Westmorland & Furness Council

Working together to improve school attendance: implementation guide

This implementation guide is a summary of the expectations on schools from the DfE's guidance "Working together to improve school attendance" (effective from 19 August 2024). It includes a series of checklists which schools will find helpful in meeting these revised expectations.

Version 2

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westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Introduction

Schools have a statutory duty under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. While regular school attendance is predominantly the responsibility of parents and carers, schools play a central role in ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly. This includes taking a positive and proactive role in the promotion of regular school attendance through strategies identified within the school attendance policy that will engage families. It is important that Governors take a key role in promoting good attendance when approving this policy.

Good school attendance should be the norm within your school. Parents should be expected to bring their child to school, on time for every session they are well enough to attend and should notify you in advance of any planned term time absence, requesting permission for the absence to be authorised. Where the absence is due to an emergency, contact should be expected on the first day of absence, with regular contact until the child is well enough to return.

This document provided by the NHS is a useful guide to establish whether a child can attend with the presenting illness, and if not, the length of time they should be absent for. This can be referred to by staff within school and shared with parents/carers in person, via your school website and/or via other communication channels. Is my child too ill for school? (www.nhs.uk)

Expectations of schools

In line with the July 2026 DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK, schools are expected to:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. This includes having a clear vision for attendance underpinned by high expectations, having a named school attendance champion (who is a member of SLT).
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand, with a whole school approach where every staff member has a role to fulfil in improving attendance.
- The school attendance policy should be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow up absence.
- Robustly track, monitor, and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to, and understand barriers to attendance.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

- Facilitate support by removing barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. Consider use of the Early Help process.
- Formalise support where absence persists, and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with. Consider using an attendance contract when meetings with parents and discussions with the individual pupil have not brought about change (see attendance contract section of this document).
- Enforce support, when formal support is not bringing about change, meet with your School Attendance Support Officer to discuss next steps.

Top tips

To improve persistent absence requires persistent work.

Routinely apply a robust system that includes incentives, rewards, and consequences (ensure that these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils). The key here is to be consistent with your approach.

Ensure attendance is discussed at parents' evenings – provide and discuss their child's attendance certificate to highlight good/poor attendance. Consider using missed days/sessions/lessons rather than percentages to reiterate the amount of lost learning.

Ensure good internal communication/meetings encompassing safeguarding, SEN, behaviour, and attendance, to facilitate robust Assess Plan Do Review.

Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies, and procedures such as the Attendance Response (contained within this document).

All schools should have:

- an attendance lead to oversee attendance in the school (who is a member of SLT);
- a designated link Governor;
- a member of staff responsible for day-to-day attendance duties.

Some schools will also have:

- a school-based attendance officer / Education Welfare Officer.

For the purpose of this document, we will refer to all staff members with responsibility for school attendance as "School Based Attendance Officers".

The role of the School Attendance Lead

Every school, including maintained, academies, free schools, faith schools and private schools, must have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance. This role is to ensure that everyone works together to improve attendance creating a whole school ethos of "Every School Day Matters".

The attendance lead will meet regularly with their linked School Attendance Support Officer. The purpose of this Targeting Support Meeting will be to discuss:

- the school improvement plan objectives linked to attendance;
- the targets and outcomes identified in the school attendance action plan;
- the whole school and cohort level attendance data;
- pupils considered to be severely absent (less than 50%);
- pupils on reduced timetables to ensure these are being reviewed and used for the shortest time necessary and not treated as a long-term solution;
- pupils accessing some of their learning off site, to ensure this is used as a short-term intervention to support a child to re-engage in their learning;
- where time allows, pupils considered to be persistent absentees (90% or less);
- next steps for the school to progress towards excellence in attendance.

It is mutually beneficial for schools to work together to ensure consistent approaches, share information, and work collaboratively. The Local Authority will provide regular opportunities for schools to come together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice.

Local Authority offer to schools

Once schools have exhausted all voluntary support and have considered formalising the support through an attendance contract, they should work with the Local Authority to consider next steps to improving whole school, cohort and individual pupils' attendance. The school can expect the Local Authority to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data
- School Attendance Support Team
    - Communication and advice
        - Networking sessions will be held termly, training will be offered, guidance updates and sharing of good practice will be shared with all schools.
    - Targeting Support Meetings
        - Regular targeting support meetings will be held with the school attendance champion, with other school staff members welcome to join. Whole school, cohort and pupil level discussions will take place including for those who are severely or persistently absent. The frequency of these meetings will be agreed with the school attendance champion and be proportionate to the level of attendance challenges in the school
    - Multi-disciplinary support for families
        - Using the mapping over education, health and care, schools will be able to identify the barriers to attendance and intervene early to ensure appropriate support/referrals are provided.

