



ATTENDANCE POLICY BALFRON HIGH SCHOOL

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Introduction

Balfron High School is committed to promoting good attendance and engagement in learning for all children and young people.

Good attendance and engagement in learning helps children and young people thrive, achieve their potential and realise a positive post school destination. Absence from school can disrupt learning, hinder progress and delay identification of additional support needs.

Attendance is one of the five key drivers for raising attainment as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

Low attendance levels can have increased negative impacts on vulnerable children including children affected by poverty, those with additional support needs and children in need of care and protection.

Impact of high attendance	Impact of low attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners with continued high attendance are more likely to progress across learning.• Learners with high attendance are more likely to develop positive relationships with peers and staff.• Learners with high attendance will have a wider range of learning experiences developing skills for life, learning and work.• Learners with high attendance will have more opportunities to have their voice heard and develop positive mental wellbeing, self-esteem and resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low attendance is linked with lower levels of attainment.• Low attendance can impact peer relationships.• Low attendance can impact on emotional and behavioural needs and regulation.• Low attendance can impact on wellbeing and school connectedness.• Low attendance is linked with reduced employment opportunities.• Low attendance can indicate children at risk of harm.

Guiding Principles

1. All children and young people have a right to education (UNCRC Article 28); and Balfron High School has a duty to provide this education.
2. All children have the right to be included, engaged and involved in their learning.
3. All children and young people have the right to get the support they need to benefit fully from their education and fulfil their potential.
4. Balfron High School focuses on positive relationships and inclusive cultures that promote good attendance; attendance is not considered in isolation.
5. Balfron High School and services will work in partnership with children, young people, families and partners to ensure any barriers to engagement are removed.
6. Balfron High School and services will prioritise early intervention to support attendance.



Policy Context

See Stirling Council's [Attendance Guidance or Schools](#)

This guidance seeks to explore and address wider issues around the promotion and management of good attendance and the prevention and reduction of absence. This guidance seeks to make stronger links between absence and the protection of children.



Section 1: What is attendance?

Attendance is “participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school”

Scottish Government 2019

Attendance includes:

- Attendance at school
- Learning out with the school environment provided by another learning provider while still on the school roll
- Educational visits, excursions and residential visits arranged by the school
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events
- Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with school
- Study Leave for learners participating in National Qualifications, if arranged by the school during the period of examination timetable
- Receiving education via hospital or outreach teaching services
- Remote learning facilitated by school or through a provider e.g. I-sgoil or another online educational provider
- Work Experience or volunteering
- Medical appointments lasting less than a full opening (half day).

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to provide efficient and suitable education to their child until they reach school leaving age, which they may meet by ensuring that their child attends school regularly (section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980).

For most children this means attending their local school for the recommended 27.5 hours for secondary.

What does 90% attendance REALLY look like?

90% equates to:

- ½ a day off every week
- 19 days off per year
- 247 days off over 13 academic years

Some pupils may engage in learning activities out with the school building as part of a bespoke package designed to meet specific additional support needs. Such individualised programmes require to be agreed by all members of the Team around the Child (TAC) and kept under regular review. The aim should always be to return to full-time educational provision.

Some parents and carers decide to educate their child within the home and create their own plan for provision of education or choose for their child to be educated in a flexible manner. This is a planned approach to the provision of learning for a young person, further guidance can be found about home education and flexible schooling arrangements within Stirling Council [Home Education Guidelines](#)



Section 2: Promoting Positive Attendance and Engagement

A staged approach to intervention is taken within Stirling Council which is based on the response to intervention model (Kearney and Graczyk, 2014). Within this approach, promoting attendance is the foundation approach upon which targeted and intensive interventions are provided to children and young people at risk of, or already experiencing attendance difficulties.



Tier 1: Ethos and Environment

Safe, Welcoming Environments

To promote good attendance and engagement, a culture where children and young people feel included, respected, safe and secure, where their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated is essential.

In order to create this environment for effective learning and teaching, there should be a shared understanding of wellbeing underpinned by Children's Rights and a focus on positive relationships across the whole learning community. A rights based approach which takes account of the UNCRC and encourages children and young people's participation in their learning is also likely to ensure children feel included, engaged and involved, and therefore more likely to be motivated to attend.

