



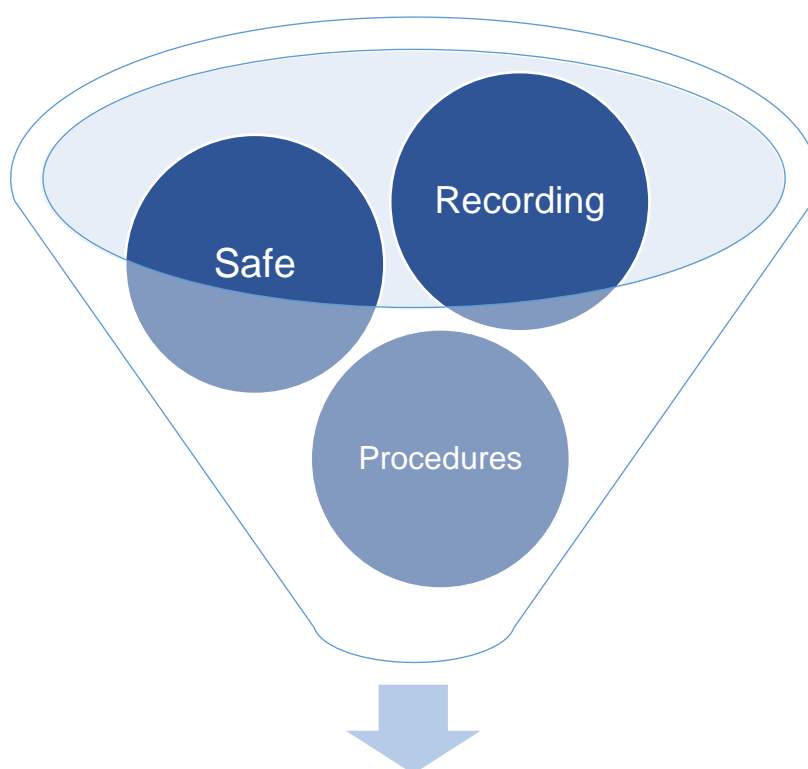
Attendance and Engagement at School:

Section 2 | Operational Procedures and Guidance 2025

SECTION 2: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Appendix no	Contents title	Details	Page
1.	Procedures to Support Safeguarding	<u>1. Safe Arrivals:</u> dealing with unexplained absence on first day of absence 1.2 Risk assessment process for first day of absence for all education establishments <u>2. Safe Arrivals:</u> dealing with unexplained absence from second day of absence onwards 2.1 Safe arrivals flowchart <u>3. Attendance Recording:</u> 3.1 managing attendance and absence 3.2 attendance codes 3.3 home education 3.4 flexi education 3.5 flexible timetable arrangements 3.6 temporary exclusion 3.7 diverse learning communities 3.8 reducing late coming 3.9 Frequently used attendance codes <u>4. Withdrawal of a Placement</u> <u>5. Guidance on Pupils Going Missing or Absconding from Educational Establishments</u> <u>6. Children Missing from Education Procedures</u>	5 7 9 10 11 19 19 22
2.	Tracking, Monitoring and Interventions	<u>1. Systems, triggers and procedures</u> <u>2. Tracking and monitoring</u> <u>3. Analysis of “actionable” data</u> <u>4. The voices of young people and parents/carers;</u> identifying barriers to school attendance <u>5. Procedures for managing regular non-attendance</u> (pre-school) <u>6. Tiered Intervention summary</u> (schools) <u>7. Tiered Intervention for schools</u> – further explanation <u>8. Exemplar Group call and letter templates</u>	26 26 27 27 30 31 32 37

3.	Emotionally Based School Non-attendance	<u>1. What is EBSNA?</u> <u>2. What can we do?</u>	49 52
4.	Improving Attendance through Culture, Systems and Practice	<u>1. The West Lothian Approach</u> <u>2. The Three Pillars; Culture, Systems and Practice</u> <u>3. Working Collaboratively with Parents, Partners and Community</u> 3.1 Learner Voice at The Centre 3.2 Working with Parents/Carers 3.3 Working with Partners/Communities	57 58 61
5.	Developing your own policy guidance	<u>1. Why have school specific guidance?</u> <u>2. How should the guidance be created?</u> 2.1 Examples	70 70



APPENDIX 1 | Procedures to support safeguarding

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1. Safe Arrivals: dealing with unexplained absence on first day of absence

Schools

The primary aim of the Safe Arrivals procedure is to establish a reason for absence where one has not already been established. On the first day of absence an initial assessment must be carried out to determine the reason for non-attendance. The following procedure must be adhered to:

- schools are required to inform parents of the need to contact the school as early as possible, and before 9.00 am on the first day of absence, if their child is going to be absent from school. This could be done through the school handbook/ newsletters etc.
- when a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parent, the school shall attempt to contact the parent, using the Group Call Messenger system, by no later than **9.45 am** (primary and ASN schools) or no later than **10.00 am** (secondary schools) on the first day of absence;
- parents will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers for use by the Group Call system. Parents will be responsible for responding promptly to contact from the school
- where a parent/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school and acknowledges the notification from the school, the parent/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the school; and
- in cases where the parent/emergency contact does not respond to the notification of absence and therefore there is still no explanation of absence, the Head Teacher will initiate a risk assessment (section 1.2) by no later than **10.00 am** in primary schools and no later than **10.15** in secondary schools on the morning of the first day of absence.
- where an absence occurs after lunch or during the school day, the same procedure should be followed. Contact should be made with home and where the parent/emergency contact does not respond and there is no explanation of absence a risk assessment should be initiated and a decision reached within 30 minutes of the risk assessment being started. The Guidance for Children Missing and Absconding from School Guidance should be referred to when conducting the risk assessment.

Nursery classes, Nursery schools and Early Learning Centres

- when a pupil has been recorded as absent and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parents, the nursery/ ELC must risk assess whether an attempt to contact the parent is required. This risk assessment must take place no later than 45 minutes into the session on the first day of absence and should be informed by the Risk Assessment questions below.
- parents will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers. Parents will be responsible for responding promptly to contacts from the nursery/ELC.

- where a parent/ emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from nursery /ELC and acknowledges the notification from the nursery/ELC, the parent/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the nursery/ELC.

1.2 Risk assessment process for first day of absence for all education establishments

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child/young person. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child/young person is regarded as minimal.

On every occasion of first day absence without explanation, a risk grading requires to be undertaken. This applies even where the child or young person is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate. The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to vulnerability, influences and past behaviour.

Vulnerability:

- *Is there an identified risk of suicide?*
- *Is criminality suspected to be a factor? Is the child/young person vulnerable?*
- *What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child/young person?*
- *Does the child/young person suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?*
- *Can the child/young person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?*
- *Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child/young person or by a close relative?*
- *Is the child/young person on the Child Protection Register?*
- *Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?*

Influences:

- *Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse? Has the child/young person been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?*
- *Has there been previous welfare concerns in relation to the care of the child/ young person or a sibling of the child/ young person?*
- *Is there Social Policy involvement in relation to the child/ young person?*
- *Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to any racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or cultural issue?*
- *Has the child/young person been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?*
- *Are there any known problems in school?*
- *Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk): Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?*
- *Is there a known reason for the child/young person to be not attending school?*
- *Has the child/young person been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?*

The answers to the above questions will enable the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

Schools

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child/young person. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Social Work Manager will progress the matter;
- if child or young person has a sibling attending another school, contact the other school to inform the risk assessment;
- contact the Safe Arrival Duty Worker, email; safearrivals.arrivals@westlothian.gov.uk
- or call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child/young person following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in the Safe Arrivals Flowchart p9.

Nursery classes, Nursery schools and Early Learning Centres

Where it has been deemed appropriate to contact the parents and no contact can be made at establishment level, further risk assessment should take place to inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the session;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Manager will progress the matter;
- call the relevant Health Visitor for that area who may be able to share further information which informs decision-making; or
- call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make
- immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in Safe Arrivals Flowchart p9.

2. Safe Arrivals: Dealing with unexplained absence from second day of absence onwards (schools)

It is not appropriate procedure to contact the Safe Arrivals Duty Worker beyond the first day of absence.

In the event of the outcome of the risk assessment on first day of absence being “to continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day”, for each continued day of absence the risk assessment procedure requires to be undertaken as described in section 1.2.

This process will enable the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

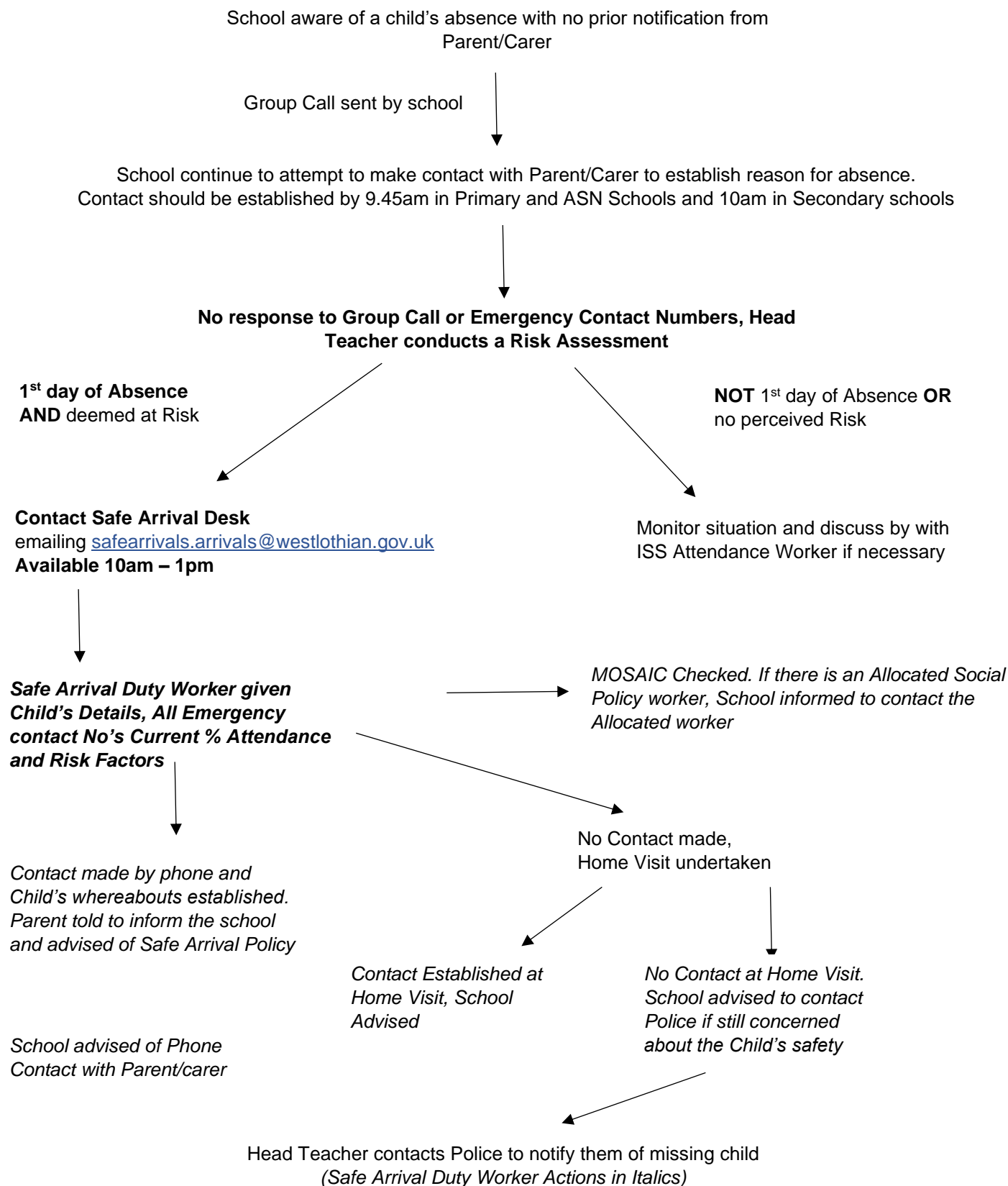
This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- Continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day.
- If a child or young person has a sibling at another school, contact the other school to inform the risk assessment.
- Contact the Duty Social Work team on 01506 284440
- To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101.
In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

(An overview of procedural expectations when managing Safe Arrivals – Dealing with Unexplained Absences is detailed in – Safe Arrivals Flowchart p9)

2.1 Safe Arrivals Flowchart

Safe Arrival Flow Chart



3. Attendance Recording

All schools are required to keep an attendance register of every pupil (The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975). Schools should use SEEMIS to record attendance, lateness and absence. Registering of attendance is the responsibility of the teacher or other designated member of staff. Timely registration should ensure accurate recording so ensuring all learners are safe and protected.

Where learning is provided out with the school by other providers (for example work experience, college, alternative programme) the provider must contact the school when the pupil is absent or late. Schools must establish an agreement with the provider that absence should be reported to the school within an agreed timeframe and that if the learner goes missing at any time, even if they reappear, the school must be informed.

Vulnerable learners should be known to named persons; pupil supports leads; and office staff. In some settings, class teachers may also need to know that a learner is vulnerable so that they can respond quickly in the event of lateness or absence.

Recording of absence should take place at least twice each day in primary and ASN schools and period by period in secondary school to enable an accurate record of attendance to be kept. Codes for use when recording attendance/absence and lateness can be accessed direct from SEEMiS. A pupil should normally be regarded as absent from school when he or she is not in attendance for a period greater than half of the morning or afternoon session.

There is no legal requirement for children to attend nursery provision, however all learners enrolled in ELC provision, for the purposes of safeguarding, will be subject to attendance monitoring procedures. ELC staff will monitor attendance in order to safeguard learners and ensure a highly consistent and routine based learning experience. Parents and carers of children in ELCs will not be subject to school attendance procedures for non attendance.

3.1 Managing Attendance and Absence

- Some absences, such as ill health, are unavoidable. Reasons for absence can also be complex and any communication about absence with learners or parents or carers should always be treated sensitively. Parents and carers are key partners in supporting attendance and reducing absence.
- Parents and carers should notify the school in advance of a planned absence.
- Parents and carers should be aware via the school policy, handbook, and website, that all unexplained absences will be followed up and a reason for the absence sought
- Parents or carers can communicate with the school via written note, email, text or telephone call.
- Schools should follow up with parents or carers if they have any concerns about the authenticity of any communication.
- If no advance notification for an absence is sent to the school, it will be assumed that parents or carers are unaware of the absence and that the learner is missing. Attempts to contact the parent or carer will then be made. Again, if a reply is received and there are doubts regarding its authenticity, further communication should be attempted to clarify or confirm the reason for the absence.