- Legal intervention
  - Prosecution is used as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate. Where unauthorised absence continues to be a concern after schools have followed the expectations placed upon them, they should liaise with their LA link School Attendance Support Officer to consider next steps.

- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker and/or youth justice worker.

Good school attendance provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. It is therefore important that pupils with a social worker and/or youth justice worker are identified, supported, and have their attendance considered at every opportunity. Schools are expected to notify the child's social worker and/or youth justice worker of any unexplained absence, as part of the first day call. Attendance is expected to be on every child's plan, and where attendance of a child with a social worker and/or youth justice worker remains a concern, consultation will take place to ensure next steps are considered and adhered to.

The team can be contacted at: Attendance@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Further information: Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The Attendance Response

Desired outcome – for every child to be in school every day, and on time.

To reach this outcome:

- We must support all children.
- We need to support our 100% attenders to remain 100% attenders.
- We need to support our 98%-99% attenders to raise their attendance and get as close to 100% as possible.
- We need to support our 95%-98% attenders to improve their attendance.
- We need to challenge our 90%-95% attenders, to remind parents of their duty to ensure their child is in full time education and offer support to prevent further absences in the future.

And we need to follow a graduated approach for our irregular attenders to ensure we assess why they are not attending regularly, create a plan to support improvement in attendance, implement the plan and review to see if improvements have been made.

Assess

- What are the reasons preventing the child attending regularly?
- What are the child's needs across Education, Health and Care?
- Has the child's voice been captured, what do they need to happen so they can attend?
- What has already been implemented to improve the child's attendance?
- What support is required to improve the attendance?
- What interventions may be required to improve the child's attendance?
- What further assessments may be required?
- Set time scales for assessments to be carried out.

Plan (voluntary support)

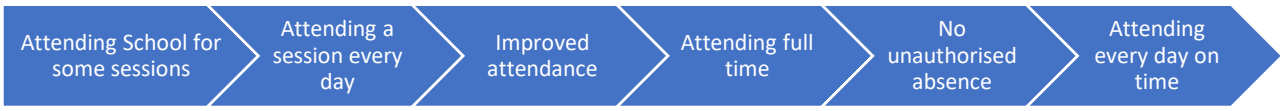
- What next steps need to take place to help the young person attend every day, on time?
- Who will support the plan and what are their actions?
- Set timescales for the plan to be implemented.
- What outcomes do we expect to see?
- Ensure the plan is shared with all parties including the child.

Do

- The plan is carried out by all professionals, the family, and the young person.

Review

- Has the support worked, do the child and family feel they have been supported?
- Are we seeing movement towards the desired outcomes?
- Even small improvements can be big steps …



- Has there been any party who has not carried out their actions?
- Has the child's voice been captured, how do they feel the last few weeks have gone, what difference has been made, what are they proud of, what could have been better?
- Is a more punitive route required?

Challenging and improving attendance checklist

ACTION	BY WHO	WHEN
Completed first day telephone calls/home visits		
Letters sent to share attendance concern		
Assess / Plan / Do / Review process started		
Information gathered from Form Tutor / class/subject teachers Head of Year / Pastoral Manager		
Explored patterns to absences		
Used the Attend framework to explore reasons for absence		
Spoken with the child with regards to issues impacting on their attendance and discussed their needs The Three Houses templates – Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com		
Explored any un-met learning needs Does Individual Education Plan need to be put in place?		
If an Individual Education Plan is in place are the outcomes being supported? When was this last reviewed?		
Met with parents / carers to discuss family circumstances, issues impacting on child's attendance, and what support school can offer. Consider Early Help		
Have any referrals to other agencies been offered? Which:		
Place in breakfast club offered. If not, why not?		
If applicable, contacted siblings' schools and compared attendance/absences (If unsure which schools, ask your Lead Attendance Officers)		
Is the child a Young Carer, and is this having an impact on their attendance? If yes, referral to Young Carers done:		
Has EBSA toolkit been completed? Referral done:		
Has evidence of any ongoing medical needs been received? If yes, health plan completed:		
If the child is absent due to illness has GP advice been sought regarding providing work for the child at home including online learning?		
If external services are involved has a meeting taken place? Eg: TAF, CIN, PEP, TAS meetings		
Has a Story so Far been completed with the family to identify barriers and opportunities to support?		
Where appropriate have you consulted with the School Attendance Lead for support and advice?		
Attendance improvement plan drawn up with input from parent/carers and Child		
Has the family been invited to an attendance panel meeting? If not, why not?		