The implementation of nurturing approaches based on nurturing principles can improve the overall ethos and culture and support children and young people to feel more connected and engaged.

Inclusive Practice

Developing an inclusive ethos and meeting the needs of learners will help to promote good school attendance. There are four key features of inclusive practice which establishments can consider and reflect upon. These are:

Scottish Government, 2019



[Presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting: guidance](#)

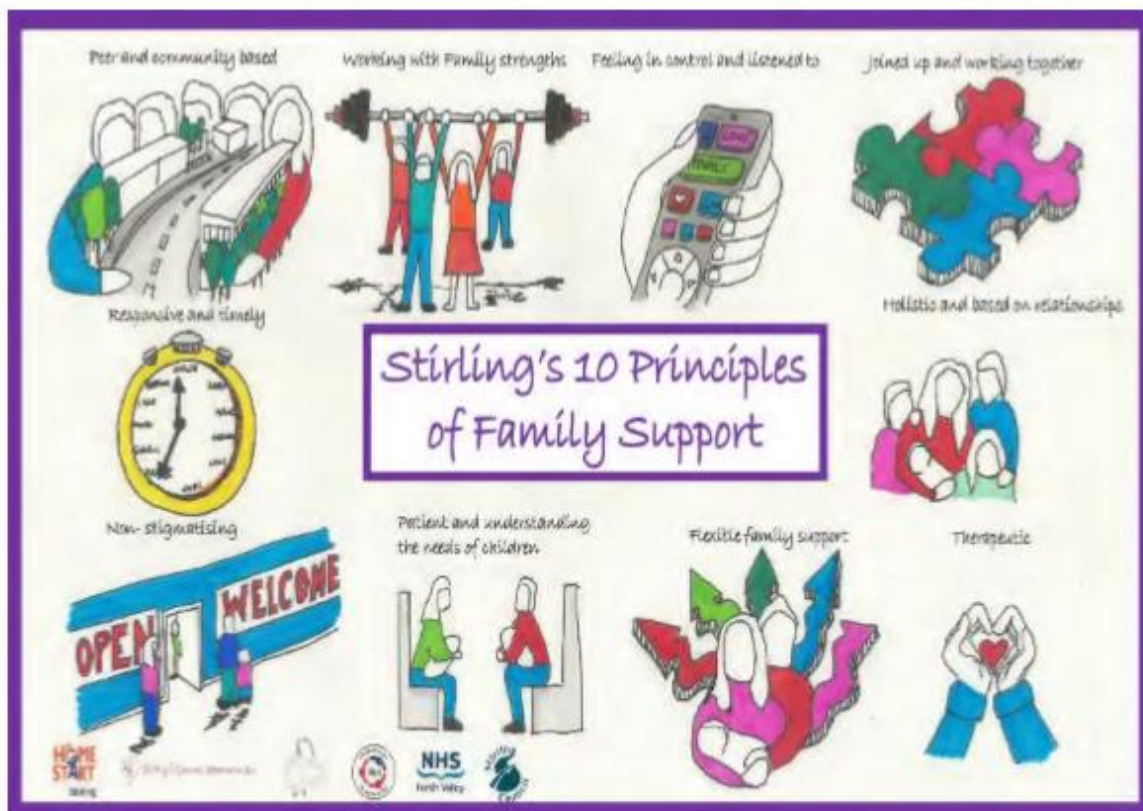
These four pillars are often interlinked. For young people to participate, achieve and be supported effectively, it is necessary to consider how they can be present in the learning environment.

Family Engagement and Support

Positive and trusting relationships with parents, carers and wider family members are key to supporting good attendance.

Positive relationships within education start in the early years through the informal contact when parents/carers drop younger children off and collect them.

Parents/carers are key partners in their child's education and it is particularly important that they are aware of their responsibilities, and are supported to enable their child to attend school or nursery.



Curriculum for Excellence

CfE promotes flexibility in the curriculum and allows establishments to personalise learner journeys to meet the needs of all children and young people. An engaging and stimulating curriculum will motivate children and young people to attend and engage in their learning.

Schools can also support children and young people's attendance through offering a range of wider achievement programmes and opportunities such as: Hi5 Awards; Dynamic Youth Awards; JASS Awards; John Muir Awards; Duke of Edinburgh. Further support can be provided by the Youth Participation Team, Active Stirling, colleges and other partners.