- Over 16-year-old learners can self-certify however, if they are considered vulnerable the school should carefully consider risks and their capacity to self-certify. If appropriate discuss with a parent or carer or seek advice from legal services. Schools should record all communications and actions.
- Protocols should be established for signing learners in and out of school to ensure school staff know who is present in the building at any one time.

3.2 Attendance Codes

In line with Scottish Government guidance, for the purposes of national reporting, every absence is categorised as either authorised or unauthorised.

On the first day of absence, To be confirmed (TBC) should be used as a temporary code until a reason for absence is provided. Review of the TBC code should be carried out daily by school staff.

Authorised Absence

School staff are best placed to decide the school's most appropriate response to requests for absence to be authorised. Schools may authorise absence when they are satisfied by the reason provided, usually by the parent (via a note, email or phone call), self-certified or sometimes may be provided by another service provider. Reasons for authorised absence can include:

- illness where no learning provision is made (including ongoing mental health concerns);
- medical and dental appointments to be recorded in separate category;
- meetings prior to, and during court appearances and other legal processes;
- attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Care Review, or appointment with another service provider, e.g. social worker;
- religious observance;
- bereavement;
- weddings or funerals of close friends and family;
- arranged absence in relation to children in Gypsy/Traveller families;
- participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school;
- lack of transport – including due to bad weather;
- family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma;
- period of exclusion to be recorded in a separate category;
- extended leave with parental consent including some young carer activities.

Schools may authorise absence where families are experiencing exceptional domestic circumstances or traumatic events such as family bereavement. However, authorising absence should not delay the process of considering how the school and other partners can plan to support the child or young person and family, helping to minimise longer term

absence. For children and young people who are care experienced, the authorisation of absence for exceptional domestic circumstances should be considered carefully with multi-agency partners to consider whether absence from school is in fact beneficial. The school and partners should ensure that appropriate supports and planning are in place.

Unauthorised Absence

Schools should record absence as unauthorised when they perceive that there is no valid reason for the absence provided. Such absence can be categorised as:

- absence with parental awareness in specific circumstances;
- family holidays during term time;
- occasional absence without parental awareness;
- longer term absence – school related issues;
- longer term absence – home and wider community;
- absence relating to substance and alcohol misuse.

There are two categories out with authorised or unauthorised:

- temporary exclusion and
- extended leave with parental consent.

Schools should be able to evidence all meetings and interventions relating to attendance and late coming. Copies of all relevant notes, minutes, correspondence and referrals relating to time- keeping and non-attendance should be retained.

Further clarification on the following attendance/absence reasons are in Appendix 2.

3.3 Home Education

Home education involves parents withdrawing their child from school education and subsequently providing an efficient education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. with the consent of the education authority. Put simply, home education is removing your child from school and teaching them yourself or providing their education by another means, e.g. online, tutors, etc. Home education does not mean Education Services/schools providing tuition or resources to be used at home.

Please Note - School register/Codes to be used: - Pupil no longer on school roll

[West Lothian Council Home Education Policy](#)

3.4 Flexi Education

Flexi schooling is an arrangement where a parental request is made for their child to attend school part-time, for example, on certain days or for certain subjects, and to be home educated for the remainder of the school week. Each flexi schooling arrangement is unique to the child/family and must be agreed in collaboration between family, school and Education Services officers. The feasibility of each request will be considered on its own merit, while

taking into consideration that under Section 28(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 “so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents”. It will be a decision for the education authority and the school as to whether they can support such an arrangement, having taken account of individual circumstances and operational arrangements.

Please Note - School register/Codes to be used: Should Not Attend (SNA).

[West Lothian Council Home Education Policy](#)

3.5 Flexible Timetable Arrangements

Scottish Government guidance (Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2, 2017) states that, “In order to support the child or young person appropriately and enhance the transition back to school, it may be necessary in exceptional circumstances to implement a package of support that could be achieved using a flexible or part-time timetable with an agreed timescale as to when this will end. Any such arrangements should be for a short, agreed period with the aims and conditions around this recorded in any support plan.”

Individual cases require to be considered in relation to the Positive Relationships Policy and schools must ensure that when pupils are not expected to attend the school full-time there is a clear agreement with parents about who is carrying out that duty of safeguarding the pupil at each session. This arrangement must be agreed by a Central Officer and an update provided within a six week cycle.

[Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian in West Lothian Educational Establishments.](#)

Please Note - School Register/ Codes to be used:

- PTX (L): Exclusion related part time timetable is accessing home learning materials at other times, due to behaviour related concerns
- PTH (Y): Health related part time timetable
- ATF when the child/ young person is engaging in work at home. Work is provided by school and school have evidence work has been completed.

3.6 Temporary Exclusion

The decision about a period of exclusion lies is made by the school and therefore there is a requirement to record and report these separately from other types of absence. Education remains the responsibility of the school during the period of exclusion. It is important to note that education provision should be provided for excluded learners without undue delay. (reasonable within 3 days and with regular contact to ensure understanding of material).

[Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian in West Lothian Educational Establishments.](#)

3.7 Diverse school communities

Some groups of children and young people may require authorised absence because of their religious or cultural practices or 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 weddings or funerals are major events which may require children or young people to travel (e.g. overseas) or participate in extended preparations. If this lasts for more than four weeks the school would normally have the right to consider removing the child or young person from the roll in order not to be penalised in terms of its attendance record. However, in these circumstances, children or young people should be considered as "Extended leave with parental consent", which allows them to remain on the school register ready for their return, but without the school being penalised.
- Some families may travel as part of their tradition, for family connections or work commitments. Further information on supporting inclusive educational approaches for children and young people from travelling cultures, including culturally sensitive approaches to managing attendance, is available in the Scottish Government guidance 'Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures' Children and young people can be registered on SEEMIS with two schools at the same time. For example, some families arrange for their children to enrol in a 'base school' (school they attend for most of the year) for part of the year and take authorised 'Extended Leave with Parental Consent' for periods of travel. The children may temporarily enrol in other schools as they travel, and these schools provide attendance and other data to the 'base school', to ensure completeness of data.

3.8 Reducing Late-coming

Late-coming can significantly impact on attainment and achievement and can result in pupils missing out on the welcoming and informative start to a new day. Poor timekeeping is disruptive to the individual pupil and to the learning of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties.

Late-coming is defined as arriving in school after the start of the school day.

A pupil who arrives after the bell at the start of the school day but before the declared midpoint of a morning or of an afternoon should be recorded as 'J' irrespective of the reason for the late-coming.

A pupil arriving after the declared mid-point is to be recorded using the code letter 'K'.

Each school should identify its declared midpoint by reference to a morning or afternoon interval or the beginning or end of a teaching period which occurs around the middle of the morning or afternoon.

Lateness should be dealt with respectfully and consideration given to any family difficulties. When the school becomes aware of any difficulties it should do what it can to help in partnership with other services.

Where a pupil's late-coming continues to be a concern despite contact with parents, the school should consider the need for an Assessment of Need and subsequent action plan to meet the pupil's identified need. This process should be followed in line with the council's Continuum of Support.

3.9 Frequently Used SEEMIS Attendance Codes

Attendance Code	Examples of usage	Attendance Status
Present in class	Self-Explanatory	Attendance
SCH – In school but not in class. (<u>Staff presence and supervision is in place</u>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S6 study periods - In school activities/Induction/Assemblies etc - This code should not be used for students who are in school but who choose not to attend class. 	Attendance
WRK – Work Experience	Work Experience or Volunteering arranged or agreed by the school	Attendance
SEP – Sickness with Educational Provision Long term sickness with education provision (code can be used from start of absence).	Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 requires education authorities to make special arrangements for sick pupils to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment, if the pupil is deemed unable to attend school due to prolonged ill health (more than 54 openings/27 days). If the child is receiving tuition in hospital, or another kind of educational tuition at home, code SEP should be used, as it counts as attendance, not authorised absence. Sickness where no such provision is available should continue to be categorised as authorised absence, under MED or SEL codes.	Attendance
LAT – Late (arrive before mid-opening)	Where a young person arrives late but during the first half of the opening, this will be marked as late regardless of the reason	Attendance
OAT – Other Attendance out of school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exceptional entrants to college during times when attending college - Student is engaged with Partner led learning 	Attendance
FLD – Field Trip	School day trips/outings/residential trips	Attendance
ATF – Adapted Timetable/ Flexible Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The pupil is following an adapted timetable for a short time. As a result of a robust assessment of need and staged intervention, the school has put a plan in place in collaboration with the pupil and family which includes a temporary adapted timetable. - This code would be used where a pupil is engaged in a learning programme at times they are not in school. A key adult is responsible for monitoring engagement. - If the pupil is not engaging in the agreed learning programme then their absence 	Attendance

	should be recorded using the appropriate code.	
VHL – Virtual Home Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be used for unplanned home learning that is not health or wellbeing related. - The school is open but the pupil cannot physically attend e.g. localised weather, transport failure, hazardous conditions in a part of the school building etc. Learning is carried out remotely. - If a pupil is not engaging in remote learning, the appropriate code should be used. 	Attendance
FLX – Flexible Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school can use this code when a parent wishes to nurture a particular talent, skill or interest of their child through a regular private arrangement (e.g. Music /sports regular tuition). Or the parent may wish to provide their child with a regular set of experiences which cannot be accessed through the local authority (e.g. An engineering project, intensive outdoor learning opportunities). This is at the discretion of the school. It is the responsibility of the parent to provide meaningful activity at home, monitored by the school. - For occasional sporting and cultural events (ABS) Other Authorised Absence should be used. 	Attendance

Attendance Code	Examples of usage	Attendance Status
MED – Medically Certified	-Evidence from GP/Consultant advising absence from school	Auth. Absence
SEL – Self Certified	-Parent reports that the young person is unwell	Auth. Absence
DCA – Exceptional Domestic Circumstances *SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN EXTREME SITUATIONS & FOR SHORT PERIODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The period immediately after an accident or illness -A period of serious or critical illness of a close relative -A domestic crisis which causes disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation 	Auth. Absence
ABS – Other Authorised Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Immediate family weddings -Bereavements -Religious observance -Attendance at court/children's hearing/ childcare review etc 	Auth. Absence

	-Sporting and cultural events not arranged by the school but approved by them	
LT2 – Late (Arrives after mid-opening)	Where the student arrives after the mid-point of the opening.	Auth. Absence
PTX – Part time (exclusion related)	The pupil is following an adapted timetable as a result of a phased return from exclusion or high risk of exclusion. The adapted timetable must be regularly reviewed as part of the Child's Planning process . PTX is used when a young person is not in school and is not engaging in learning in the time they are at home.	Auth. Absence
PTH – Part time (health related)	Where pupil is on a part time timetable PTH should be used during the periods when there is no educational provision available (when PT TT is as a result of a health condition/concern) *Must be regularly reviewed as part of the Child's Planning process .	Auth. Absence

Attendance Code	Examples of usage	Attendance Status
UPH – Parental Holiday	-A parent removes a young person from school during term time	Unauth. Absence
TBC – To be confirmed	-Temporarily used until a reason for absence has yet to be confirmed	Unauth. Absence
UNA –Truancy/ Unexplained	-All absence for which no adequate explanation has been provided	Unauth. Absence
EXC - Exclusion	-A young person has been temporarily excluded from school	Unauth. Absence
OUA – Other unauthorised absence	-Where a parent is refusing to send their child to school following a dispute with the school	Unauth. Absence

Attendance Code	Examples of usage	Attendance Status
SNA – Should not attend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exceptional entrants to college during times when not expected to be in college (formal agreement with the parent/carer and young person) - S6 students who have an agreement with the school where they sign out in line with their learning agreement. - All students who have a formal flexi schooling agreement arranged in 	Other

	partnership with the authority's Home Education Team should have attendance patterns changed and marked as SNA when they are scheduled not to be in school.	
EXL – Extended leave with family consent	This is not the same as a family holiday. This includes circumstances such as - Extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school. - Short term parental placement abroad. - A family returning to their country of origin (for cultural reasons, to care for a relative etc.)	Other

Additional information on recording exceptional entrant attendance.

All **Exceptional Entrants** at college should have attendance patterns changed where SNA indicates when student is not in college, OAT when scheduled college time. When informed of a student absence then the OAT code should be changed to appropriate absence code.

4. Withdrawal of a Placement

A placement at school should only be withdrawn if it is confirmed through the Attendance and Engagement at School policy and Children Missing from Education Policy that the child no longer required the place.

For children in preschool, the designated staff should work with the Health Visitor and Police in the first instance as per the safeguarding procedures. Advice should be sought from their link Education Officer prior to the withdrawal of a placement.

5. Guidance on Pupils going Missing or Absconding from Educational Establishments

This guidance is designed to support schools in managing situations where a pupil has:

1. Been discovered to be missing during the course of the school day and/or
2. Absconded from school in the presence of staff.

Context

Getting It Right for Every Child ('GIRFEC') means that all those people who have a responsibility to help children and young people will make sure that they do their best to keep them safe and healthy. All children and young people have rights and responsibilities. Article 3 of the UNCRC states that the best interests of the child will be the primary consideration. They have the right to feel safe, supported, included and respected. Staff must constantly demonstrate this through their planning and their actions.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments

- Attendance at School: Policy and Operational Procedures
- West Lothian Education Services Child Protection Procedures
- WLC Health and Safety Policy
- Any risk assessments relating specifically to the individual environment or the individual pupil

Relevant factors to consider when making decisions regarding pupils who have gone missing or absconded:

- Age of pupil and any additional support needs or vulnerabilities relating to the pupil
- The pupil's current demeanour and the nature of any incidents which led to the missing or absconding incident
- Any previous missing or absconding incidents involving this pupil and the outcomes of these incidents
- The immediate environment of the school, including potential hazards such as major roads, railways, rivers, canals
- Prevailing weather conditions or any other situational factors such as ongoing building/maintenance work.

1) Incidents where a pupil is discovered to be missing during the course of the school day

- Attempts to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil should be made by speaking to relevant staff, pupils and, where necessary, emergency contacts
- A thorough search of the school grounds and immediate vicinity should be undertaken
- An assessment of risk should be carried out based upon the relevant factors listed above and the length of time the pupil is believed to have been missing for
- Where an immediate risk of harm is identified, staff should contact Police without delay. Ensure the staff member contacting Police has all key information about the pupil to hand
- Where police have been contacted, appropriate central education staff and any allocated workers from partner agencies should also be notified at the earliest opportunity.