Mapping across Education, Health and Care

When meeting with the pupil and the family members it is important to capture:

- what is going well – give some praise and encouragement
- what are we worried about – be open and honest, what are the concerns
- what are the next steps?

For each of these three areas, think about the child's education, health, and care needs. By breaking it down into these three areas you will see the predominant factors preventing this child from being in school, every day on time. You will also be able to identify the most appropriate next steps. The Signs of Safety model could be used to undertake this mapping.

Formalising the support

Attendance is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing. All parties should work together to offer voluntary support to address the symptoms and bring about change. Where this voluntary support is not leading to improved attendance, or the family are not engaging, consideration should be given to formalising the support.

Schools are expected to meet with the parents, child and any other agencies involved to consider formalising the support through an attendance contract or Education Supervision Order.

Attendance contracts are a formal written agreement usually between a parent and the school. In some instances, this will be a formal agreement between the parent and the Local Authority.

A contract is not legally binding and is not a punitive tool. It is intended to provide a formal route to secure engagement with support and offer an alternative to prosecution where voluntary engagement has not brought about change. Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.

An attendance contract may not be appropriate but should always be explored before moving forward to an Education Supervision Order or prosecution.

If a parenting contract is in place and not being adhered to, the school should contact their School Attendance Support Officer to consider next steps which could be progression to a legally binding Education Supervision Order or prosecution.

A Westmorland and Furness attendance contract template is included in this guidance as an appendix with a template for recording the meeting notes.

There is no minimum or maximum duration to an attendance contract, reviews should take place regularly with next steps considered at each review.

Enforcing support

When all voluntary and formal support has been exhausted, School Attendance Support Officers support schools with the attendance legal process.

All schools have a link School Attendance Support Officer from the LA's School Attendance Support Team. In the absence of your link officer, please contact Attendance@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Prosecution is the last resort, and we support schools to provide the child and family with help and assistance in accessing their education wherever we can. We expect that the child and parent voice is captured throughout the process as situations can change, and this may change the response and support offered. Our aim is to ensure that the school has exhausted all avenues of support before considering the legal route.

The School Attendance Support Officer will require the school to have undertaken certain measures **prior** to considering legal prosecution for attendance.

Checklist

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
School to have referred to the Challenging and Improving Attendance Checklist and completed the identified actions relevant to the situation		
Child to be discussed at whole school inclusion meeting this may include wider school staff, safeguarding, SEN, Pastoral, Attendance, and any other relevant staff to ensure any barriers are discussed at a whole school level regarding attendance, well-being, behaviour, and learning		
School to ensure they have spoken to all services involved with the child or young person; this may include use of a Team Around the School (TAS) meeting		
Mapping across education, health, and care to identify need and barriers		
Consider use of Early Help process, if not why not?		
Parents to be given the opportunity to attend at least **two meetings** within the Assess Plan Do Review process		
Where appropriate, ensure evidence of the impact that irregular attendance has had on child's learning is discussed with parent/carer		
Record of meetings setting out expectations/plan recorded, and parents provided with copies		
Schools to formalise support by way of an attendance contract. If considered not appropriate, school must provide their rationale		
Parent voice captured and recorded		
Child voice captured and recorded		

School to ensure all parents / carers / those with day-to-day care of child, have been informed of any attendance issues and the legal duties placed upon them to provide a full-time education		
School to ensure all parent/carer details are up to date (who is in the household? Do both parents have parental responsibility? Who has day to day care and responsibility for child and on which days?)		
School to demonstrate how they have considered where the family live in relation to school and show what support has been offered if this is a barrier		

Based on the measures school have undertaken, the School Attendance Support Officer will assess the evidence provided, to establish if the parent(s) / carer(s) has failed in their duty to ensure their child attends school regularly, and whether legal intervention is appropriate or not.

PLEASE DO:

- Ensure a reduced timetable is **NOT** in place. A reduced timetable is seen as support is required and therefore prior to legal intervention.
- Ensure you are working with the whole family and have contacted siblings' schools for attendance related information, and if appropriate invite their school to any meetings.
- Offer parents the opportunity to attend at least two meetings within the Assess Plan Do Review process.
- Send all relevant paperwork and documentation as identified on the checklist to your School Attendance Support Officer:
    - Attendance registers should be with comments.
    - Copies of any correspondence sent to parents is included.
    - Assess Plan Do Review process is evident within a plan.
- Ensure any plan is reviewed on a regular basis.

When considering the use of legal sanctions, it is necessary to bear in mind **statutory defences** and these should be explored as part of your Assess Plan Do Review process. This can be discussed with your Attendance Support Officer.