Developing the Young Workforce; Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy builds on the foundations already in place through CfE and encourages schools to offer a flexible programme of skills development and vocational experiences to meet individual needs. Schools may develop programmes in partnership with other agencies such as Skills Development Scotland, colleges and local businesses to ensure young people are fully engaged. It is also important that schools support young people to develop a range of skills that will prepare them for the world of work.

Young people who choose to stay on at school beyond school leaving age, usually 16 years of age, should be strongly encouraged to consider their continued commitment to full attendance. Some secondary schools develop a learning agreement outlining these expectations. There should also be ongoing support and encouragement for young people to ensure their sustained commitment and engagement.



Tier 2 – Prevention and Early Intervention

Balfron High School promotes attendance as part of our school improvement planning cycle. We have identified staff with responsibility for attendance, monitoring and tracking attendance data, identifying patterns and planning interventions. Monitoring and tracking includes a particular focus on vulnerable children.

Raising Profile and Clear Expectations

Parents/carers are given clear information, updated on a regular basis, regarding their responsibility to inform the school if their child will be absent, and to provide current emergency contact information.

In discussing attendance, we maintain a practical focus that recognises the challenges that can be part of family life, such as balancing work commitments, or dealing with financial challenges that may occur. Such difficulties can lead to repeated lateness or absence. Staff work with families to ensure that any barriers causing lateness and absence are supported and overcome as early as possible.

Information on attendance is available for children, young people and families via the school websites and through the Padlet [Parents: What's on at Balfron](#)

The positive impact of good school attendance will be shared through newsletters; assemblies; regular reporting procedures; social media channels; posters and displays in school and at parent-teacher appointments.

Attendance Supports for Parents/Carers

Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) have developed an interactive attendance guide on the topic of attendance, accessed using the link [Attendance - Support for Parents and Carers](#)

Tracking and Monitoring

To prevent difficulties with attendance arising and to ensure that any interventions can be provided as soon as possible, Balfron High School regularly monitor attendance of all young people. Regular review of attendance and late-coming data will support identification of problematic patterns and support timely, effective interventions. Balfron High School will consider a specific focus on more vulnerable groups including those with Additional Support Needs, those in need of care and protection, and those affected by poverty.

Parents/carers are kept up to date with their child's levels of attendance through the school's tracking and monitoring system. When attendance is concerning, this will be brought to the parent/carer's attention via an attendance letter sent to the home address.

Where concern about attendance is ongoing, parents will be invited to the school to discuss ways to support the family to improve the attendance of their child(ren).

Designated Senior Staff

Whilst all staff have a role to play in promoting good attendance, those with additional responsibility for pupil support, wellbeing and safeguarding are in a unique position to:

- Develop positive relationships with pupils and families to prevent attendance difficulties arising
- Respond quickly to absence, to ensure children and young people are safe and well
- Follow up on absence, to enable the school and its partners to make an effective response
- Support re-engagement with learning on return from absence
- Be aware of early signs or concerns which may cause absence, to allow support to be arranged
- Ensure non-attendance does not become a pattern or habit following a specific issue
- Include individual attendance patterns as routine part of staged intervention meetings
- Ensure current attendance data is shared as part of Child Care reviews
- Engage in meaningful CLPL to improve attendance, including that available through the RIC Interactive Guidance.

Personalised Support

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009) requires education and other agencies to make provision for all pupils who require additional support to overcome barriers to their learning.

Additional support needs can arise from a variety of factors including:

- learning environment
- disability or health concern
- family circumstances
- social and emotional factors

Difficulties with school attendance can also be considered an additional support need. Low attendance can also be related to other additional support needs that a child or young person may have. Staged intervention should be used to assess barriers to attendance and identify supports. Where appropriate, a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) could be considered.

Every *Looked After* child or young person is presumed to have an additional support need, unless an assessment concludes otherwise. When care experienced children and young people are moving placement, they may have to travel longer distances or adjust to new schools. The Designated Senior Manager for care experienced children and young people in the school should ensure that support is in place as early as possible to support this transition.

As a result of an appropriate assessment, establishments may consider the use of individualised, planned packages of support in order to promote good attendance.