2) Incidents where a pupil has absconded from school in the presence of staff

Where a pupil absconds but remains **within** the perimeter of the establishment grounds:

- Staff should utilise appropriate de-escalation strategies as set out in the Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments Policy
- Staff should be mindful of any actions which may increase the likelihood of the pupil leaving the establishment grounds.

Where a pupil absconds and moves **outside** the perimeter of the establishment grounds but within the immediate vicinity:

- Staff should encourage the pupil to initially return back inside the perimeter and thereafter the school building
- If the pupil refuses to return, staff should use the relevant factors listed above to risk assess whether they feel the pupil is at immediate risk of harm
- Where immediate risk of harm is identified, staff should contact the Police without delay. The pupil's parents/carers or allocated worker from partner agencies should also be contacted if appropriate.

Where a pupil leaves the immediate vicinity of the establishment grounds:

- Staff should consider the list of relevant factors above to re-assess the level of risk to the pupil
- Where immediate risk of harm is identified, and if not already notified, staff should contact the police without delay
- Staff should follow at a safe distance, allowing them to keep the pupil in sight and maintain communication without causing the pupil to feel the need to run. Staff following pupils must continue to keep the police up to date with the pupil's location and any potential danger the pupil is placing themselves in at that time.

Searching for a pupil or following a pupil at a safe distance out with school grounds:

The following should be noted:

- Staff should be wearing suitable high-visibility clothing and carrying a mobile phone or walkie- talkie to enable communication with police and/or other establishment staff
- Staff should not place themselves in situations of potential risk or harm e.g. trying to stop fast moving traffic; climbing over fences; entering derelict buildings; walking near railway lines
- Physical intervention should only be considered as a last resort where the staff member feels that to not physically intervene would likely result in physical damage or harm to the pupil. This requires to be a balanced decision which takes into consideration that to act may force the pupil to actually cause harm or injury to themselves. - An example would be a child threatening to jump from a high position and therefore threatening serious harm or injury to themselves. Staff approaching could cause or force the pupil to actually jump. In circumstances such as this, the Police should be allowed to intervene as they have the expertise and training for such situations.
- Staff should not use motor vehicles to search for a missing or absconding pupil as it presents a risk of accident by driving and looking for the pupil at the same time. The use of their own motor vehicle may also result in potential liabilities for the individual and the local authority if they are not insured for use of the vehicle for work purposes.

Reporting and recording of incidents

- Head of Service and the Education Child Protection Officer should be notified at the earliest opportunity where police have been called to attend a missing or absconding incident

- All incidents must be reported on Sphera - the Council's Incident Reporting System
- Where a pupil has had a number of missing incidents, consideration should be given to completing a [Philomena Protocol Form](#).

6. Children Missing from Education Procedures

This procedure should be used in conjunction with the following:

- WLC Attendance at School: Policy and Operational Procedures
- Children Missing from Education (Scotland) national guidance: [Link](#)
- School to School (S2S) Transfer System.

Responses to Non-Attendance

When a child does not attend school, the school must respond in every case. The response will depend on the circumstances of the absence, as follows:

Circumstances	Response
Unexplained absence	Follow Safe Arrival procedure within the Attendance at School: Policy and Operational Procedures (page 10)
Persistent non-attendance/lateness/truancy	Follow Attendance and Engagement Tiered Response Flowchart within Attendance at School: Policy and Operational Procedures (page 31)
Non-attendance for a period of 4 weeks (or considerably less for a vulnerable child) <u>and</u> no contact can be made with the child or family <u>and</u> there is no evidence of alternative enrolment or home education	Follow the Children Missing from Education procedure

Children Missing from Education Procedure

There are three criteria which must be met for a child to be considered Missing from Education:

- Non-attendance for a period of four weeks (or considerably less for vulnerable children, see criteria below)
- No contact can be made with the child, their family or any other emergency contacts
- No evidence of alternative school enrolment or appropriate home education

A child will be considered vulnerable if they are:

- Currently or recently on the Child Protection Register

- Currently or recently subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (Care Experienced) or subject to a current Children's Reporter referral
- Current or recently the subject of a child protection investigation into them or another member of their family
- Considered at risk due to their additional support or health needs

This list is not exhaustive and other factors may give the school cause for concern. The school should use their knowledge of the child and family and information available from partner and other agencies to inform their decision.

If at any time during the process the school believes the child/ren may be at risk of harm then Child Protection procedures should be followed immediately.

Actions by School

Before declaring a child Missing from Education, the school's Designated Member of Staff (DMS) for Child Protection should ensure that the following school level checks in relation to the absence have been undertaken:

- Attempted communications via telephone, letter and email
- Checks with council services and partner agencies i.e. Social Policy and Health for information on move or change of address Check with Pupil Placement for information on alternative enrolment within West Lothian
- Check with link education officer if the child is now being educated at home.
- Consider contacting police via 101 to request a welfare check visit.

When a school has identified a child as Missing from Education and has undertaken the school level checks, the authority's CME Co-ordinator (Education Child Protection Officer) should be notified.

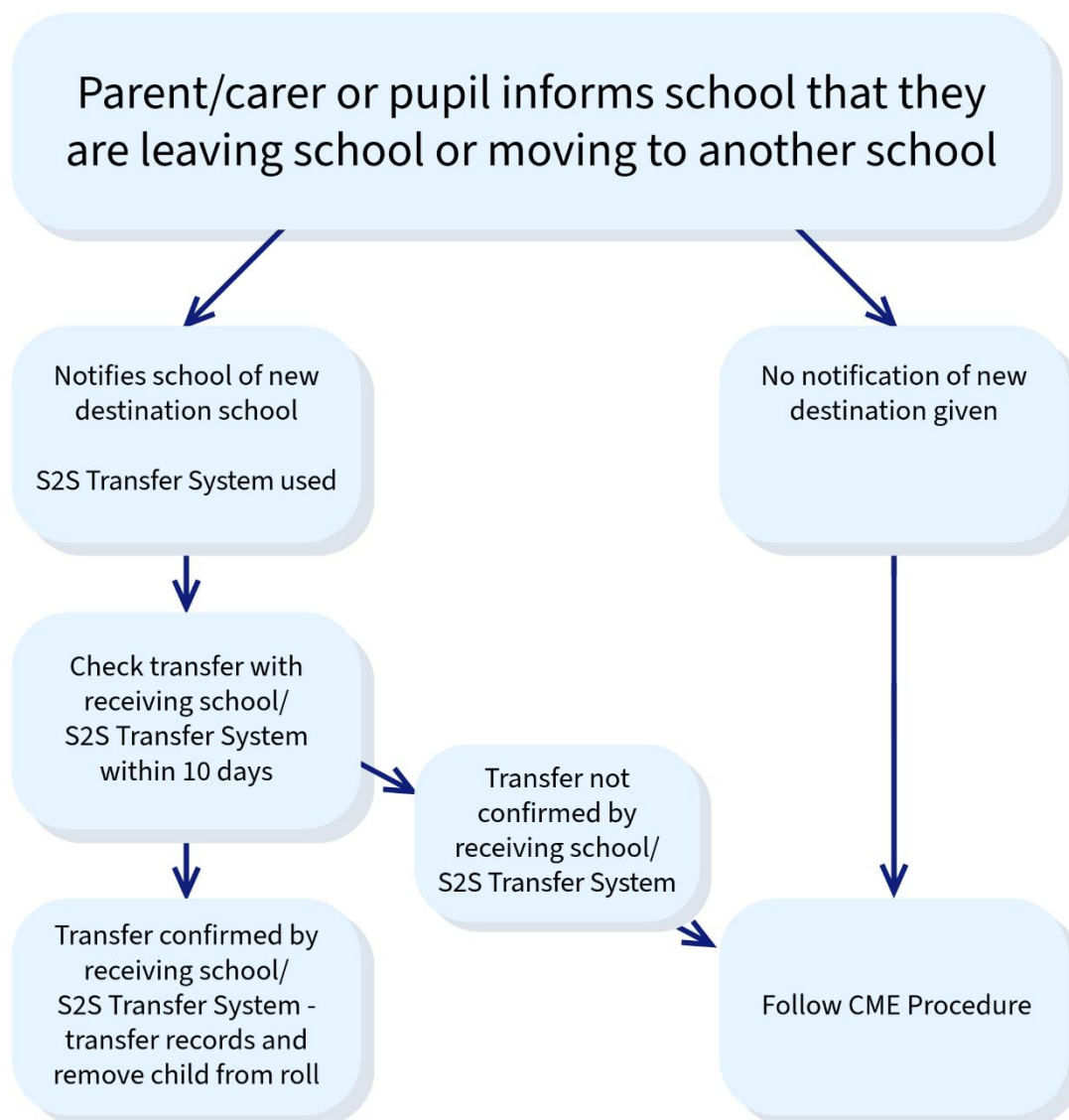
When a child is suspected of being Missing from Education but the school term will end before a four week period of absence is completed, the Education Child Protection Officer should be informed before the end of the school term.

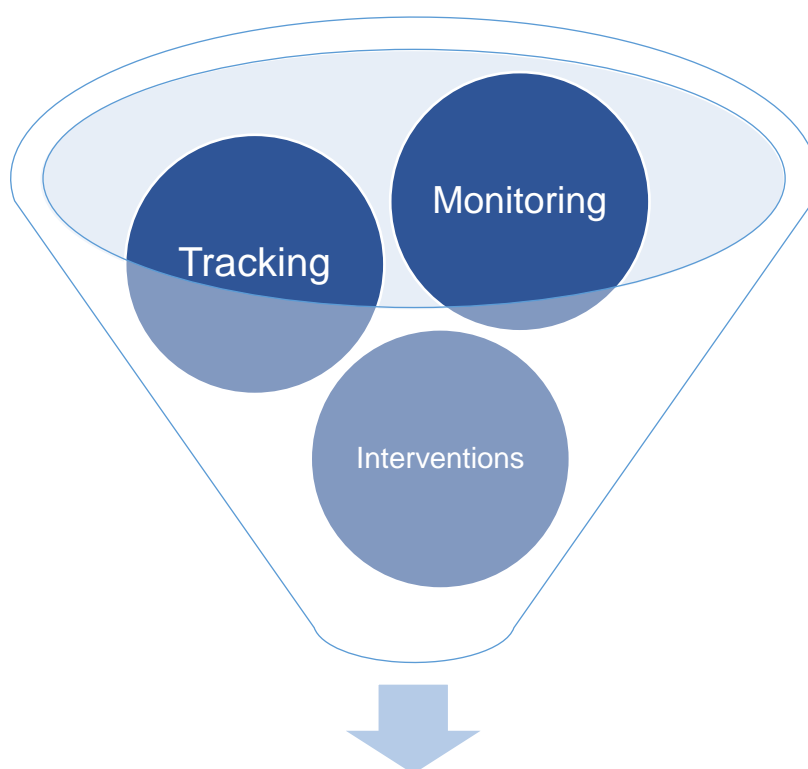
Action by Authority CME Co-ordinator

The CME Co-ordinator will undertake the following authority level checks:

- Follow up checks with other services and partner agencies (i.e. social policy, housing, health and police) as appropriate
- Contact any other local authorities' CME co-ordinators if there is an indication of a child's whereabouts
- When the authority level checks have been undertaken the authority Child Protection Officer may refer the case to CME Scotland.

Guidance on Transfer of Pupils to Another School





APPENDIX 2 | Tracking, Monitoring and Interventions

APPENDIX 2 | Tracking, monitoring and Interventions

Systems alone do not ensure an improvement in attendance and engagement. However, robust systems within a positive culture should result in the development of effective practices that impact positively supporting better outcomes for children and young people.

1. Systems, Triggers and Procedures

Every school day counts for a child or young person and to support excellent attendance it is important to look beyond attendance percentage levels and consider what the percentage levels mean in terms of missed opportunities for learning and personal development.

The table below sets out the reality behind the attendance percentage levels in terms of number of missed school days.

100% attendance	0 days missed
95% attendance	9 days absence (1 week and 4 days of missed learning)
90% attendance	19 days of absence (3 weeks and 4 days of missed learning).
80% attendance	36 days of absence (7 weeks and 3 days of missed learning- half a term absent)
75% attendance	45 days absence (9 weeks and 1 day of missed learning)
50% attendance	90 days absence (20 weeks of missed learning-half of the school annual session absent)

It is important to challenge misconceptions about attendance and not assume attendance percentages are similar to assessment percentages. 90% attendance means a child can be missing a day a fortnight over the year whereas 90% in a class assessment is an indicator of academic success.

In communication with the school community, schools should look beyond the attendance percentage and outline what absence levels mean in terms of missed days and implications of learning and progress, inclusion and wellbeing for children/young people.

2. Tracking and Monitoring

Whole school approaches to tracking and monitoring attendance should be in place where the roles of staff members are clear in actioning the data and consistent approaches are understood and used across the school community.

There is an expectation that schools should track attendance:

- Daily - through the Safe arrivals at school procedure
- Weekly - Fortnightly monitoring for targeted groups of children/young people
- Monthly - whole school attendance interventions and actions and strategic overview.

In order to ensure effective tracking and monitoring:

- Schools require to have clear systems in place to track and monitor attendance and time-keeping to enable a timely response to emerging negative habits and trends. Equally important is tracking and monitoring the reasons for absence.
- Regular monitoring should take place daily/ using SEEMIS and monthly using Power BI. Monitoring reports should be checked for changes or emerging patterns in attendance for both individuals or groups of learners (year/class/characteristics) at least monthly.
- Children and young people for whom concerns have been identified should be subject to more regular attendance monitoring.
- Number of days missed, the frequency of absences, concerning absence patterns, and/or the level of concern an absence causes due to vulnerability or risk factors could all trigger a supportive response or intervention. Vulnerabilities and risks should always be considered first when deciding when and how to respond to absence.
- Responding to absence should be staged. Intervening as early as possible may prevent an absence becoming chronic or entrenched. Attendance thresholds should be considered a minimum criteria for triggering a supportive response.
- Communications with parents or carers are an essential part of absence management however they are not interventions in themselves. Appropriate interventions can only be put in place when there is a clear understanding of the factors contributing to absence. These may be complex. Communications with parents or carers should always be managed sensitively and respectfully.

3. Analysis of 'Actionable Data'

Power BI Attendance allows schools to analyse whole school data to inform interventions and supports. By filtering and intersecting attendance data, trends and patterns of absence can be identified for cohorts, groups and individuals.

There is significant value in supporting analysis of absence through considering issues through a range of lenses: school refusal, leaving school early, visits to pupil support/school office/medical room, pedagogical truancy, absent at points of transition, , staying in corridors during classes, weekly patterns or times where children/young people feel learning is of less value e.g. the end of term. Underlying reasons for absence (e.g. linked to life at home) must also be identified and understood.