All decisions regarding legal proceedings will be made by the **School Attendance Support Officer** linked to your school. The Statutory Defences (reasons why cases would not be progressed through the legal system) are as follows.

1. Authorised absence.

2. Sickness – or other unavoidable cause. Evidence presented will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

3. Religious observance.

4. Distance from school – the school that the child is registered at is not within walking distance of the child's home. Where the local authority has a duty to make travel arrangements and no such arrangements have been made for either transport to and from school or enabling him/her to become a registered pupil at a school nearer his/her home. (Walking distance – exceeding two miles for a child under eight years old, exceeding three miles for a child aged eight years and over.)

5. Trade or business – the parent/carer can show that their trade or business requires them to travel, that the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business allows and the child has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding 12 months.

Attendance legal documentation

Paperwork required from school includes (as a minimum):

- Attendance referral form (included at the end of this document).
- Copies of checklists.
- Attendance record covering the period of concern only.
- Case Summary / Witness Statement covering the period of concern.
- Evidence of the Attendance Response being followed including the education/attendance plan informed by Assess Plan Do Review process.
- Copies of correspondence sent to parents.
- An up-to-date attendance record for the academic year/previous academic year (with reasons for absence / comments from your attendance system).

The information required will show that during the period of concern, the parents/carers were aware of the child's poor attendance.

School based attendance officers should continue the Assess Plan Do Review cycles and continue to monitor attendance during and following any legal intervention to ensure changes are sustained, and any decline in attendance must be explored in a timely manner. If further support is identified while a legal process is being pursued, you must speak to your School Attendance Support Officer.

Your School Attendance Support Officer will assess cases on a case-by-case basis following the voluntary and formal support offers by the school being deemed unsuccessful. The decision will be made as to what legal intervention, if any, is appropriate, using the range of legal powers available to us. These will be discussed during attendance meetings and assessed based on the evidence provided, as to how the parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure a full-time suitable education for their child.

All paperwork should be sent via email to your School Attendance Support Officer.

Taking the step to initiate prosecution proceedings should *only* be taken after discussion with the school, along with legal input (litigation team) at the LA, as there are a number of critical steps to be followed ahead of any prosecution, including interviewing parents under caution. Any decision to prosecute **must** be authorised by the Chief Legal Monitoring Officer at the LA before commencing proceedings.

There are strict time scales within which an LA can bring a prosecution under the Education Act, they must bring the charge before a magistrates' court within six months of the offence being committed, that is, the last date of the period of regular absence (*section 127(1)*, *Magistrates' Courts Act 1980* (MCA 1980)).

All prosecutions by the LA must consider the *Code for Crown Prosecutors*, which is the overarching guidance for prosecutors on the high-level general principles to be applied when making decisions on whether or not to prosecute. The code's "Full Code Test" provides a two-stage test that must be satisfied before a prosecution should be started:

- Evidential stage. This requires prosecutors to satisfy themselves that there is sufficient evidence available to provide a realistic prospect of conviction against each suspect on each charge.
- The public interest stage.

Only if the evidential stage is first satisfied can the prosecutor consider whether it would be in the public interest to prosecute the matter.

The school will provide the local authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court.

Fixed penalty notices

Fixed penalty notices are an alternative to prosecution. They are used when absence has not been authorised by the school. Fixed penalty notices should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour where support has been provided and has either not worked or has not been engaged with or would not have been deemed appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time). There is a Code of Conduct for Westmorland and Furness which must be adhered to.

Any queries around the issuing of fixed penalty notices should be discussed with your School Attendance Support Officer.

Support around reasons for absence

B – Educated Off Site

Some children and young people may attend sessions off school site at an approved provider, or with another educational professional. This should be a short-term intervention to support the child's return to full time education in school. Contact should be made with the provider each morning/afternoon registration period to establish if the child has attended, and school should follow their absence procedures as normal for any pupils who are absent. If the child's attendance agreement is to stay with the provider all day, school should also make contact in the afternoon to confirm their attendance, unless an agreement has already been made with the provider to notify you should the child leave the site. Children attending an alternative provision should be in school at least one day per week.

Schools must also record the nature of the approved educational activity, eg:

- attending taster days at other schools;
- attending courses at college;
- attending unregistered alternative provision arranged by the school.

<u>Support/challenge</u>

- Work with the provider to review the plan regularly to establish if the provision is engaging the young person in their education – if not, does the provision need withdrawing and other support putting in place.

K – Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

The pupil is attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by the local authority.

Schools must record the nature of the provision.

