

## Supporting Attendance in North Ayrshire

Extract from Policy and Procedure Document

### **Attendance Letters – Guidance and Templates**

The Head Teacher or Head of Centre should monitor attendance in collaboration with their Leadership Team. In secondary schools, Pastoral Support staff, Deputies, Faculty Heads and Principal Teachers Curriculum are central to this information gathering/sharing and any ongoing interventions.

The most purposeful use of data is to inform whole school developments to improve attendance and plan to meet individual children and young people's needs. Please note that if a pupil's attendance has been subject to triggers from the previous session and continues to cause concern then a discussion should be sought with a senior manager at the earliest opportunity to determine next stage for intervention.

#### **Up to Four Weeks**

Schools should contact parent/carer by telephone call to alert parents/carers to the schools' concerns regarding the attendance of their child. The school should find out all relevant information and offer support at this stage.

#### **Eight Week Trigger - <90% - Letter 1**

Please note that when sending letters to parent/carers, Head Teachers can amend letter templates to ensure they are appropriate for the circumstances of their families.

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 90% over a four-week period: Parents/Carers should be contacted to discuss the situation, the barriers to nonattendance and agreed actions to improve. The main focus of the discussion should be:

- How can we help?
- What can we do to support you and your child?
- What are the risks for them of not coming to school?

This discussion should be conducted by a Principal Teacher and/or Depute Head. In secondary establishments, this is likely to be the Principal Teacher of Pastoral Support. The parent/carer should be aware that the attendance pattern for their child is being closely monitored and in-house supports are in place, as well as the school working alongside parents/carers to support activities at home to help improve attendance. This should be accurately recorded in pastoral notes.

Non-engagement at this stage should be followed up via phone calls or text messages. The school should do everything possible to contact the parent/carer. The Area Inclusion Worker could become involved at this stage where there are nonengagement concerns, and meet with the school leadership team to agree a way forward.

## Twelve Week Trigger – Letter 2

Despite engagement at an early stage, and the best efforts of all concerned, a pupil's attendance is still below 90% over the eight-week period.

Letter 2 should be sent at this stage to invite parent/carer into the school to discuss the ongoing concern. This meeting should continue to support children and families to work together to secure an improvement in attendance and ultimately, improved outcomes for their child. Letter 2 should include the agreed actions outlined at the TAC meeting, following Letter 1.

This meeting should be conducted by the HT or DHT/PT in a primary school. In secondary schools this should be with PT Pastoral Support.

The discussion will continue to focus on:

- What are the barriers for your child?
- How can we help?
- Why did our last set of agreed actions not work?
- What are the ongoing risks?
- Who else can we ask to help us?
- What might your child need?

This meeting should be recorded on Pastoral Notes (and Ayrshare when relevant) and further actions discussed. Discussions should be, at all times, frank, honest and open to ensure that parents and carers are clear that the school wants to help get the best outcomes for the pupil and support their families.

The school may wish the Area Inclusion Officer and/ or Pupil Support or any other relevant school support to attend this meeting.

Non-engagement at this stage should be followed up via phone calls or text messages. The school should do everything possible to contact the parent/carer and meet with them.

## Sixteen Week Trigger – Letter 3

Where there is ongoing concern about attendance and the 90% target is still not being met, the parent/carer should be invited to attend a **Team Around the Child (TAC)** meeting (Letter 3). All parties concerned should meet with the parent/carer and the child involved (if age and stage appropriate).

Letter 3 should include the agreed actions outlined at the TAC meeting, following Letter 2.

The TAC team may consist of the following staff/agency, dependent on the situation, the context and the pupil concerned.

- Head Teacher (Chair)

- Depute Head
- Principal Teacher
- Pastoral Support Teacher (Secondary)
- Class teacher (as appropriate/ if available)
- Area Inclusion worker
- Social Worker (if involved)
- YPST (if involved)
- School based counsellor (if involved and willing to participate)
- Educational Psychologist
- Any other relevant agency

This list is not exhaustive and Head Teachers/ Pastoral Support staff are best placed to judge who should attend.

The discussion will continue to focus on:

- The views of the parents/ carers and child should be taken and recorded (this could be noted prior to the meeting). The meeting should be supportive. Previous actions/interventions should be discussed. Possible future actions/interventions should be explored, targets set, and review date agreed.
- Parents/ carers should be made aware of their parental responsibilities in relation to the law around attendance.

#### **Twenty-four Week Trigger – Letter 4**

At this stage, where there remains concern about a continual pattern of nonengagement and/or there is no tangible improvement, there should be consideration of a referral to the Children’s Reporter Administration (CRA).