Attendance Information should be considered alongside wider tracking and monitoring information, including wellbeing assessments.

The analysis of data can be used to allocate resource or targeted intervention to support improved engagement, achievement and attainment.

4. The Voices of Young People and Parents/Carers; Identifying Barriers to School Attendance

In order to support the attendance and/or engagement of any child or young person, schools must ensure that learners views are at the centre. This is required in terms of Article 12 of the UNCRC. Efforts should be made to reduce barriers to enable the voice of the young people to be heard.

Engaging parents and families, listening to, valuing and acting upon their opinions and expertise regarding their children and young people is key to ensuring good attendance at school. With parent/carers on board attendance is more likely to improve. Discussions with parents and families about attendance should take cognisance of the challenges that can be part of everyday family life such as work commitments, dealing with financial challenges, bereavement, and mental health and wellbeing.

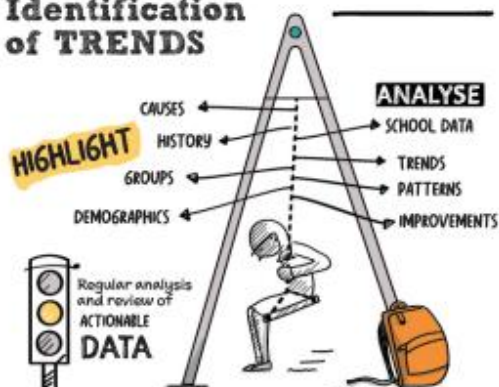
In assessing reasons for absence, consideration should be given to what is pushing the child or young person away from school and pulling them towards home, or the community (Kearney, 2002). Assessment should also take place to determine what would support improvements in attendance. Risk and resilience factors should also be discussed with individual children and young people and families.

Collaborative working with learners, parents/carers, staff and partners promotes better understanding and assessment of needs to identify and implement appropriate supports.

Supporting Attendance: EFFECTIVE TRACKING AND MONITORING

'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.' Included, Engaged and Involved Part I: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (www.gov.scot)

Identification of TRENDS



Improving Outcomes

WIDER TRACKING AND MONITORING
Information, including wellbeing assessments



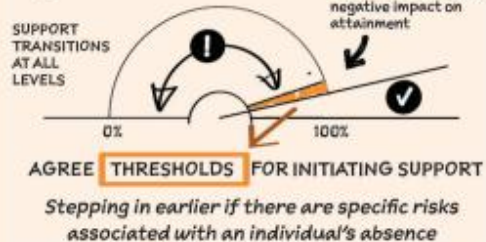
Identify the 'VITAL FEW' causes of ABSENCE



How ENGAGED are the children and young people?

USE ANALYSIS OF DATA to allocate resource or targeted intervention TO SUPPORT IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT, ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT

Early warning signs (using data)



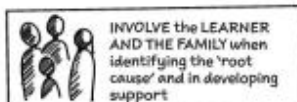
Ensure that data is monitored and considered for groups who are more likely to have barriers to attendance

★ I.E. YOUNG CARERS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS, THOSE IMPACTED BY POVERTY.

Promoting Positive Culture Ethos and Relationships



SHARED UNDERSTANDING of the IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE



INVOLVE the LEARNER AND THE FAMILY when identifying the 'root cause' and in developing support

★ REGULAR PROFESSIONAL dialogue and reflection

★ ENCOURAGE FULL attendance in the first two weeks of the school year

★ SUPPORTS to improve attendance and TIMEKEEPING

★ HIGH-QUALITY conversations focused on improvement

POLICY ★



★ Ensure ALL absence is followed up in line with child protection purposes

★ Local authority guidance and school level policies in place

★ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES of all school staff are clearly outlined

★ RECORD attendance at least TWICE A DAY

★ RIGOROUS tracking and monitoring of all absences



★ Provide clear and accessible attendance data to ENCOURAGE GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND COLLABORATION in promoting regular attendance

<https://education.gov.scot/resources/improving-attendance-in-scotland/effective-use-of-data/principles-of-effective-tracking-and-monitoring/>

5. Procedures for Managing Regular Non-Attendance (Pre-School)

While there is an entitlement to 50 weeks provision, practitioners and managers should be mindful that a family would not be expected to bring their child to nursery 50 weeks of the year as for example the family may have family holidays throughout the year. Individual circumstances should be taken into account when considering next steps and actions.

West Lothian Council operates a two-tier intervention approach to managing the absence of children in pre-school provision. These tiers dovetail with Education Services' Continuum of Support and, as such, a wellbeing concern will have been raised in relation to attendance prior to Tier 1. The non-attendance of nursery children at pre-school provision should follow tiers of intervention as follows:

Tier 1

Where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 90% of expected attendance and there are no extenuating circumstances, communication and discussion should take place with the parent to raise the awareness of the level of absence and the impact it is having on the pupil's progress at school/nursery.

Tier 2

If in the next 4-week period, the pupil's attendance is still below 90% and there remains a concern about the level of attendance and/or the reason provided for the absence, the parents should be invited to attend a meeting with the school key persons. This meeting should be supportive and should be solution focused. A plan should be agreed to improve attendance in line with GIRFEC staged intervention processes.

Where a child is continuously not attending pre-school provision, safeguarding procedures should be followed. Prior to a placement being withdrawn discussion should take place with the Early Years Quality Improvement Officer.

6. Tiered Intervention Summary (Schools)

Tiered intervention to promote attendance and reduce absence should be used in conjunction with the GIRFEC staged intervention assessment and planning processes.

90-100%	Tier 1: Universal
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventative – at school/class level • Early Intervention approaches
70-90%	Tier 2: Additional
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of individual needs and barriers • Additional supports and interventions put in place • Communication and partnership with parents • Consultation/ advice with partner agencies
50-70%	Tier 3: Targeted
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Assessment of Need would be carried out • Individualised targeted planning with 6 weekly review • Working in partnership with parents and child/ young person • Consideration of referrals for partnership support
Below 50%	Tier 4: Enhanced
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly individualised support and planning tailored to individual needs • This may be multi-service or a multi-tiered approach which involves bespoke planning with the child/young person and the family at the centre

When monitoring attendance, the education authority and schools need to model a “common sense” approach to staged intervention. For example, at the start of the term a child was absent in week 1 of school and present week 2. By the end of week 2 their attendance was 50%. This is clearly too early to go to Tier 3.

Actions should not be based on the attendance figure alone but through a considered approach of all the information and evidence available. Staff should work progressively through the stages.

Where there is Improvement:

As part of the tracking and monitoring processes, schools should recognise and note in the attendance tracking where there is improvement. Schools should celebrate small steps of success with the young people and their families in line with their school celebrating success approaches.

7. Tiered Interventions for Schools; further explanation:

By setting clear expectations of what good attendance looks like early intervention can prevent negative habits and can also highlight unmet wellbeing needs quickly and enable support to be put in place. Regular analysis of data and trends to ensure early intervention and next steps are identified; this is essential to avoid lengthier absences which often require more complex interventions.

TIER 1: Prevention and Early Intervention

ACTIONS:

- To promote and celebrate positive attendance and the impact of positive attendance. Awareness raising of the potential impact of non- attendance.
- When there is a sudden unexplained dip in attendance or when a child/young person's attendance is at 90% over a period of time, a trusted adult should have a supportive communication with the child/young person to discuss school attendance.
- Where appropriate, schools should notify the parent/carer.
- All interventions should be recorded as part of attendance tracking.

It is also important that data is closely monitored for groups who are more likely to have barriers to attendance e.g. young carers, children and young people with additional support needs, those impacted by poverty and for those young people at points of transition.

Other resources/actions:

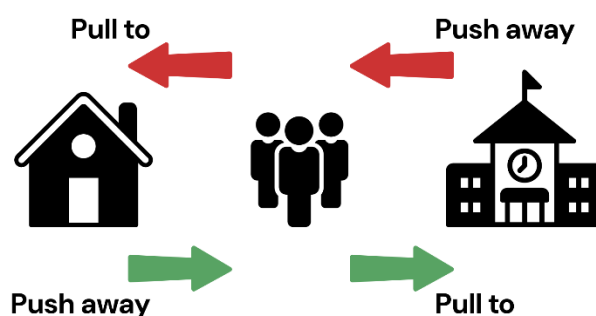
- School/class/Individual attendance monitoring
- School communications to parent see exemplar Letter for unexplained absence (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for attendance below 90% (section 2.8)

TIER 2: Additional Support

When attendance drops to 70-90%

ACTIONS:

- The main aim at this stage is to identify the reasons for non-attendance in partnership with the parent and young person so that interventions can be identified.
- A trusted adult should have a supportive communication with the child/young person around school attendance
- Communication with the parents should be made and as attendance decreases (70-80%) a meeting should take place with the parents/carers.
- Once the barrier is identified, interventions should be decided collaboratively with for example class teacher, the learner and the parent/carer.
- The planned intervention and communication with the parent and young person should be recorded as part of attendance tracking.
- The school may wish to consider their wider “actionable data” and targeted interventions to consider whether the young person would benefit for additional support.
- A school may feel that is appropriate to seek consultation and advice from partner agencies such as NHS partners, ISS (Social Policy and Education Teams) at this time.



It is important to identify push-pull factors influencing absence. These are experiences which are pulling a learner to school or pushing them away from school. It may also be possible to identify pull factors which could encourage them to attend.

‘Push-pulls’ factors should be considered in 4 categories of: school/classroom, peer/social, family, or individual needs.

Prompt questions

- What is the reason of the absence? What are the barriers to attendance?
- Are there patterns in attendance / period truancy?
- Are there any identified triggers to non-attendance? Can action be taken to minimise triggers?
- How is the learner coping with the curriculum?

- Who would be a key adult for the learner?

Other resources/actions:

- School/class/Individual attendance monitoring
- Exemplar Group call (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for unexplained absence (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for intervention (section 2.8)
- Push/ Pull profile



TIER 3. Targeted Support

Attendance drops below 70% (targeted support)

ACTIONS:

Where barriers, needs and interventions need to be identified or in the event that there is continued *no* improvement in attendance, an Assessment of Need should be undertaken by the school in partnership with the child/ young person and their parents/carers.

An appropriate Child's Plan should be considered to support the need using SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed) targets to closely monitor progress. In the rare event that the decision is that a young person does not need additional planning, the reasons for this should be noted in Pastoral Notes.

It may be that the child/ young person already has Child's Planning processes in place in which case the attendance lens would become part of the holistic planning approach. It is important to keep the barriers effecting attendance at school at the heart of planning.

Enhanced assessment is the combined responsibility of practitioners, pastoral support and senior leaders but may also involve other agencies/services. Schools should ensure:

- Regular review of effectiveness of current plan/child's plan (short timescales e.g. every six weeks but at least once per term).
- Revisit the barriers to attendance every 6 months to 1 year (these may have changed over time)
- Ensuring barriers are addressed and supports meet individual needs
- Consider tools such as the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) to better understand function of non-attendance – pupil and parent version aids triangulation
- Consider support needed in school, at home and for parents and who is best placed to provide this
- Consideration of Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA)
- Consider a referral to other agencies for support
- The key link adult continues to engage with the learner to help them express their views and supports them to be at the centre of the planning and review process. This should not only focus on learning but more broadly on interests, strengths and aspirations

Where the school has carried out an Assessment of Need and a Child's Plan is in place, a referral can be made to ISS (Social Policy and Education Teams) with the agreement of the

parent/carer and young person. There should be clear evidence of planning at a school level to support the needs.

A school may also consider a referral to School Health, the Educational Psychologist, Community Learning and Development etc. in partnership with the young person and their parent carer. This would be where the school's attempts to reduce the barriers have not succeeded and this is evidenced through the Education Support Plan.

All interventions should be recorded as part of attendance tracking.

Other resources/actions:

- School/class/Individual attendance monitoring
- Exemplar Group call (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for unexplained absence (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for intervention/ partner and/or Targeted support (e.g. ISS) (section 2.8)
- Emotionally Based School Non Attendance Resources (section 3)
- Referral links



TIER 4. Enhanced Support

Attendance drops below 50%

ACTIONS:

- Schools should consider using a creative, individualised approach. This may include using alternative curricular activities, flexible pathways, involving partner agencies in supporting the learner and/or family, and considering alternative locations for interventions. Support services such as the Interrupted Learner Service may also be considered
- Regular communication with parents and child/ young person.
- Planning meetings should continue on a 6-8 weekly basis.
- School continues to have an overview of learner needs and responsibility for the school's role in the agreed plan. Assessment at this level will be collaborative and may draw on specialised assessments from partners
- Consideration of referrals to services or partners.
- Assessment approaches should consider whether Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA) should be explored (Appendix 3).
- Consultation with Inclusion and Support Service (ISS) and /or Interrupted Learner Service re. further steps on possible consideration of the case at the Inclusion Strategic group.
- Consideration of a referral to SCRA. This referral should be discussed with the Central Attendance team before submission to the Reporter. Advice and guidance are also available from SCRA West Lothian Office 0131 244 3130
- All interventions should be recorded as part of attendance tracking.

Other resources/actions:

- School/class/Individual attendance monitoring
- Exemplar Group call (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for unexplained absence (section 2.8)
- Exemplar letter for intervention/ partner and /or targeted support (e.g. ISS) (section 2.8)
- Emotionally Based School Non Attendance Resources (section 3)
- Referral links

Inclusion Support Review Group

ISS/ Education Support Services (ESS) can bring a case to the Inclusion Strategic Review Group (ISRG) for consideration. This group will ensure the practical implementation of the policy by providing coordination at a strategic level. This may include:

- Appointing an officer to work with the school/family
- Advice/consultation work and direct work
- Quality assurance of supports already in place
- Advice and support re. partnership referrals and links with WRG.
- Offer of mediation to parents/schools
- Coordination of complex packages of support
- A referral to SCRA.
- Consideration of next steps based on the outcome of the SCRA referral .

8. Exemplar Group call and letter templates

The templates below can be customised by the school.

Group call messages:

A TRIGGER IS REACHED:

“Attendance alert: your child’s attendance has fallen below (INSERT NUMBER e.g. 90%) alert. By working together, we can improve this.”

CONTINUOUS ABSENCE:

“Unfortunately, your child’s attendance at school remains a significant concern. Please contact the school to enable us to set up a meeting to positively support high levels of attendance.”

IMPROVEMENT: “Your child’s attendance at school has improved in recent weeks. Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to work with you to positively support high levels of attendance.”