Child Protection Co-ordinators should be aware of children and young people in their school who are on the Child Protection Register. They should monitor attendance and offer support through the Team around the Child (TAC).

Staged Intervention

Many issues relating to absence in school can be dealt with quickly and promptly by school supports and by ensuring that there are positive relationships in place to support children and young people and their families. However, there may be occasions when absence from school becomes a more significant cause for concern. Balfron High School use staged intervention processes to support improvements in attendance.

Staged Intervention meetings consider:

- Effective assessment and planning for additional support needs to address any barriers to learning that might be impacting on attendance
- Creating a plan which clearly outlines the actions that require to be in place to support any wellbeing or additional support needs
- Flexible pathways and consideration of approaches to include and engage pupils more fully in their learning
- Collaboration with a range of relevant agencies as part of the TAC to ensure effective child and family support.

Tier 3, Assessment and Planning offers more detail on how to identify barriers to attendance and support children, young people and their families.

Tier 3 – Assessment and Planning

Difficulties with school attendance can progress quickly and lead to longer term absence which can have a variety of detrimental effects on both learning and wellbeing as well as on family life and on the wider school community. To support young people and their families to overcome any challenges with attendance and engagement, it is important to identify any difficulties and offer support as soon as possible to prevent problematic patterns of attendance developing.

As well as contributing to a positive ethos and learning environment that supports regular attendance, all staff have an important part to play in recognising patterns of nonattendance or school avoidance behaviour when they arise. Challenges with school attendance can be thought of as a spectrum of behaviours. This can include a long period of absence, but can also include attending every day where significant support and encouragement is needed to do so. It is important to take a preventative approach and be aware of the risk factors for non-attendance.

Where there are risk factors or emerging patterns of non-attendance noted, Balfron High School will assess the situation and intervene as soon as possible to support the young person and their family and prevent any problematic attendance patterns from worsening.

Young people may be absent from school for a variety of reasons. These reasons may be complex in nature. Balfron High School takes a comprehensive holistic assessment, where appropriate, including partner agencies within the Team around the Child.

Assessment is key to identify the underlying reasons for non-attendance or avoidance behaviours as well as to identify the supports needed.

School attendance issues cannot easily be separated from the relationships and contextual factors within the wider school community and it is important that schools view the promotion of attendance in this context.

Factors that Impact on Attendance

There are a range of factors that can impact on school attendance. It can be helpful to consider individual factors, school-related factors and home/community factors. The table below gives some examples of the wide range of factors which can contribute to nonattendance or avoidance behaviour. Some children and young people may be impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences. It is important to use a trauma-informed lens when considering non-attendance and avoidance behaviours.

Some examples of factors include:

Individual Factors	Home/community related	School related factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness • Having a mental health difficulty e.g. anxiety or depression • Poor wellbeing • Experiencing social anxiety • Experiencing difficulties with separation • Being at a transition point • Experiencing difficulties with learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ill health within the family • Changes in the family setting • Loss and bereavement • Being a young carer • Having concerns about the wellbeing of family members • Coping with adversity/trauma • Experience of abuse or neglect • Substance misuse • Availability of other peers • Opportunities to engage in preferred activities out with school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum provided • Difficulties with aspects of learning or specific classes • Limited connectedness or lack of positive relationships • Conflict with or fear of, peer(s) • Issues relating to social media • Issues relating to transport • Difficulty with transitions

There is usually more than one underlying factor underpinning the challenges impacting on children and young people. It is important to consider the range of factors which both give rise to the difficulties in the first place but also those which maintain the behaviour over time. For example, a young person may start avoiding school due to worries about social situations. Over time other factors such as, preferring to be at home with family and feeling more comfortable to learn in their own space may maintain the behaviour.

Established, trusting relationships between school and home are more likely to lead to the child or young person returning to school.

Section 3:

Managing Absence

Article 28 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are: regardless of race, gender or disability; if they're in detention, or if they're a refugee.

Balfron High School have clear procedures to support the recording and management of absence (Appendix 1). Clear and consistent practice to respond to absence helps all learners in Stirling's schools have the best chance of achieving their potential and acts as a crucial step in safeguarding children and young people

When a child has not arrived at school, there must be clear processes for contacting parent/carers; if attempts to contact home are unsuccessful, emergency contact numbers should be used. In most circumstances, this will result in a reasonable explanation for the absence.