C – Absent Leave of absence

Code C Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Head Teachers have discretion to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Schools must judge each request individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and any relevant background and context to each application. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school should determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from the school.

Code C1 Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

Children absent from school for agreed reasons relating to performance, modelling, etc, may also be an authorised absence. Contact the **Local Authority Child Employment and Entertainment Officer** ChildEmployment@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk for further information.

Code C2 Reduced timetables where a child misses a whole session are also an authorised absence coded as C2. Reduced timetables should be for no more than eight weeks, unless the child has a treatment plan from a consultant advising otherwise. Work should be set for the sessions they are unable to attend to avoid them falling behind with their learning.

Support/challenge

- Are the absences due to family circumstances, does a referral for support from outside agencies need to be completed?
- Is the child a young carer, and, if so, has a referral been made and support identified?
- Safeguarding officer should liaise with the young carer, their parent, and their young carer's worker (if involved) to formulate a plan of support and to consider further support from the GP or health professionals around home help.
- Reduced timetables should be a short-term intervention of no more than eight weeks, with reviews every two weeks.
- If a child is attending on a reduced timetable, regardless of the attendance coding, schools must notify the Local Authority by completing a notification form and returning this via the school portal to the folder: Access and Inclusion Part time timetables – Westmorland and Furness. Schools must also notify the LA when the timetable ends.

D – Dual Registration

Some children and young people may attend sessions off school site at another school setting where they are put on roll. The school they are attending on any particular day, should mark the register appropriately (present/absent); the school where the student is not expected to attend on that day should mark the register with a D. The D code can only be used for sessions that are in place.

This code can also be used for Traveller children where their family are while travelling for work purposes and they are attending another school.

Support/challenge

- Regular meetings/contact is needed to ascertain if the provision is working for the pupil, and if any further support needs to be put in place.

E – Exclusion

If a pupil breaches the school behaviour policy, the Head Teacher may issue a suspension. If the suspension is for longer than five days, the school must arrange for the child to have work or other education provision from the sixth day to avoid them falling behind in their studies. For serious breaches of the school behaviour policy the Head Teacher may issue a permanent exclusion. If a pupil has received a permanent exclusion, the Local authority will arrange for the education of the child from the sixth school day.

Support/challenge

- Has discussion taken place with parents to establish any concerns outside of school?
- Are further assessments needed from speech and language, the Ed Psych etc.
- Are there outside factors influencing the child's behaviour – does this need a referral to other services e.g., Health, CAMHS, Young carers, etc?
- Are there any unmet learning needs?
- Contact your Access and Inclusion Officer for support or advice regarding a pupil who has exclusions
- For nursery and FS2 pupils who are struggling to engage in their learning contact, the Early Years Advisers can offer advice via a consultation.
- Schools should notify their Access and Inclusion Officer (Exclusions.Mailbox@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk) and arrange a governors behaviour meeting when a child accumulates 30 sessions of 'E' codes, or when a pupil is identified as at severe risk of permanent exclusion, to see what support can be put in place. If the child has an EHCP, an early review should be called and the Access and Inclusion Officer and SEND Education Team Manager should be invited to attend.
- Consider referrals to external agencies for support and advice, eg Educational Psychologist, etc.
- Has a managed move been considered?
- After a suspension, a reintegration meeting needs to be arranged, when the child is welcomed back into school. A support/or behaviour plan needs to be put in place and a timescale for review should be agreed. If the plan is not working for the pupil, other alternatives will need to be considered to support the pupil's behaviour. A child's return to school must not be delayed until a reintegration meeting has been held.
- Has the voice of the child been sought, to support the behaviour plan and the reintegration meeting?
- It is not acceptable to ask the parent to collect the child during the school day or allow a child to leave early as a plan to manage their behaviour. This is considered as an unlawful exclusion. Other support measures and plans must be considered to manage the child's behaviour during school hours.

G – Holiday not granted by the school

The school has not granted a leave of absence and the child is absent for the purpose of a holiday. Parents should apply for leave during school time in advance Schools should specify the notice period required in their attendance policy. If parents do not apply for leave, and you have evidence from another source that they are on holiday, this should also be 'G' coded. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval for a leave of absence.