LETTER A1 – Stage 1: Early Intervention

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

Dear **(Parent/Guardian Name)**

(NAME OF PUPIL), (CLASS OF PUPIL),(DATE OF BIRTH) ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to highlight our recent concerns regarding **(first name of pupil)'s** attendance at school.

(first name of pupil) currently has an attendance rate of **90% (or insert appropriate attendance figure 90-94%)**. While this may not seem significant, if this pattern continues at an attendance rate of 90% over the school year, this is the equivalent of missing one school day every two weeks. Research has shown that persistent absence has a detrimental impact on attainment, achievement and wellbeing.

At **(school name)**, we are committed to ensuring appositive learning experience for all of our pupils. We understand that absences can sometimes be due to illness or unavoidable circumstances. However, we kindly ask that you work with us to ensure **(first name of pupil)'s** attendance improves. If there are any particular challenges or reasons for these absences, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to support you and your child in any way we can.

We appreciate your continued support in promoting good attendance and academic success for **(name of pupil)**.

Thank you for your support

Yours sincerely

(Your Name)

(Your Position)

(Optional : This may be included):

The table below sets out the reality behind the attendance percentage levels in terms of number of missed school days across the school year.

100% attendance	0 days missed
95% attendance	9 days absence (1 week and 4 days of missed learning)
90% attendance	19 days of absence (3 weeks and 4 days of missed learning).
80% attendance	36 days of absence (7 weeks and 3 days of missed learning- half a term absent)
75% attendance	45 days absence (9 weeks and 1 day of missed learning)
50% attendance	90 days absence (20 weeks of missed learning-half of the school annual session absent)

LETTER A2 –Intervention Required

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

Dear **(Parent/Guardian Name)**,

(NAME OF PUPIL), (CLASS OF PUPIL),(DATE OF BIRTH) ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to highlight our recent concerns regarding the **(first name of pupil)**'s attendance at school.

We are writing to inform you that **(first name of pupil)**'s attendance is currently at **(insert attendance figure)**. This is the equivalent of missing **(insert number)** days off school.

Research shows that persistent absence can have a detrimental impact on attainment, achievement and wellbeing. We understand that absences can sometimes be due to illness or unavoidable circumstances. However, we kindly ask that you work with us to support the attendance of **(first name of pupil)**

We would like to invite you to a **(insert meeting type e.g. Assessment of Need, Child's Planning)** meeting on **(day/date)** at **(time)** to discuss strategies and further supports that may help.

If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to support **(first name of pupil)**'s attendance, achievement and wellbeing at school.

Yours sincerely,

(Your Name)

(Your Position)

(Optional : This may be included):

100% attendance	0 days missed
95% attendance	9 days absence (1 week and 4 days of missed learning)
90% attendance	19 days of absence (3 weeks and 4 days of missed learning).
80% attendance	36 days of absence (7 weeks and 3 days of missed learning- half a term absent)
75% attendance	45 days absence (9 weeks and 1 day of missed learning)
50% attendance	90 days absence (20 weeks of missed learning-half of the school annual session absent)

LETTER A3 - CONTINUED ABSENCE – Targeted Support (Partner support)

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear **(Name of Parent)**

(NAME OF PUPIL), (CLASS OF PUPIL),(DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which your attention was drawn to **(first name of pupil)'s** level of attendance. Unfortunately, **(first name of pupil)'s** attendance remains a concern and is now **(Insert percentage)** meaning **(first name of pupil)** has missed **(insert no. of days) of school**.

Research shows that persistent absence can have a detrimental impact on attainment, achievement and wellbeing. We understand that absences can sometimes be due to illness or unavoidable circumstances. However, we kindly ask that you work with us to support the attendance of **(first name of pupil)**.

We would like to invite you to a planning meeting to discuss strategies, and further supports that may help improve attendance and engagement with school . At this point in time we wish to consider additional supports which could help your child with school attendance. In the planning meeting we will discuss whether a referral to **(include name of service)** would be appropriate.

The meeting will be held on **(day/date)** at **(time)**. **(Names and titles of people invited to the meeting)** have been invited to attend the meeting If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to support **(first name of pupil)'s** attendance, achievement and wellbeing at school.

Yours sincerely

(Your Name)

(Your Position)

LETTER A4 - CONTINUED ABSENCE – Targeted Support (Referral to ISS – Social Policy)

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear **(Name of Parent)**

(NAME OF PUPIL), (CLASS OF PUPIL),(DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which your attention was drawn to **(first name of pupil)'s** level of attendance. Unfortunately, **(first name of pupil)'s** attendance remains a concern and is now **(insert percentage)** meaning **(first name of pupil)** has missed **insert no. of days) of school.**

Research shows that persistent absence can have a detrimental impact on attainment, achievement and wellbeing. We understand that absences can sometimes be due to illness or unavoidable circumstances. However, we kindly ask that you work with us to support the attendance of **(first name of pupil).**

We would like to invite you to a planning meeting to discuss strategies, and further supports that may help improve attendance and engagement with school . At this point in time we wish to consider additional supports which could help your child with school attendance. In the planning meeting we will discuss whether a referral to the Inclusion and Support Service (Social Policy) would be appropriate. Part of the remit of the Inclusion and Support Service (ISS) is to support West Lothian Council in improving attendance in school.

The meeting will be held on **(day/date)** at **(time)**. **(Names and titles of people invited to the meeting)** have been invited to attend the meeting.

If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership to support **(First name of pupil)'s** attendance, achievement and wellbeing at school.

Yours sincerely

(Your Name)

(Your Position)

LETTER A5 – Holiday Request – Unauthorised

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear **(Name of Parent)**

(NAME OF PUPIL)(CLASS OF PUPIL)([DATE OF BIRTH]): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(first name of pupil)** to go on holiday during term time.

I write to confirm that, in accordance with council policy, permission for leave of absence for **(first name of pupil)** is not granted. As a result, any absences on these days will be recorded as unauthorised.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

(Headteacher)

LETTER A6 – Holiday Request – Authorised but Still to Be Marked Absent

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(first name of pupil)** to go on holiday during term time.

On this occasion, I am willing to authorise absence. However, please be aware that **(first name of pupil)** will still be marked absent for this period and this will impact on **his/her** overall attendance figure.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

(Headteacher)

LETTER A7 – Absence Reason Unauthorised

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I am writing to inform you that the reason supplied for **(first name of pupil)**'s recent absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

(Head Teacher)

LETTER A8 – Unexplained Absences

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

(first name of pupil) has unexplained absences for the date(s)

If a pupil is absent, it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school of the reasons for absence.

Please contact the school to update the reasons for these absences either by telephoning **(insert number)** or emailing (**insert email address**).

This will allow **(first name of pupil)'s** record of attendance can be updated accordingly.

Should you fail to respond, in line with council policy, **(first name of pupil)'s** absence will be recorded as "Truancy or Unexplained".

Thank you for your support,

Yours sincerely

(Head Teacher)

LETTER A9 -LATE LETTER

TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER:

(Name and Address of parent)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to highlight **(first name of pupil)**'s recent late arrivals to school.

At **(school name)**, we value punctuality as it is an important factor in supporting good habits and continuity in learning.

We understand that mornings can sometimes present unexpected challenges. If there is anything the school can do to assist, please don't hesitate to contact us. Our priority is to work in partnership with you to ensure **(first name of pupil)** feels supported and able to learn.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and commitment to **(his/her/their)** education. We look forward to working with you to resolve this.

Warm regards,

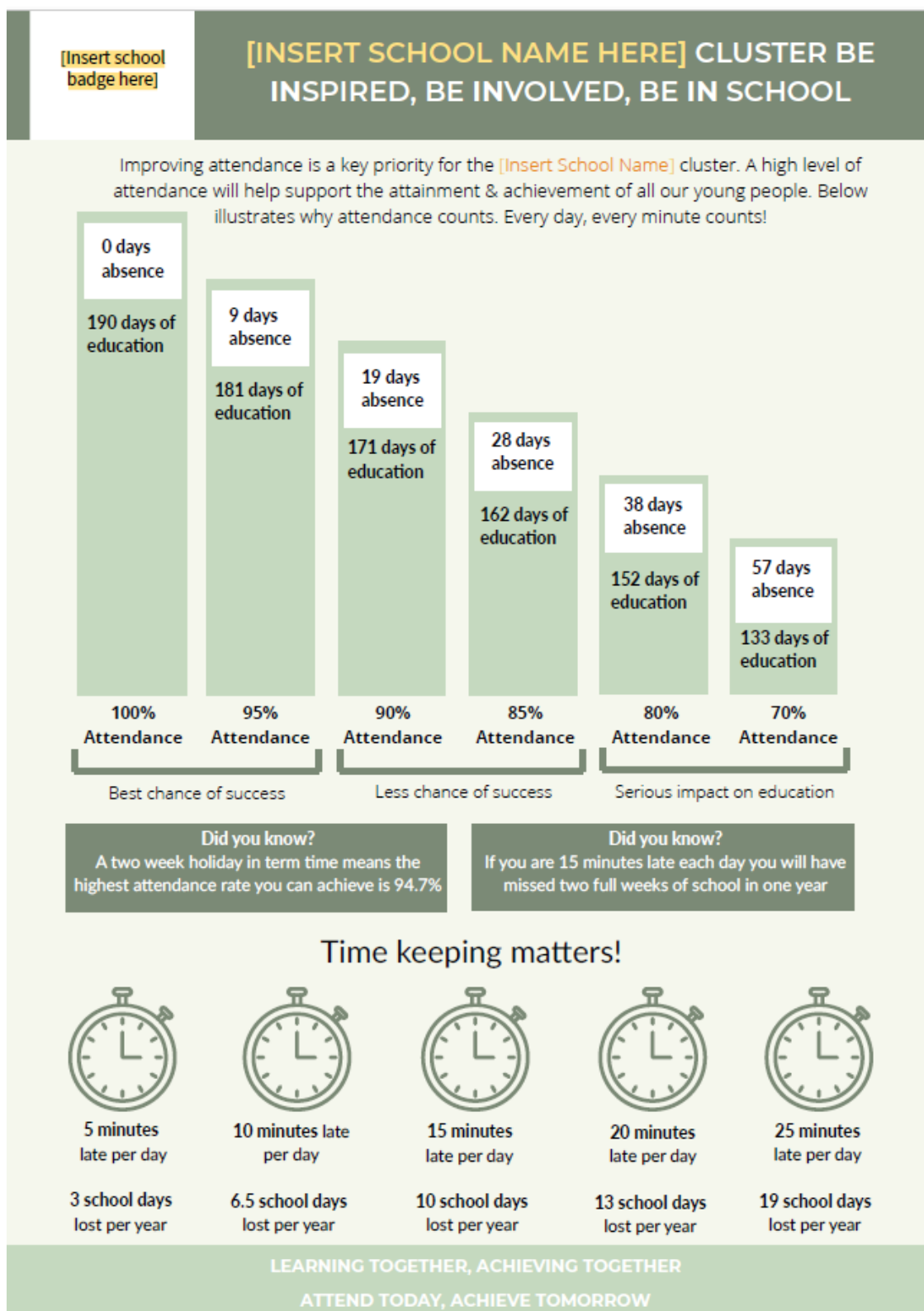
(Your Name)

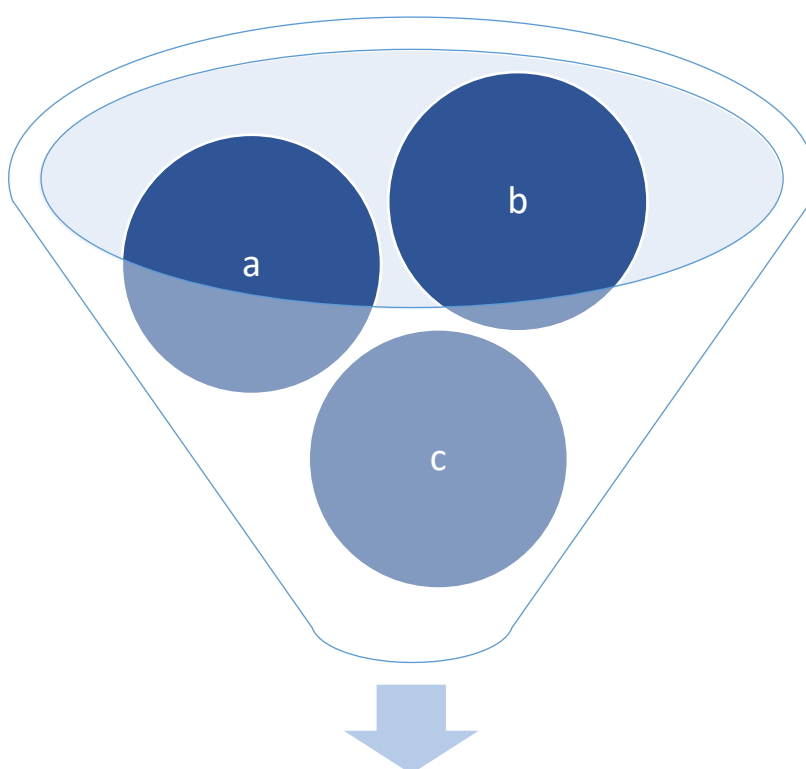
(Your Position)

EXEMPLAR LEAFLET



Attendance Flyer_ West Lothian Version.pdf





APPENDIX 3 | Emotionally Based School Non attendance

APPENDIX 3 | Emotionally Based School Non-attendance

1. What is EBSNA?

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) refers to a group of children and young people experiencing severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, which can often result in prolonged school absence (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008).

The [Anna Freud.org](https://annafreud.org) notes that the 22.3% persistent absence rate (2022/23) is a significant increase from the 10.9% rate in 2018/19, suggesting a rise in EBSNA related issues since the pandemic. It's important to note that while the data suggests a large number of students are facing attendance challenges, the exact proportion of those experiencing EBSNA specifically is difficult to pinpoint without detailed data collection. The overall increase in absence rates, however, points towards a wider prevalence of emotional and mental health issues impacting school attendance.

How can we recognise it?

It is important to determine whether attendance issues are related to emotional factors. The wider context and information gathering is key.

Some indicators include:

- Sporadic attendance
- Missing specific lessons/patterns in absences
- Child wants to attend school but only attends with a high level of support
- Child reluctant to leave home
- Regular absence without indication of anti-social behaviours (child likely at home)
- Reluctance to attend school trips
- Depression/ social isolation from peer group
- Emotional distress, particularly in relation to specific situations at school
- Anxiety on separation from caregivers/key adults
- Complaints of physical ill health or changes in physical health (which result in staying away from school) i.e. sweating, abdominal sickness, headaches, panic attacks.