The parent/carer should be informed. All members of the TAC should be informed, and another meeting held to discuss the case. The TAC may look for another course of action which may include referral to Inclusion Group for advice and support.

Referral to the Reporter may be an option considered by an education authority in conjunction with other approaches above, or usually separately, as an important stage in engaging the child or young person and the parent/carer in compulsory interventions to improve outcomes for the child. Referral would usually only be made after appropriate measures at a local level have been exhausted (this could include phone call to social services to seek further advice).

#### **Legal grounds for referral**

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

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Letter 1

Appendix 2 – Letter 2

Appendix 3 – Letter 3

Appendix 4 – Letter 4

Appendix 5 – Attendance Process Flowchart

Last Updated: 22/02/2024

## Appendix 1

### Letter 1: Attendance Procedure – Attendance Concerns 8 weeks

Dear *(insert parent/carer name)*

**Subject: Attendance**

Further to our phone call on *(insert date)*, I am writing to inform you that we continue to have concerns about *(insert child's forename)* attendance, which is currently *(insert percentage)%*. Please see attached report for further detail.

We understand that there are many different reasons for low attendance. We would like to work with you to support *(insert child's forename)* towards an improved attendance pattern, and ultimately, greater wellbeing and achievement for *(child's forename)* in *(insert school name)*.

We would like to invite you to a meeting with *(insert PT Pastoral/DHT name)* on *(insert date and time of meeting)* to discuss this with you and to assist you in any way we can.

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting. North Ayrshire Council and *(insert school name)* are committed to positive outcomes for our children and young people and know our families share this commitment.

Yours sincerely

*(insert Name and Designation)*

*(insert School Name)*

Enc.

## Appendix 2

### Letter 2: Attendance Procedure – Further Attendance Concerns 12 weeks

Dear *(insert parent/carer name)*

**Subject: Attendance**

Further to our meeting(s) on *(insert date/s)* we continue to have ongoing concerns about *(insert child's forename)*'s pattern of low attendance. According to our records, *(insert child's forename)*'s attendance has continued to fall below 90% over the last 12 weeks of school. Please see attached report for further detail.

At our last meeting we agreed the following:

*(insert actions from the last meeting)*

In order that we can work together to support improved attendance we would ask that you come into the school to attend a Team Around the Child meeting. An appointment has been made for you and *(insert child's name)* to meet with us on *(insert date and time of meeting)*.

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

It is important for us to discuss this matter to ensure it does not have a lasting impact on your child's learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

*(insert name and designation)*

*(insert school name)*

Enc

## Appendix 3

### Letter 3: Attendance Procedure – Further Attendance Concerns 16 Weeks

Dear *(insert parent/carer name)*

**Subject: Attendance**

Over the past few months' we have been working together to support *(insert child's name)* to consistently attend school. However, we have not seen any improvement in *(insert child's forename)*'s pattern of attendance.

According to our records, *(insert child's forename)*'s attendance has remained below 90% over the last 16 weeks of school. Please see attached report for further detail.

From our last meeting, we agreed the following:

*(insert details)*

We would ask that you come into the school to attend a Team Around the Child meeting, to explore what more we can do together to support *(insert child's forename)*. An appointment has been made for you and your child to meet with us on *(insert date and time of meeting)*.

We will continue to work together to improve the situation. Given the ongoing concerns around attendance we may need to seek further advice and guidance from other agencies, in some circumstances this may include Social Services and/or a referral to the Children's Reporter.

For your information, in accordance with The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 states '*The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36).*'

We recognise the many circumstances that can lead to low attendance, and we are committed to working together to support *(insert child's name)*. It is therefore essential for us to meet and have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your child's learning and wellbeing.

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

Yours sincerely

*(insert name and designation)*

*(insert School Name)*

Enc.

## Appendix 4

### Letter 4: Attendance Procedure – Further Attendance Concerns SCRA

Dear (*insert parent/carer name*)

**Subject: Attendance**

We have been working together to support (*insert child's name*) improved attendance in school.

Despite repeated attempts to resolve the situation, we are yet to see any consistent improvement in (*insert child's forename*)'s attendance.

We are writing to inform you that we have sought additional support from the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and have made a referral on (*insert date*).

For more information on the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration please click on the link [Role of the Reporter - SCRA](#).

Should you wish further information or to discuss this further please contact me at the school.

Yours sincerely

(*insert name and designation*)

(*insert school name*)



## Appendix 5

### School Attendance - Flowchart