However, in rare incidents, there may be more serious or concerning reasons why children or young people have not registered at school. Schools cannot be complacent about children and young people's safety. If the school has been unable to establish contact with the parent/carer, action must be taken to confirm that the child or young person is safe and well.

Where contact has not been made, this should be escalated to the school's Senior Leadership Team to consider further action. The information should be assessed in the light of known attendance issues, support needs or current concerns about the child or young person or family.

In the case of Looked After or vulnerable children, including those on the Child Protection register, this should always be followed up immediately and where appropriate contact made with Social Work.

Broadly speaking attendance can be categorised as authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised Absence

The majority of cases of absence from school are classified as “authorised”. Schools may authorise an absence when they are satisfied by a legitimate reason.

Reasons that qualify as an authorised absence include:

- Illness where no learning provision is made.
- Meetings connected with legal processes.
- Attendance at Children’s Hearing or similar.
- Religious Observance.
- Part-time tables for health reasons or post-exclusion.
- Bereavement.
- Weddings or funerals of close friends and family.
- Arranged absence in relation to gypsy traveller families.
- Participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities, agreed by school.
- Lack of transport.
- Agreed gypsy travelling.
- Term time holidays where there are exceptional circumstances.
- Family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma.

Follow up on Authorised Absence

If a child or young person’s absence is authorised through parental contact (e.g. due to illness, medical appointment, bereavement, exceptional domestic circumstances etc), and there are no other concerns, the absence should be authorised and an expected date of return to school, or further advice from parents, should be noted.

Authorising absence should not delay the process of considering how school and other partners can plan to support the child/young person and their family to minimise length of absence.

Where discussions with parents/carers identify an ongoing concern, school staff should arrange a supportive meeting as soon as possible and should not wait for the child or young person to return to school, especially if there is a concern for which additional support may be required. Discussions, agreements and actions should be recorded on a Form 6.

As stated, parents/carers have a key role to play in promoting and supporting good attendance, and schools should work in partnership with families to ensure that there is good communication about any issues relating to attendance. If a child or young person returns to school, but a pattern of absence is noted, then it is important that the school continue to work alongside families to resolve any issues and build positive and trusting relationships between the home and school.

Requests for children or young people who are care experienced or on the Child Protection Register to be absent from school, apart from illness, should be considered carefully. Multiagency discussion may be required to consider any risks to the children's wellbeing and safety.

Providing for Pupils during Long Term Illness

Long term illness can be a stressful time for a child and their family, however, children and young people can still engage with learning. Ongoing communication, contact and support from school can make a positive difference.

Where the school, parents/carers and any other relevant professionals work together to develop a learning programme for the child or young person which allows them to engage in remote learning, this is recorded as Sick with Education Provision (SEP) which counts as attendance. It is important that schools are in regular communication with the pupil providing feedback via telephone, email or home visit. The school retains overall management for providing appropriate learning and resources. However, it must be noted that this is different to the remote or 'online' service provided during Covid lockdowns when this became the main mode of education.

Stirling's ASN Outreach Service can provide further advice: asnoutreach@stirling.gov.uk

Part-time Timetable

There may be circumstances where a child or young person is not be able to access school on a full time basis, for example due to agreed home schooling days, health or exclusion related reasons and TAC agreements. The aim should always be to return the child to the full entitlement as soon as possible.

Part-time bespoke arrangements should in most cases be agreed by the Team around a Child and recorded in their Child's Planning paperwork. An exception to this expectation, may be a phased return post-illness if it is a short-term arrangement.

All part-time/bespoke timetables must be reviewed regularly to ensure that full entitlement to education is available to all children and young people.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Parents/carers, young people are encouraged to arrange appointments wherever possible outside of the school day; such expectations can be shared in school handbooks, websites and other communications. Where appointments happen during the school day but last less than half a day, attendance is not affected. Where appointments last longer than half a day, this counts as an authorised absence.

Term Time Holidays

Absence from school, whatever the cause, disrupts learning. It is important that parents encourage their young people to attend school and that parents arrange family holidays during the holiday period.