Impact of EBSNA

School non-attendance has a significant impact at both a societal and individual level. For example, attainment and achievement can be negatively affected when school attendance falls below 90%, there is a higher likelihood of school dropout and a lower probability of going onto further education (Klein et al, 2020). In addition, there is evidence of increased risk of poorer mental health later in life (Flakierska, Lindstorm & Gillberh, 1997; King, Heyne, Tonge, Gullone & Ollendick, 2001), poorer employment opportunities post-school (Scottish Government, 2019) and significant conflict and difficulties within the family (Heyne & Borghuis, 2022)

Risk factors that give rise to EBSNA

The risk factors that can trigger EBSNA are multifaceted and complex. Klein & Sosu (2023) in their meta-analysis research highlighted the following as risk domains to school non-attendance:

- School problems (negative attitude to learning/schooling and low academic achievement),
- Physical and mental health issues,
- Barriers to school attendance related to behaviour (e.g. risk-taking behaviours, substance misuse),
- Family circumstances/dynamics (e.g. parental separation, poverty, substance misuse, neglect)
- School factors (poor pupil-teacher relationship, negative school climate).

The table below further illustrates examples of risk factors based on Kearney's early research on non-attendance.

Table 1. Factors Associated with Vulnerability of EBSNA

School factors	Family Factors	Child factors
Bullying (the most common school factor)	Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic	Temperamental style – reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects
Difficulties in specific subject	Parent physical and mental health problems	Fear of failure and poor self confidence
Transition to secondary school, key stage or change of school	Overprotective parenting style	Physical illness
Structure of the school day	Dysfunctional family interactions	Age (5-6, 11-12, 13-14)
Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance-orientated classrooms	Being the youngest child in the family	Learning difficulties, developmental problems or Autism spectrum condition if unidentified or unsupported
Transport or journey to school	Loss and bereavement	Separation anxiety from parent
Exams	High levels of family stress	Traumatic events
Peer or staff relationship difficulties	Family history of EBSA	
	Young carer	

The functions of EBSNA

According to Kearney and Silberman's model, EBSNA can serve one or more function: Avoiding Negative Emotions, Situation Avoidance, Relationship Seeking, and accessing Tangible Reward(s).

When an individual's risk factors interact with one or more of the functional consequences of not attending school, this can create a situation how risk factors can interact with the function

of school avoidance to create a situation whereby there are more factors pulling the individual away from attending school, than there are factors that are pushing the individual towards school attendance. EBSNA This is when EBSA happens – when risk factors are greater than the resilience factors and when stress and anxiety exceed support.

Table 2. The Four functions of EBSNA (Kearney and Silberman, 1990)

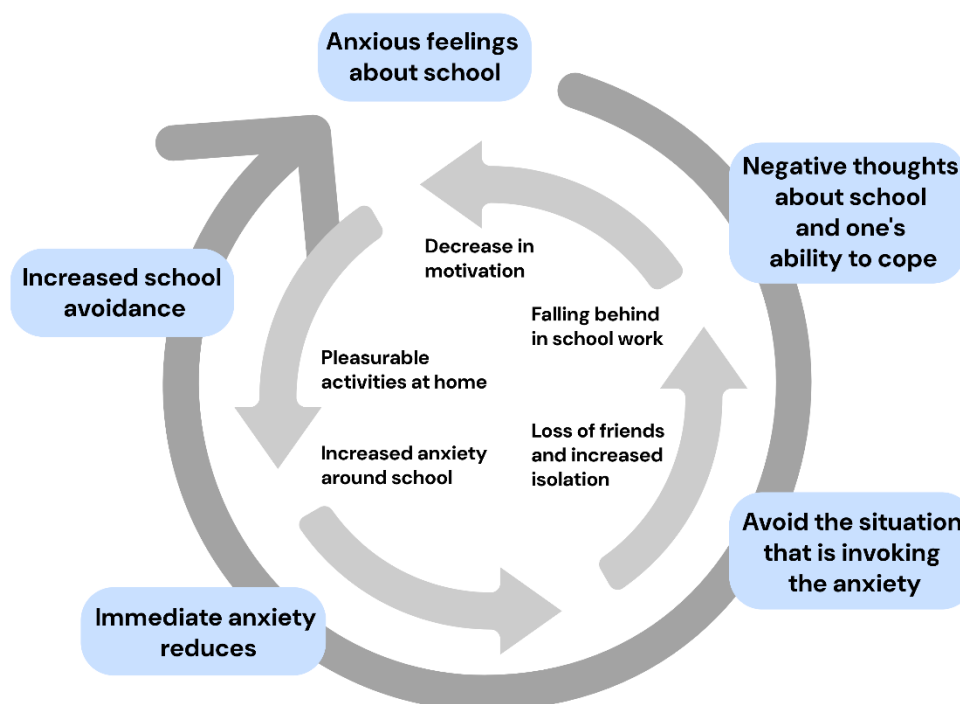
1. Avoiding negative emotion Avoiding uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school	3. Situation avoidance Escaping situations that might be stressful (e.g. academic demands, social pressure, aspects of the school environment).
2. Relationship seeking Reducing separation anxiety, gaining relational input from and/or spending more time with significant others	4. Tangible reward Spending more time out of school as it is more stimulating or motivating

Anxiety and EBSNA

Anxiety has been identified as a key feature of EBSNA. Although a certain level of anxiety is considered a normal and natural part of growing up, some young people may experience heightened levels of anxiety which impact on their functioning and school experiences. When the anxiety is linked to school avoidance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school. These feelings may also be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety such as nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating etc, and may start the night before, or even a few days before school. To respond to these feelings, some children and young people begin to withdraw to avoid the associated fears. For example, it may start as refusing to get dressed in the morning and over time can lead to not leaving the house and struggling to attend at all. Avoidance helps to reduce anxiety in the short term and, therefore, it can be reinforced.

Various additional factors contribute to the maintenance of EBSNA including worrying their friends will have forgotten about them, that they won't fit in any more or concerns about missing work and falling behind. Similarly, in order to avoid these overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with school attendance the young person may withdraw from the situation, becoming further entrenched within a cycle of avoidance. The young person may also turn to hostile behaviours as a means to avoid the threatening situation and to try and control what feels like a very 'out-of-control' situation (see figure 1 for an illustrated example).

Figure 1: Anxiety and School Avoidance



2. What can we do?

Those who are affected by EBSNA require supportive adults around them to sensitively identify the key push and pull factors at play, and to help understand how they may be serving to maintain school non-attendance. This requires a systematic and rigorous approach to gathering information, assessing the dynamics of the situation, creating comprehensive plans and ensuring that the right supports are available. Effective and early intervention is essential.

Early Identification of Vulnerable Learners

There are often complex interacting factors linked to EBSNA. Some children and young people are at higher risk and early identification means they can be supported prior to experiencing EBSNA, preventing school avoidance behaviours from escalating or becoming entrenched.

To support children and young people at risk of EBSNA, establishments need to be aware of and responsive to early indicators or risk factors.

In West Lothian the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework is thoroughly embedded within the Continuum of Support Guidance. This framework is designed to help establishments to ensure that child's needs are understood and supported effectively. More specifically, the Assessment of Wellbeing Process is a useful way to help with early identification of any risk factors and adversity which often precipitate EBSNA.

The Assessment of Wellbeing documentation and planning framework encompasses the key elements of the National Practice Model as outlined within the Children and Young People's Act (2014). The paperwork includes:

- Wellbeing Concern Forms
- Assessment of Wellbeing
- Child's Planning Meeting

An additional tool to help gather further information at this stage is the Profile of Risk Screening Tool. [EBSA – Profile of Risk screening tool](#) .

The Profile of Risk (View Profile of Risk) is designed to be used as a 'screening tool' that can help when thinking about how at risk a child or young person might be for experiencing EBSNA.

Where EBSNA is more established, escalation within the Continuum of Support to Solution Focused Child Planning Meetings may be required.

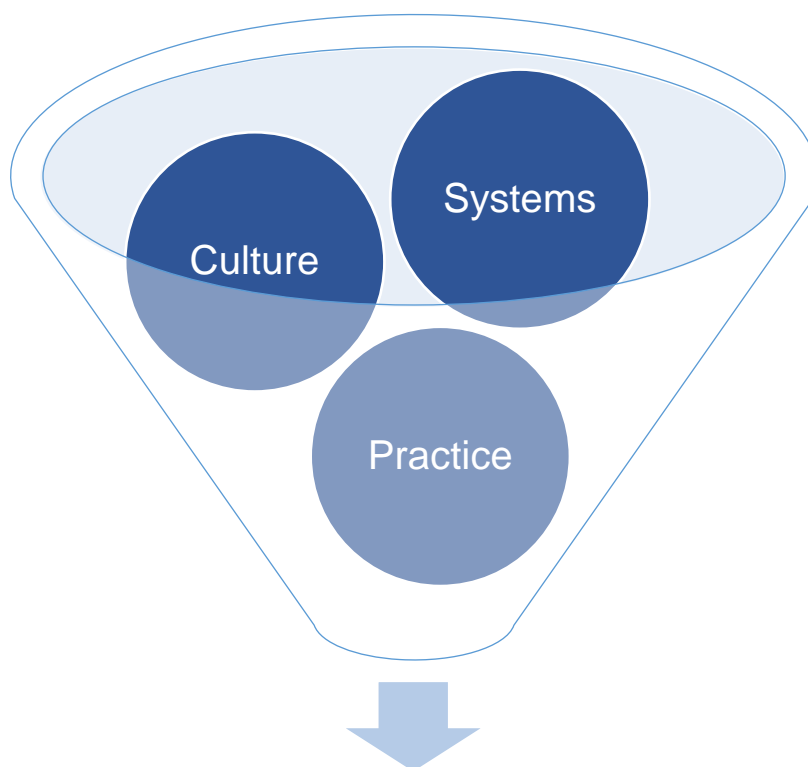
In summary, this means that discussions take place using the following agenda:

- Discussion of Strengths / Protective Factors
- Discussion of Barriers to Learning / Risks, including a focus on identify push/ pull and risk/ resilience factors. It is important that the young people/ parent/carer and key school staff are involved and that all voices are heard. This can be sensitive and so conversations should be carefully supported. There are a variety of tools designed to be used to help capture the views of all parties. For further information please visit the EPS SharePoint [WL Educational Psychology Service](#)
- Discussion of what is currently working well to support needs
- Discussion of what needs to be done differently in order to further support needs
- Create and agreed a Child's plan in partnership with the young person and parent/carer to support. This will identify interventions and strategies specific to the young person and the family.
- Keep communication regular and targets SMART with regular review.

Need more advice?

- Support in further understanding re EBSNA and access to resources and training can be found on the Educational Psychology website at SharePoint resources – Supporting Attendance section, Anxiety eLearning Module and other resources: [Sharepoint WL Educational Psychology Service](#)
- Seek advice/ consultation with Educational Psychologist.
- School mental health support: Cognitive Behavioural therapy approaches are particularly useful
- Anxiety is key feature of EBSNA so anxiety reducing techniques are helpful. In more extreme cases school outcomes for pupils who display EBSA include poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities (Garry, 1996, Pellegrini, 2007 and Taylor, 2012).

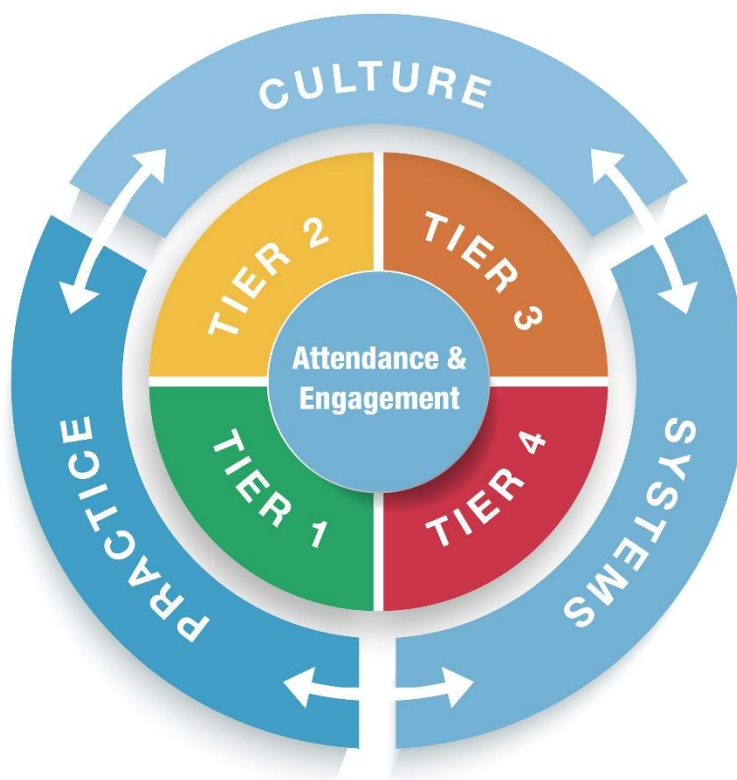
- EBSA is also associated with poor adult mental health (Blagg, 1987 and Walter et al., 2010).
- EBSA can cause conflict and difficulties within the family (Heyne & Borghuis, 2022).
- Create a specific plan in partnership with the young person and parent/carer to support. This will identify interventions and strategies specific to the young person and the family.
- Keep communication regular and targets SMART with regular review.
- In more extreme cases schools/ parents may wish to seek advice through ISS/ WRG/ CAMHS.



APPENDIX 4 | Improving Attendance through Culture, Systems and Practice

APPENDIX 4 | Improving Attendance through Culture, Systems and Practice

A relentless leadership commitment to improving wellbeing leads to success in supporting attendance. Collaborative work across staff teams, together with parents and partners ensures a shared understanding that positive wellbeing is linked to attendance and engagement. Leadership of culture, systems and practice are the key pillars for improvement and change in school attendance.



The West Lothian Approach to supporting learners to attend and be engaged in learning at school is set out on the diagram.

1. The West Lothian Approach

The outer ring of the diagram relates to the universal culture, systems and practice required to support high levels of attendance and engagement of our children and young people. The inner ring of the diagram relates to the increasingly targeted responses required by the school and multi-agency partners to support good attendance and engagement.

Positive Relationships

Compassionate, flexible relationships with significant adults are not dependent on role or remit and make a difference to a child or young person's sense of belonging. The strength and nature of the relationship is most influential in improving attendance.