Support/challenge

- Are parents aware that they need to complete a leave of absence request form? Is it readily available in school/online?
- Have you seen evidence that warrants an 'exceptional circumstance'?
- Consider holding a meeting with the parent(s) to discuss their child's attendance, and how time out of school will affect their child's education.
- Are there other absences? Consider holding an attendance panel.
- Are you aware of siblings at other schools and have you liaised with those schools to ensure consistency of action?
- Where the head teacher has not agreed the period of leave, a request should be submitted to the LA to issue a penalty notice if the absence totals 10 or more sessions in a 10 week period and there are no wider support needs.
- If the parents do not return in the agreed amount of time, then the following absences must be G coded, and a penalty notice considered if they total 10 sessions or more.
- If pupils take leave of absence and no return date is given, school should make attempts to contact the parent(s) and other emergency contacts to establish the whereabouts of the child and the expected return date. If schools are unable to establish whereabouts and return date, they should refer the child as a Child Missing Education to cme@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk using the CME1 form.

I – Illness

If schools have reason to doubt the authenticity of the illness that the parent(s) are reporting, they can record the absence as unauthorised, but must advise parents that they will be doing this. Schools can request that parents provide medical evidence to support absences due to illness. Parents should not be advised to ask their GP for a doctor's note. GP's should not be providing adult 'fit notes' and if schools receive these, they should inform their Attendance Support Officer.

Support/challenge

- Schools should challenge illnesses at the first instance when informed of the absence, through their daily processes. At this point minor ailments should be discussed, and parents should be informed that their children can attend school if appropriately medicated.
- Frequent absences should be discussed with parent(s) to establish if further support needs to be put in place.

- Patterns of absences should be investigated with parent(s), teachers, and if appropriate, the child.

- Schools should be mindful of absences related to the female menstrual cycle, including period poverty. Schools need to be meeting with children and looking at putting a plan in place on how they can support them. The absence should be challenged and coded appropriately, O, C, or I code.
- Has medical evidence been seen – appointment card, AskMyGP text, dated medication, etc?
- Consider a consultation with the e-school nurse service 01228 603973.
- Is a health/medical care plan in place?
- Does the family need support in seeking medical help? Consider writing a letter of support for the GP and explaining how the child's attendance/education is being affected. Provide the attendance certificate to show regularity of the illness being reported.
- Parent(s) must be informed if the decision is taken to unauthorise future absences.
- Does a reduced timetable need to be considered for a short period of time to support the child back in to school following illness? Schools should notify the local authority through the reduced timetable route if implemented.
- If the child is absent for a prolonged period of time due to illness the school should arrange to undertake safe and well checks
- If the child is absent for a prolonged period of time due to illness the school should seek advice from the GP regarding providing work for the child to complete at home. This could include signposting to key stage appropriate online websites and resources

Advice around general illness can be found at Is my child too ill for school? (www.nhs.uk).

J1 – Leave of absence for attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

To be used for interviews with another educational establishment or prospective employers. The interview must take place within the session for which it is recorded.

Support/challenge

- Have you seen proof of the interview and been given notice of the pupil attending?
- Pupils to attend school either side of the appointment/interview.
- Establish if the pupils need any support prior to the visit/interview such as clothing, travel, money, preparation and managing stress/anxiety.
- Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to the transfer to another educational establishment, employment prospects, further education.

L – Late (before registration has closed) – being regularly late or accumulating unauthorised absence after the register has closed school should follow the poor school attendance process as this is failure to secure regular attendance

Some pupils may come into school after the register has been taken but before the register closes. This should not be a frequent pattern. The L code does not affect a pupil's attendance percentage but can be the first sign a child is struggling with issues or difficulties in, or out of school.

Support/challenge

- Schools are expected to set out in their attendance policy the times the register will be open. This should not be longer than 30 minutes. Schools are also expected to set out how the codes will be used and what measures will be put in place to support punctuality.
- Does the parent/carer and child know the times of the school day?
- Phone call or meeting with the parent/carer to ascertain the reasons for the lateness and if any support can be offered.
- 1-1 with the child to ascertain the reasons and what support can be offered.
- Is the lateness due to sleep issues? Does the parent or pupil need advice on sleep hygiene and routines, or does the GP need to see the child to rule out anything medical affecting their sleep?
- Primary schools – consider if a reward chart at home or with the teacher would help encourage the child into school.
- Establish if the child is a young carer and make a referral if the child and parent agree.
- Establish if there are siblings at different schools, liaise with the other schools to establish the reasons they are given for lateness. Are there difficulties getting the children to the different locations, does a breakfast club/after school club need to be explored?
- Is behaviour an issue, does the parent need support from outside agencies?

U – Late (after registration has closed)

The DFE states that registers should be closed 30 minutes after the start of the session. Regular 'U' codes can be a safeguarding issue or can suggest there are issues the family are struggling with. U codes should be investigated early so that support can be put into place if needed. The U code is classed as an unauthorised absence. If children are accumulating a large number of U codes schools should follow their attendance processes.