Family holidays should not be recorded as authorised absence, other than in exceptional circumstances, these include:

- Where employment is of a nature where school-holiday leave cannot be accommodated.
- If it is important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family.
- Following serious or terminal illness.
- Following bereavement or any other traumatic event.

Unauthorised Absence

Schools should record an absence as an unauthorised absence where no satisfactory reason has been provided.

Unauthorised absence can include:

- Term time family holidays outwith exceptional circumstances.
- Absence with parental awareness.
- Unexplained absence without parental awareness.
- Unarranged gypsy travelling.

Follow up on Unauthorised Absence

Term Time Holidays

Family holidays should not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances include where the main carer's employment is of a nature where school holiday leave cannot be accommodated. Such employment may include armed forces, emergency services or professions where parents/carers are required to work away from home for extended periods.

Each request for term time holiday will be considered separately but the majority of all requests will be unauthorised.

Where term-time holidays do not meet the requirements for exceptional circumstances, Balfour High School will issue a standard letter advising parents/carers that holidays in term time are unauthorised.

Absence with Parental Awareness

Parents/carers generally act in the best interests of their children. Occasionally, parents/carers allow their child to stay off school because they believe they will benefit from an alternative activity or outing. Such an absence is recorded as unauthorised.

Regular communications about the importance of attendance with clear information about recording methods will help staff respond to such situations.

Sometimes parents/carers allow their child to miss school because of a situation that they believe has not been addressed or resolved by school staff. This may include a conflict between pupils or that the family believe their child's needs are not being met. In such circumstances, early contact with the family is crucial with a focus on building trust and prioritising resolving difficulties and planning for the child's return to school. A clear message of expected continued attendance is appropriate.

Schools should maintain clear records of communication (Seemis Pastoral Notes) with parents/ carers in relation to unexplained absence and supports provided. Information from Pastoral Notes may form part of a Chronology if the situation escalates, so information should be kept up to date.

Unexplained Absence without Parental Awareness

Consistent and vigilant school based processes for responding to absence are important mechanisms in safeguarding children and young people. Schools must be confident that follow-up action is taken following identification of a child not in school without their parent/carer knowledge. In secondary schools, some young people will attend for

registration and then leave. Schools should have effective class-by-class attendance protocols and awareness of exits/ entrances to the school grounds. Where there is a risk of occasional absence, schools should take appropriate preventative measures. Where a child has additional vulnerabilities including disability, care experience or is on the Child Protection Register, schools should take swift action to help prevent a young person coming to harm.

Ongoing concerns around occasional absence require a multi-agency response. See Part 3 on Assessment and Planning, of this policy document, for further advice on steps to take to review individual situations and plan interventions.

As stated earlier, developing positive trusting relationships between staff and pupils in safe inclusive school environments leads to better attendance and fewer occasional absences.

Registration and Recording Lateness

The impact of frequent lateness can be significant; being 10 minutes late every day is equivalent to losing around 6.5 days of school a year.

Attendance and absence should be recorded at least per half-day session, but there is also a need to record lateness.

Balfron High School will send a letter to parent/carers if lateness becomes a concern. The timing and circumstances behind lateness should always be considered.

Balfron High School will monitor ongoing late coming and seek to identify any patterns.

Diverse School Communities

Some groups of children and young people may require authorised absence because of their religious or cultural practices or their family's mobility.

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

In some cultures, family celebrations are major events which may require children or young people to travel overseas. In these circumstances schools should code this as Extended Leave with Parental Consent (EXL) which allows them to remain on the school register and prevents school attendance data being negatively impacted.

When a school is notified that Gypsy/Traveller children or young people are leaving to travel, the school should record their absence as Other Authorised Absence (ABS). If the school has not been notified that Gypsy/Traveller children or young people are leaving to

travel, the school should record their absence as Unexplained Absence (UNA). If confirmation of travelling received, absence can be updated to ABS as above.

Further information on supporting inclusive educational approaches for travelling cultures is available in *Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People from Travelling Cultures* and from ASN Outreach Service.

Children or Young People Missing from Education for Extended Periods

There may be occasions where a child or young person goes missing from education for an extended period of time. Schools should make reasonable attempts to contact the family. Where this is unsuccessful, schools should follow the guidelines *Children Missing from Education* available on the Source.

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

Particular sensitivity should be given to children or young people in Gypsy/Traveller families.

