupil's absence from school is without good reason.

Step 1 - Parents/Carers are Informed of Attendance Record

Where attendance is a cause for concern and falls below 90% within six weeks, or earlier if appropriate, parents/carers will be contacted and given clear information about the child's attendance record.

The situation will be fully discussed with the parent/carer and their co-operation sought to ensure that the problem is resolved.

Subsequent absences will be monitored. Where a pattern of absence warrants further action, Head Teachers, or their representative, will arrange for the matter to be investigated.

Step 2 - Maximising attendance meeting

If there is no sustained improvement in attendance within four weeks or no improvement at all within two weeks, the parent/carer will be invited to attend a maximising attendance meeting to be held within the school. This meeting will normally involve a member of the senior management team and other staff as appropriate. At this meeting attempts should be made to establish the root cause of the problem.

Where it emerges that non-attendance may be due to additional support needs arising from the learning environment, family circumstances, disability or health needs or social and emotional factors, further advice will be sought.

Should the parent fail to attend the maximising attendance meeting, **step 3** will be followed.

Step 3 - Multi-agency planning

If there is no sustained improvement in attendance within four weeks, or no improvement at all within two weeks, parents/carers will be contacted and procedures put in place to involve other appropriate agencies.

In early year's establishments and primary schools this will involve a multi-agency case conference while in secondary schools it will mean referral to the Joint Agency Team.

Should the parent/carers withhold consent for involvement; a referral will be made to the Children's Reporter.

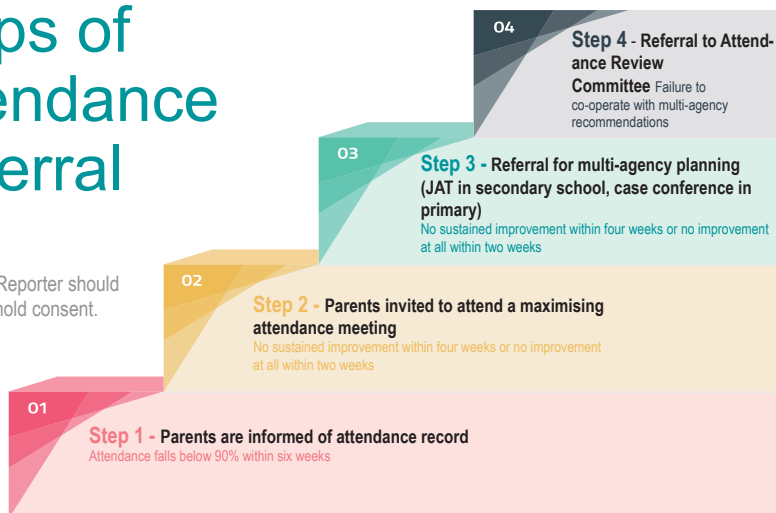
Step 4 - Referral to Attendance Review Committee

If there is failure to cooperate with multi-agency recommendations within the agreed timescale and there is no improvement in attendance, parents/carers will be called to an Attendance Review Committee to provide an explanation for their pupil's non-attendance. The committee may:

- discharge the case as your child's attendance has improved;
- refer for medical examination to the community doctor;
- refer your child to the Children's Reporter
- issue an Attendance Order;
- following further unauthorised absence, make a referral to legal services to consider pursuing a criminal prosecution in the Sheriff Court

Steps of Attendance Referral

Referral to Reporter should parent withhold consent.



Underlying all actions to promote good attendance will be a robust, universal pastoral care system to meet the needs of all learners.

The Attendance Review Committee

The Attendance Review Committee meets on a regular basis to provide an opportunity for parents/carers to explain non-attendance that has persisted to **step 4** of the procedures to improve attendance. To allow the parent/carers 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.

The Attendance Review Committee will be chaired by the appropriate member of Education Services Senior Management Team and have representatives from primary and secondary schools and other services and partners in attendance, as required.

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

- postpone the decision to report for a maximum of six weeks.
Where a decision to postpone is made, the committee may, if the pupil is of school age (5-16), make an Attendance Order or
- refer the pupil for medical examination, if appropriate; or
- refer to the Children's Reporter; or
- refer to legal services

Referral to the Reporter to the Children's Panel

Referral to the Reporter may be an option considered by the ARC in conjunction with the other approaches as noted above, or more usually separately at **step 3** as an important stage in engaging the child and the parent in compulsory interventions to improve outcomes for the child.

Frequently asked questions

Is a phone call enough to explain my child's absence?

A phone call will be accepted but an email or letter protects your rights if further action is taken about your child's absence. An email or letter will help verify your identity as the child's parent/carer

Can I take my child on holiday in term time?

The Scottish Government state that term time holidays should be classified as unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional family circumstance, such as a serious domestic crisis, will the family holiday be recorded as authorised absence

How will I know if I have been referred to the Attendance Review Committee?

At each stage of the procedure parents/carers will be informed in writing and may be asked to appear in person.

Could I be referred to the Attendance Review Committee even if I feel I've done everything possible to get my child to attend?

The committee will want to know what steps you have taken.

Will my doctor be informed of the result of any medical examination?

The report from the examination will be sent to your child's doctor

What will happen when my child is referred to the Children's Reporter?

The Children's Reporter will write to you to tell you a referral has been made. The Children's Reporter will carry out investigations based on reports from a range of sources such as school, Social Work Services and other agencies

When investigations are completed the decision will be made whether or not to arrange a Children's Hearing. You will be informed in writing.

What about family holidays during term-time?

Schools will not normally give a family permission to take pupils out of school for holidays during term-time. This means that if your child is off school because you are away on holiday the school will record this as an unauthorised absence. It is up to education authorities to decide what sanctions they will use if there is an unauthorised absence.

There are some circumstances where permission might be given for a holiday during term-time. This would include when:

- A family needs time together to recover from distress.
- A family holiday is restricted to term-time because of the parent's job (for example a parent is in the armed services or emergency services).
- There are other circumstances considered to be exceptional.

For more information about other reasons for your child being off school during term-time see the earlier section called: Is it ever alright for my child to be off school?



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