Support/challenge

- School policy should reflect the start and finish times of the day and when U codes will be used.
- Do the parent and child know the times of the school day?
- Schools should actively discourage late arrivals, be alert to patterns of late arrival.
- Meeting to be held with parent(s) to ascertain the reasons for the lateness and if any support can be offered.

- If appropriate, speak to child to establish reason for lateness and if there are any issues they need support with.
- Are there wider family issues, such as the child being a young carer, adult mental health, bereavement, SEN? With older children, are there issues with them travelling to school, grooming, contextual safeguarding to be considered, etc?
- Is this due to sleep issues? Give advice on sleep hygiene and routines.
- School to follow attendance processes, is a school attendance plan needed?
- Daily absence processes must take place for safeguarding reasons, parent(s) must be informed that their child has not arrived in school.
- Consider practical support that could be offered, can an alarm clock be offered to the family, etc?

M – Medical/Dental appointments

Use this code for GP appointments, surgery, dental, optical, and hospital appointments. If the child is present for registration, they must receive a present mark, and a comment should be entered to show the time the child leaves school to attend the appointment and their time of return. Schools should also record the pupil leaving and returning, on a separate register to support the fire register.

Support/challenge

- Encourage parents to make routine appointments out of school times where possible.
- Encourage parents to bring children into school, either side of the appointment time.
- Request evidence of the appointment to allow the pupil to leave school.
- If a child is having an operation, the M code should be used for the day of the surgery, then the I code for the recovery period advised by the medical professionals.

N – No reason yet provided for absence

Sometimes parents/carers do not inform school the reason for their child's absence.

The correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than five school days after the session (regulation 10(7) to (9)), then the school should change the N code to the O code. When the code is changed the school should record who is making the change, as well as when and why (this applies to any changes to codes). The N code should not be left on a pupil's record indefinitely; if a reason for the absence cannot be established within five school days, schools must amend the pupil's record to the O code.

Support/challenge

- Have the school's daily processes been followed?
- Does school send out a letter asking for the reason for absence?
- Do parents know the process for informing school of their child's absence?
- Do parents understand that if they do not provide a reason for absence and the O code is used, this is deemed an unauthorised absence?

- For those children under social care, their social worker should be notified.
- The Keeping Children Safe guidelines should be followed.

O – Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Where no reason for the absence is established or the school is not satisfied that the reason given is one that would be recorded as authorised. Any unauthorised absences need to be addressed quickly following school's attendance processes so that any issues can be addressed, and support put in place.

Support/challenge

- Schools should promote good attendance through parent evenings, assemblies, displays, attendance promotions, other platforms such as school websites, class Dojo, merits, texts, letters, and incentives.
- Follow school attendance processes – telephone calls, letters, home visits etc.
- Are there any patterns with the absences?
- Establish if there are siblings in other schools and liaise with their attendance officer to look for patterns.
- Are there other unauthorised absence codes on the registration certificate such as the U, G, N, or a combination of concerning codes that need to be taken into consideration?
- Are parents struggling to contact school due to other reasons such as, financial issues or language barrier? Consider implementing another system that can be put into place for them, for example can they email with the reason for absence instead of phoning?
- Hold a meeting with the parents/carers (and pupils where appropriate) to ascertain the reason for the absences and establish if further support needs to be put in place. This could include referrals to other agencies for support with routines and boundaries, sleep, behaviour, unmet needs, etc.
- Consider seeking consent from parent(s) to discuss the family at your TAS meeting.
- Be observant to trends and patterns of absences within key cohort groups that may be having an impact on whole school attendance – consider consulting with your School Attendance Support Officer for further support and advice in considering next steps.
- Ensure you follow the Attendance Response.
- Has a school attendance planning meeting taken place?
- Consider holding an attendance panel.

P – Approved sporting activity

The pupil must be taking part in the activity and it should be taking place during the session(s) for which the P mark is recorded.

Support/challenge

- Has school seen evidence of the activity taking place?

- School should discuss with parents the necessity of the activity and the child's need to attend.
- Consult with your School Attendance Support Officer if you are unsure if the sporting activity is approved or not.
- Details for the National Governing Body associated with each particular sport can be found online, or through request to the club or affiliation the child belongs.
- Children participating in off school site sporting activities arranged by the school, or the local school sports partnership, should be P coded unless the child is present in school for the registration period prior to the activity.

R – Religious Observance

On occasion, a pupil may need to take religious observance during the school week. Any additional days taken around their recognised religious days are not to be marked as 'R' and should be coded appropriately as O, C, G or I.

Support/challenge

- Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice of any religious observance taking place.
- School should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether the date requested is a religious day in their faith.
- Schools may consider using one of their INSET days for a religious observance to which a high proportion of the school community will be observing.