Referral to the Reporter Referral to the Reporter may be considered where poor school attendance has not improved following a range of supports and interventions being implemented. Where a child is failing to attend school regularly without a reasonable excuse, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the *Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011*. This option may be appropriate where there are a range of other concerns which together with non-attendance, form grounds for referral.

Before reaching a decision to proceed to an initial referral, schools should work together with social work services and other partners to complete a thorough assessment and ensure that all other options have been exhausted.

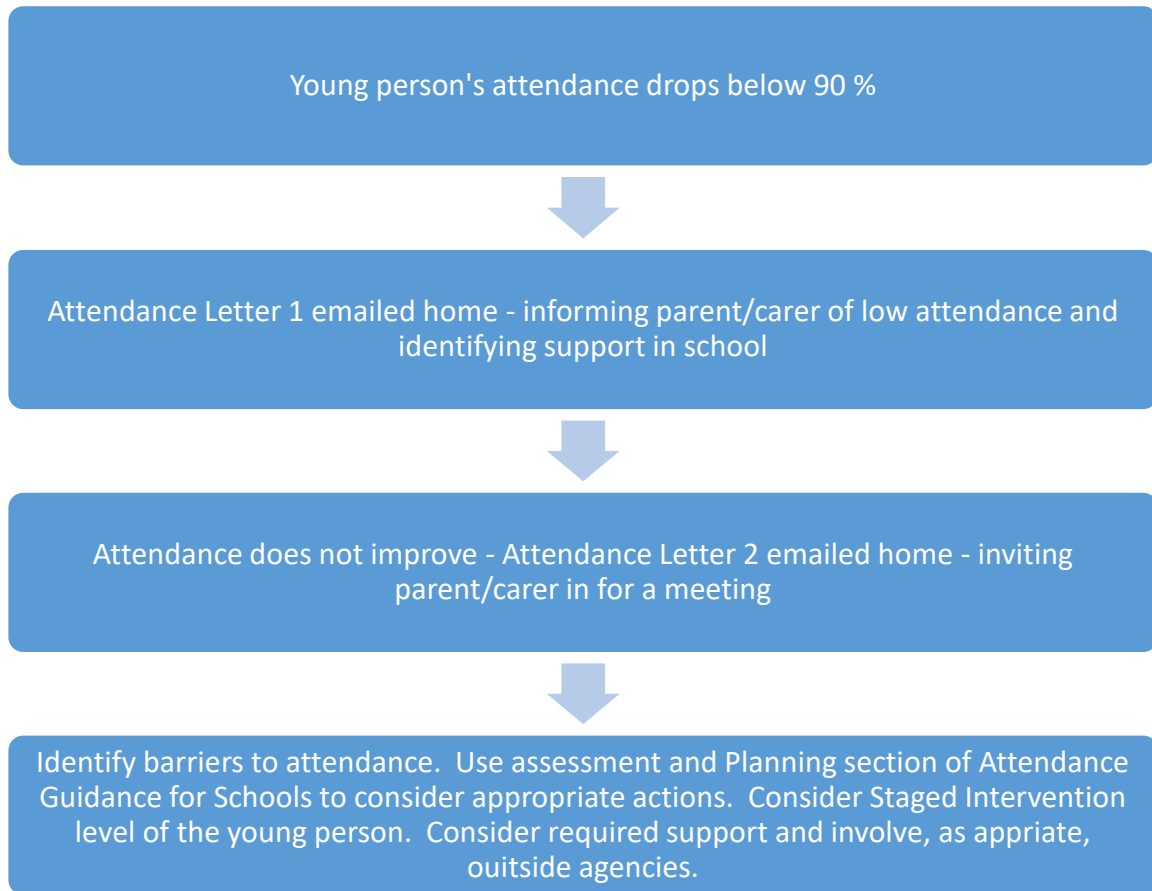
Following the referral and if the Reporter considers that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, the matter will be referred to a Children's Hearing which will then decide whether compulsory measures are necessary.

Attending a children's hearing can be a stressful experience for a child or young person. Local guidelines on *Preparing children and young people for attending a Children's Hearing* are available on the Source.

Appendix 1: Attendance Flowchart: Secondary



Appendix 2: Persistent Low Attendance



Appendix 3: Persistent Late Coming