Adults who show they care, listen and are respectful, create stronger and more positive connections over time which allows them to mentor the young person to improve wellbeing and attendance. Relationships are more important than ever- all schools require to have a renewed focus on the importance and power of positive relationships across the school and wider community.

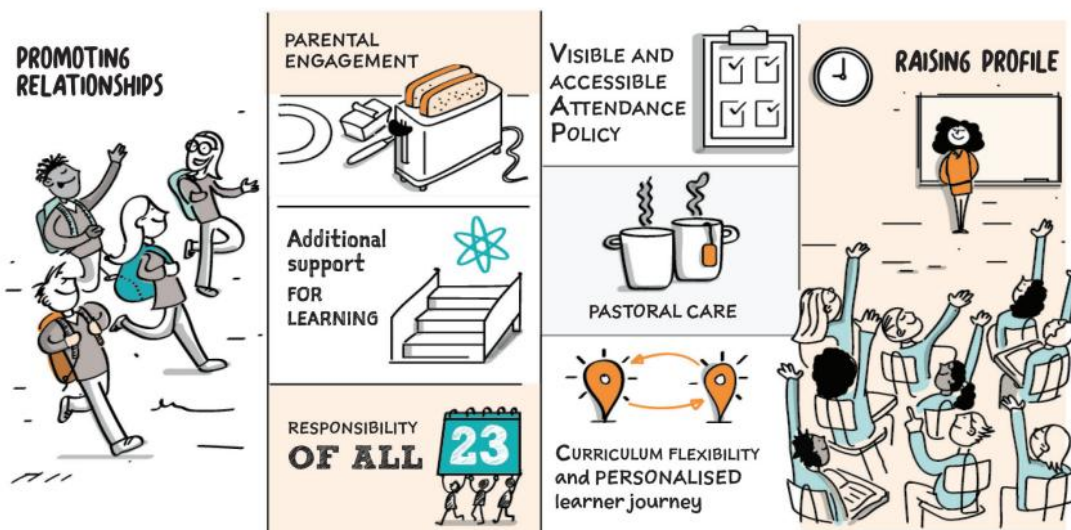
Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments



PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

sample strategies and approaches from policy and research

INCLUDED, ENGAGED, AND INVOLVED

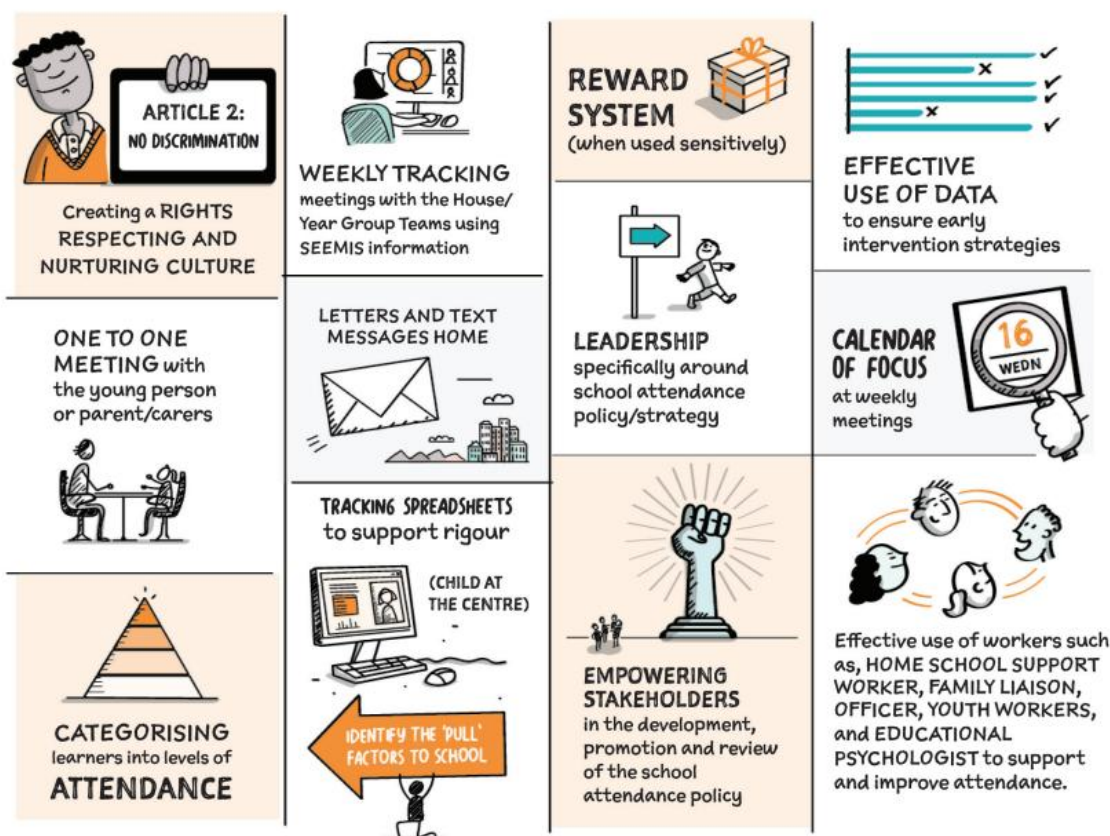


2. The Three Pillars: Culture, Systems and Practice

In West Lothian, feelings of safety and belonging are fundamental to school core values and strong school cultures. The holistic wellbeing needs of every child and young person are core to planning and staff should aim to understand why any child/young person feels safe/unsafe at school, at home or in the community. The responsibility for the success of our inclusive and safe cultures across our schools is the responsibility of all team members across the school community and associated partners.

Research suggests that children and young people who miss out on school through prolonged absence miss out on both key social and learning milestones and can be a factor in longer-term health, economic, social and relationship challenges into adulthood. In order to ensure our learners have the best possible start in life, we collectively need to create the cultures where strong relationships thrive and where school is where all children and young people feel safe and supported to achieve their undoubted potential.

— CULTURE, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICE ARE FUNDAMENTAL —



Developing a positive culture:

- clear leadership is needed
- equity and inclusion are embedded
- compassionate, flexible relationships
- support families to build their confidence
- feelings of safety and belonging are prioritised
- universal and targeted approaches are balanced
- families, partners, and community members are valued
- ensure all stakeholders understand the importance of attendance
- cross-sector working - avoiding a discrete problem-solving approach

Through effective systems:

- effective use of data to identify early warning signs
- rigorous tracking and monitoring of all absences
- analysis of 'actionable data'
- identify history of absence
- evidence-based support approaches
- whole school approaches
- highlight absence through a range of lenses systems
- multi-dimensional, multi-tiered systems of support
- evidence based self-evaluation and improvement systems

And consistent practice:

- aligning to values and culture
- getting it right for every child
- reflecting the views of the young person
- curriculum flexibility and learning pathways
- low income supports
- prioritising social and emotional support
- building connections with a key person
- targeting underlying causes such as wellbeing and additional support needs
- activating children and young peoples' motivation

An understanding of the benefit of attending school for the full term can be supported through the consistent delivery of relevant, challenging and motivational learning activities. Such educational activities require to be planned for, and implemented, throughout the term, including the school days immediately prior to holiday breaks.

By adopting collective evidence based self-evaluation approaches and improvement planning, a collective understanding and responsibility for attendance can be built.

Attendance self-evaluation links:

[Promoting Attendance: Self-reflection questions for educational settings](#)

Self-evaluation tool

[Improving attendance: understanding the issues report: Forth Valley and West Lothian toolkit](#)

3. Working Collaboratively with Parents, Partners and Community

3.1 Learner Voice at the Centre

A key recommendation from the “Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues” report (2023) highlighted the need for schools to put children and young people’s views at the centre of refreshed approaches.

In order to identify the barriers, make sure planning is appropriate and monitor the effectiveness and impact of interventions, the voice of the young person should be sought every step of the way. Where learners have recognised additional support needs a range of tools can be used to gather their voice. Every effort should be made to do so.

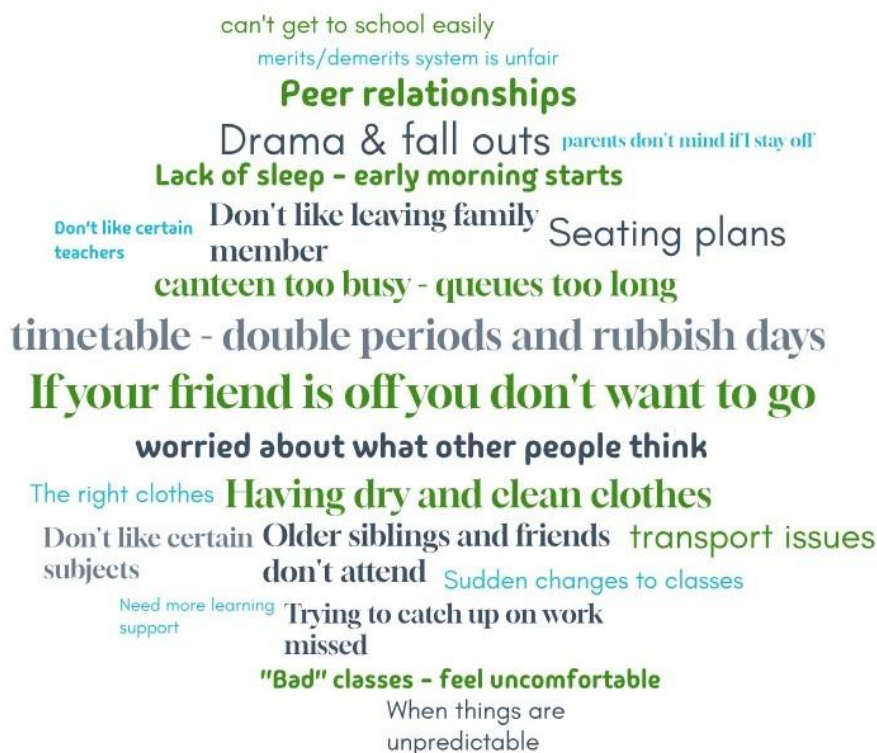


In West Lothian, some research was carried out with learners with regard to the factors that push them towards school and the factors that pull them away.

FORCES FOR



FORCES AGAINST



The schools involved in the research found the results to be highly individualised and benefited from doing this exercise with identified groups to uncover barriers and interventions.

One common theme in secondary schools was linked to a sense of belonging and school connectedness. This links to research carried out last year in England which highlighted that a "sense of belonging" is a key driver in school attendance

[Talking Impact: Measuring your impact on school attendance \(Jan 2024\)](#)

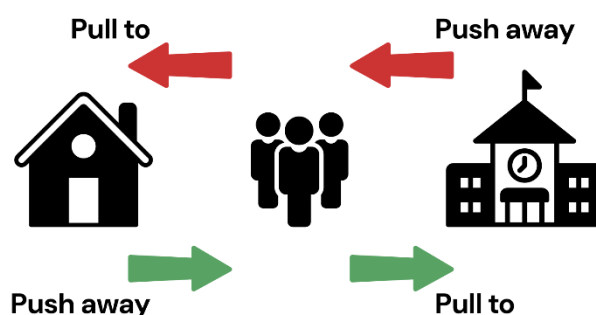
Nationally, recent research by Education Scotland (2024) identified the main reasons that children gave for not attending school to be:

- The child or young person dislikes school and sees no value in it.
- The child or young person may feel that they do not fit in.
- The child or young person feels they have unmet additional support needs or needs support.
- The child or young person has difficulties with their mental health. (tied in with reasons 1-3)
- Parents believe it is ok for their children or young person to miss school because they consider there is something better for them to do (e.g. holiday, learning opportunity – sports, dance etc). this tended to be associated with higher attendance brackets.

What were they key things our children and young people felt would help?

- Trusted adults in school
- Support available when required
- Calm accessible areas
- A sense of belonging and acceptance; friendship
- Subjects and a curriculum they enjoy
- Extra curricular activities
- More accessible transport to school (if you are late or have an appointment)
- Predictable routines and environments (no sudden changes)
- Clean clothes, food.
- Clear expectations from parents.

Schools are advised to look at push/pull factors with individual student, groups and potentially cohorts prior to planning interventions.



Tool link

Identifying barriers:

[Putting children and young people's views at the centre](#)

[School Refusal Scale](#)

[EBSA – Profile of Risk](#)

3.2 Working with Parents/Carers

Engaging parents and families, listening to, valuing and acting upon their opinions and expertise regarding their children is key to ensuring good attendance at school. These positive relationships begin in the early years. Capitalising on these opportunities at an early stage can lead to positive relationships built on trust and mutual respect that continue throughout a child's learning journey. Some families may require support to work in partnership with settings and schools and feel confident to discuss their children's learning. Discussions with parents and families about attendance should take cognisance of the challenges that can be part of everyday family life such as balancing work commitments, dealing with financial challenges, bereavement, and mental health and wellbeing.

It is important for everyone to understand that attendance does not happen in isolation. There is an interrelated correlation between attendance, family, home, community and the quality of the curriculum within the setting or school, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity. The process of securing and maintaining good attendance at school for all current and new cohorts of pupils is an ongoing and continuous process.

Feedback from national and local research indicate that:

Things that make a difference:

- parents, pupils and schools working together as a team towards a shared goal
- building relationships in a sensitive and supportive manner, being cognisant of the individual barriers and needs of families
- acknowledging and building on parents' efforts to get their child or young person to school providing meaningful and holistic practical support and strategies
- messaging that highlights to parents that they are not in it alone. Schools should be viewed as a partner and as a source of support
- acknowledging that improving school attendance may not be a 'quick fix'
- being clear and concise about the focus of any communication with parents and families around non-attendance
- demonstrating the desire to work with parents and families to help pupils overcome any anxieties that may be impacting attendance through supportive and relevant coping strategies
- recognising and reflecting the journey of improving attendance. Parents and pupils may not know that improving attendance can take time and may need a variety of strategies to be successful. It is important that this is communicated to set realistic expectations
- ensuring that communication takes place regularly, even through long periods of absence. Parents feel it is important that plans remain in place for their children even if they have not been in school for some time and that there is an ongoing opportunity to communicate and ensure planned supports, even in circumstances where there is little process. Being listened to, heard and supported is important.

Things that will not make a positive difference:

- over focusing communications on mental health and isolation through bullying, as this is not applicable to all non-attenders
- messaging that lacks empathy or which can be viewed as patronising
- general messages about the benefits of high levels of attendance
- making parents feel that the matter of non-attendance rests entirely with them
- making parents, children and young people feel that attending school is the only option where there is a serious situation or mental health crisis that needs to be addressed first

Parents, families, children and young people also felt that settings and schools should focus on support. While this may not result in improved attendance at school immediately, a

commitment and united approach from all parties was felt likely to improve attendance longer term.

Talking directly about mental health in an accessible way and providing information, helped reduce stress and anxiety for children and young people.

School leadership teams may also wish to consider:

- Using a Family Learning approach to break down barriers and strengthen relationships and trust. Further information can be found in the Family Learning Review and Framework; [Family Learning Framework](#)
- Home-school link Partnerships
- Cost of the school day; [Cost of the School Day Toolkit - Scotland](#)
- Understanding barriers associated with protected characteristics
- Supporting Transitions; [Parentzone Scotland](#)

More information on engaging parents and families is available at:

[Engaging parents and families to improve attendance in school](#)

[Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners](#)

3.3. Working with Partners and Communities

West Lothian Council is committed to working with its partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people receive an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It is recognised that non-attendance may be an indicator of a wide range of issues or difficulties a child or young person is experiencing. It is essential therefore that an early intervention multi-agency approach be considered when addressing attendance concerns.

A Community Approach

Working in partnership with the local community also offers significant opportunity to support and develop an inclusive and positive culture. Taking a service design approach to develop local solutions with partners to support children and young people can have a very powerful positive impact. Following a partnership planning approach and through the use of case studies, brings together the local community to support our children and young people. Silo approaches to complex problem solving are proven to be ineffective and through adopting a system and community wide approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, collectively, challenging issues can be addressed.

Resources to support Partnership Approaches and service design tools:

[Partnership and multi-agency working](#)

Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) have collated a range of resources for schools to support parents whose children are very reluctant to attend school. The EPS SharePoint site collates advice and guidance from across the UK to support schools to gain a greater insight

into issues around school non-attendance. Further details can be accessed on the EPS SharePoint site link below: [Inclusive Classroom Practice](#)

Interrupted Learner Service

The Interrupted Learner (Teaching) Service (ILS) was established in 2023. The service aims to help children and young people who face significant barriers to attending school. ILS would become involved when despite regular planning and interventions in partnership with the parents and young people there is significant nonattendance and non engagement. ILS aims to support the pupil, family and school communities to access and reengage in education again.

The service supports children and young people in all educational settings, with a focus on P5 to S3 and transition times. The type of support is provided in a setting which best suits the needs of the child or young person, including virtual teaching. ILS works in partnership with families, schools and other professionals to provide tailored planned support for the child or young person.

The appropriateness of referral should be discussed with a member of ILS.

Inclusion and Support Service (Education and Social Policy)

The Inclusion and Support Service (ISS) brings together existing teams from Education and Social Policy to support children, young people and families with additional support needs. These services include the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, who provide educational support from their Early Intervention and Secondary Teams for children and young people aged 0-18. The ISS also includes the following Social Policy teams: The Attendance Team, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team, Parenting Team and Early Years Team.

Every school can access further support to improve attendance and engagement via the ISS. The Social Policy Attendance team has allocated a named worker to each school cluster. This allows for consultation and advice in addition to individual and family referrals. It is essential that good lines of communication are established and maintained between school and the ISS team. This is best facilitated through regular contact/scheduled meetings to ensure consistency in implementation of the council's Attendance Procedures. It is recognised that arrangements for such communication will be agreed at a local level.

All the teams within the Inclusion and Support Service work is underpinned by the Getting It Right for Every Child approach as we work together to improve outcomes for the children and young people of West Lothian and their families. In taking a holistic view at meeting wellbeing needs, the Inclusion and Support Service work in partnership with schools to support children, young people and families. Direct contact with the Inclusion and Support Service is via the online referral form:

[Inclusion and Support Service Referral Form](#)

Community, Learning and Development (CLD)

Youth Services work collaboratively with young people, schools, and communities, actively promoting school attendance and engagement, wellbeing, skills development, and lifelong learning.

Youth Services takes a learner-centred approach, identifying learners' strengths and aspirations. All learning activities are co-designed and evaluated with learners. CLD practitioners support all learners in setting personal learning goals, reflecting on their learning, and developing skills to progress to the next step.

Learners have opportunities to participate in Youth Services activities individually and in small learning groups; these activities can take place within schools and other appropriate community settings, during and out of usual school hours.

The Senior Community Education Worker leads for each area in discussions with Secondary School Senior Leadership Teams responds to requests from schools for targeted support.

Community Paediatrics

Community Paediatrics are a team of doctors and advanced practitioners who assess and manage the medical needs of children and young people who have developmental difficulties and disability across NHS Lothian. We have specialist skills in the area of neurodevelopmental assessment and will lead assessment in younger children as well as contribute to assessments of older children and young people who have health needs. We work within multidisciplinary teams supporting children who have complex health needs and neurodisability.

The team work within the Scottish Government's 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) which is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We work closely with other professionals in health and education. Assessments will help with identification of children and young people's needs and how to support them and their families.

School Nurse

The School Nursing service is dedicated to prevention, early intervention, and support for all school age children, whilst offering more intensive support to those with the highest needs. We assist children and young people with various health aspects, including physical and mental health, at key transition stages such as moving from nursery to primary school or from primary to high school. Our support also covers Health promotion/education, development, behaviour, sleep, and diet.

In addition, school nurses will focus primarily on ten priority areas under the overall headings of vulnerable children and families, mental health and wellbeing, and risk-taking behaviour, as outlined by the Scottish Government. These ten priority areas are:

1. Emotional health and wellbeing
2. Substance misuse
3. Child protection
4. Domestic abuse
5. Care-experienced children
6. Homelessness
7. Youth Justice

8. Sexual health and wellbeing (including pregnancy)
9. Transitions
10. Young carers

The School Nursing has a standardised Request for Service form that must be completed and returned to the shared mailbox: loth.schoolnursingwlothian@nhs.scot. Health professionals, schools, third sector agencies and young people above the age of 13 can refer into the school nurse service.

Counselling Services and Place2B

There is access to school counselling and therapeutic support for primary school children through a centrally procured service. Place2Be are the current providers of this service. Primary schools can contact Place2Be directly to explore the referral process

All Secondary Schools receive funding through the Scottish Government School Counselling initiative to provide access to counselling service for young people. Each secondary school therefore has direct access to school counselling services for any young people who require this support. This service is managed and accessed directly via the school.

ASN schools work with CAMHS and offer therapeutic approaches appropriate to the school setting.

Information on school counselling can be found on the Educational Psychology Service Sharepoint site: [Health & Wellbeing](#)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

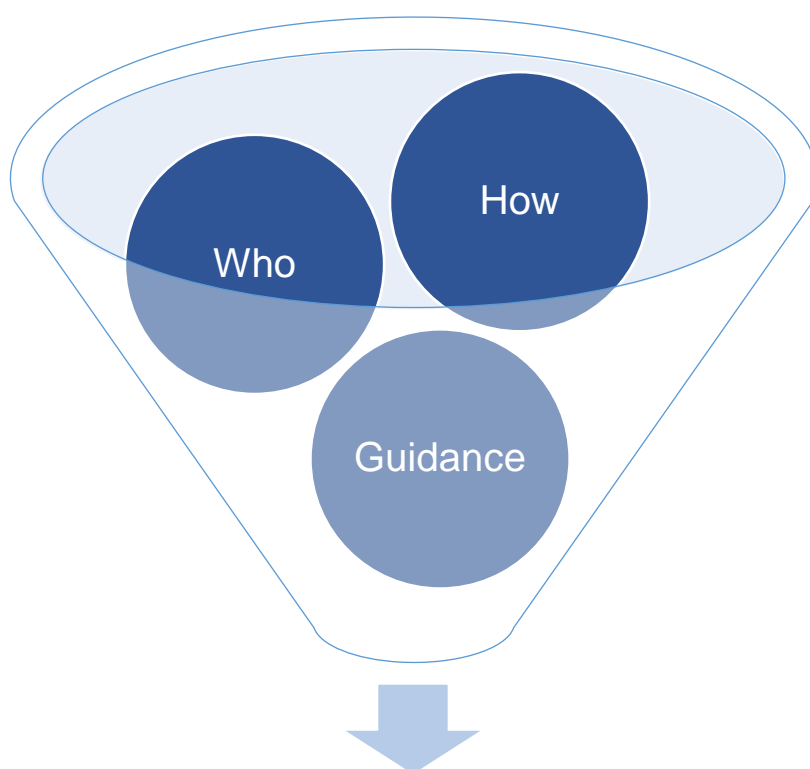
CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) work with children and young people from age 5 to their 18th birthday and their parents or carers. NHS Lothian CAMHS provides specialist assessment/intervention as part of a tiered system, which can include consultation and advice prior to referral; an assessment appointment to establish clinical need and priority status.

Referrals are triaged twice per week and outcomes are decided according to which service meets the young person's clinical needs.

CAMHS Tier 2 offers assessments in GP practices for individuals whose Mental Health needs are mild to moderate. The Tier 3 West Lothian Outpatient team offers specialist Mental Health assessments and interventions from the base in Livingston and by video call.

CAMHS West Lothian Outpatient team are able to consider neurodevelopmental assessment referrals for children and young people where this is indicated through information submitted. At triage, where there are some indicators of an assessment being beneficial, education may be asked for further information, the young person may be offered an initial assessment in CAMHS to gain further information or if sufficient evidence is sent in referral young person may be added directly to the Neurodevelopmental waiting list for assessment

CAMHS Tier 2 offers a Consultation Service each working day to professionals working with children and young people, if you would like to use or find out more about this service please call 01506 585007 or email loth.CAMHSTier2EMW@nhs.scot



APPENDIX 5 | **Guidance on Writing School Guidance**

APPENDIX 5 | Developing your own policy guidance

1. Why have school specific guidance?

National Policy Guidance – Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (IEI1, 2019) states:

‘Education authorities should have clear guidance on supporting attendance and managing absence. They should ensure that all schools have in place policies that promote good attendance and outline procedures to support the recording and management of attendance. This should be linked where possible to their relationships and behaviour policy.’

This means:

- All educational establishments should have an Attendance policy or guidance which outlines the importance of attendance and everyone’s role and responsibility in promoting attendance and minimising absence.
- All learning communities are different and therefore policies should be contextualised to local needs and are likely to be different for early learning and childcare settings, primary and secondary schools, and other educational establishments.
- Educational establishments should refer to, and adhere to, the local authority operational procedures for recording and managing attendance/absence. Operational procedures are likely to apply across all sectors with little, or no, contextualisation. Standardised operational procedure supports consistency of recording and monitoring across settings.

(Education Scotland, 2025)

2. Who and how should the guidance be created?

The policy guidance should be created and implemented alongside learners, parents/carers, and staff. Development, implementation, and evaluation as a collaborative process takes time. Refreshed approaches therefore should be included into school plans and factored into learning opportunities for pupils, staff and parents.

Process for developing a context specific school attendance policy

- Identify school leader(s) with responsibility for improving whole school attendance.
- Identify relevant stakeholders from across the school community (in school and beyond).
- Identified school lead engages with current attendance data and both national and local authority policies for vision, rationale, guidance and legislation.
- School undertakes self-evaluation of current attendance supports and challenges to identify areas for action (data, observations and views).
- Stakeholders are consulted at relevant points to ensure context specific information.
- School attendance policy and procedures are created in alignment with national and authority level guidance.
- School promotes final attendance policy and procedures with all stakeholders.

- School lead for attendance creates timeline and action plan for implementation of the policy. Possible use a school 'Action Enquiry Activity' to inform the action plan.
- Agree a date for policy guidance to be reviewed.

What should be included?

- Why attendance is important
- Expectations: roles and responsibilities
- How we do it here: how we promote and support attendance
- Links to other policies

The guidance should reflect a whole school approach: it should be relevant to, and accessible by, everyone. It should be easy to read and remember. The policy should be re-producible as a poster and in leaflet format suitable for learners, parent/carers, and partners, and should be referred to in other communications such as the settings website and handbook, and other policies.

Operational guidance set by the Local Authority to ensure consistency may be referred to but not be repeated in detail.

2.1 Examples

Primary and secondary examples are available on the Education Scotland website:

[Development of plans, policies and guidance: Guidance for, and exemplification of, school attendance policies](#)

Roles and Responsibilities - Exemplar

Learners will:

- Take personal responsibility for attending as often as possible
- Try not to be late
- Engage in all aspects of the life of the school including learning
- Contribute to the daily life of the school and encourage peers to attend

Parents and carers will:

- Ensure their child understands the importance of education and attendance
- Support their child to attend as often as possible
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child is unexpectedly absent
- Work with staff to minimise absence and reduce any barriers to attendance
- Book medical appointments outside school hours where possible and give advance notice if an absence is unavoidable
- Keep the school up to date with telephone numbers and emergency contacts

Staff will:

- Proactively and regularly promote good attendance through lessons, assemblies, school events, and informal and formal conversations with learners, parents/carers and partners
- Support learner engagement using a range of strategies
- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for every learner
- Share concerns about a learner's engagement, attendance or wellbeing at the earliest stage
- Respond sensitively to learners and parents/carers when exploring attendance concerns

Senior leaders will:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone
- Promote attendance through policies, documents, training, meetings and communications
- Improve overall attendance and reduce lateness through supportive interventions
- Explore all absences
- Identify and investigate patterns of absence
- Keep a chronology of repeated and regular absences and associated follow-up actions
- Ensure consistency in supporting attendance and challenging barriers to attendance
- Ensure effective communication through text, phone, letter, email and face to face meetings
- Treat learners and parents/carers as partners when exploring appropriate supports
- Enable staff and partner agencies to support all children and young people to attend and engage in learning

Local authority leads will:

- Work together with school leaders to set whole school cultures
- Prioritise attendance and take an active role in improvement
- Ensure the accurate recording of learner attendance and absence in accordance with Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1 (2019)
- Ensure senior leaders fulfil local authority expectations and statutory duties
- Support schools with planning approaches for those children and families who face the most significant barriers to attending and engaging in school.
- Provide training which enhances staff understanding and implementation of policy and procedures for the promotion and management of attendance
- Offer opportunities to share effective practice

Partners will:

- Work with learners, parents/carers and staff to maximise learner participation in education
- Contribute to attendance support planning
- Where possible, attend meetings and catch-ups relating to attendance and prioritise these
- Be clear on what the offer is from your organisation/setting
- Communicate when things are not going well and be solution focussed to mitigate issues
- Ensure that records and or recordings are accurate and are shared timely with appropriate colleagues
- Provide local knowledge to establishments to help them better understand circumstances affecting attendance
- Build capacity of other staff to utilise different approaches to improve attendance
- Support community-based planning to improving attendance through alternative curriculum offers