T – Traveller absence

This code is for several different groups who are covered by the term Traveller, when parents are travelling due to work purposes. Dual registration is allowed if the child will be attending other school/s during the period of travel. Children cannot be taken off roll at the base school whilst away travelling. Although the T code is classed as an authorised absence for statistical purposes, if a pupil's attendance was to fall below an acceptable level consideration may be given to attendance enforcement.

Support/challenge

- If there is genuine and reasonable doubt that the parent is travelling for work purposes, the school may request evidence when families are travelling for work, such as contracts, receipts, or Showman Guild certificate.
- To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England, it is expected that the pupil should attend a school near their place of work and be dual registered. School should encourage parents/carers to enrol the child/children at another school near their place of work. Please see the D code for advice on this.
- The child/children should be T coded until they start attending the school setting near their place of travel, at which point the D code would be used.

V – Educational visit or trip

This is to be used for school organised trips and visits, including residential. The visit or trip must take place during the session for which it is recorded.

Support/challenge

- Where a parent takes responsibility in taking their child to a transition day this would be a B code, as would children making their own way to transition days.
- Children attending swimming lessons as part of the curriculum should receive their registration mark/s prior to travel to the swimming pool and therefore would not need to be coded as V.

W – Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education.

Support/challenge

- School must check on the attendance for each session a child is expected to attend their work experience and mark the register accordingly.

X – Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Support/challenge

- Can be used for a short period of time at the start of the school year for all reception age pupils as part of the settling in process.
- Can be used for pupils in reception who are attending school on an agreed reduced timetable up to the time they become compulsory school age.
- Not to be used for children who are compulsory school age or for exclusions.
- Not to be used for children of non-compulsory school age who are not attending for reasons such as illness, holidays, or unexplained absence.

Y1 – Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

The pupil is unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport usually provided by the school or local authority is not available.

Y2 – Unable to attend due to widespread disruption of travel

Unable to attend due to widespread disruption of travel caused by a local, national or international emergency.

Y3 – Unable to attend due to partial closure of the school premises

Y4 – Unable to attend due to whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Y5 – Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

This code applies if the pupil is in police detention, remanded to youth detention awaiting trial or sentencing or detained under a sentence of detention.

Y6 – Unable to attend due to public health guidance or law

Y7 – Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Support/challenge

- Where there is an outbreak of infectious diseases, you must get advice from Public Health England on next steps, such as a deep clean, closing a year group, or whole school: Notifications of infectious diseases (NOIDs) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
- You must notify the local authority of all situations that result in full or partial closure of the school.
- If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities, then they can code those sessions as a B (educated off site).
- Can be used for pupils who are abroad and where returning to the UK would be contrary to international, national, or regional travel restrictions.

Z – Pupil not on roll

Used to set up registers before pupils are due to join. To safeguard children, schools must put all pupils on the admissions register on the first day that the school expects them to attend. Schools must not ignore any pupils who do not attend on their first day, nor delay putting them on roll until they physically enter the school.

Support/challenge

- If the pupil does not arrive at school as expected contact parents/carers to find out the reason why.
- Arrange a meeting for parent(s) and child to attend.
- If child fails to arrive at school, or parent(s) fail to attend the meeting, follow the CME process and O code the absences for 20 school days.
- Complete a home visit to see if the family are still at the address and ascertain the reasons why they are not attending.
- If the school are unable to contact the family they should complete the CME1 form and refer to the CME Officer.

 # – School closed to pupils

To be used for whole or part school planned closures, eg between terms/half terms/weekends, along with bank holidays.

Support/challenge

- This code can also be used up to five times in an academic year for INSET days, and if the school is closed for use as a polling station.

Children Missing from Education

- All children without a school roll, who are not 'Electively Home Educated' (EHE), should be known to CME. If you are aware of a child who is not on a school roll, please notify the team immediately.
- The CME officer can be contacted at cme@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk.
- When a school place is allocated, and a parent/carer fails to ensure their child's attendance at the named school, a School Attendance Order can be applied for by the Local Authority Access to Education Service, which will allow for the allocation of a school place via court order.
- The CME officer will support complex families to ensure they are able to access a school place.
- Schools should notify Westmorland and Furness Council of deletions and new admissions each week by sending by completing the Admissions Register Return and sending this via Egress to the designated School Admissions Assistant.

Further information:

- Children Missing Education: www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education
- Fair access: www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-access-protocols-in-school-admissions

Children transferring schools

When children are transferring from one Westmorland and Furness school to another, the family should contact Westmorland and Furness School Admissions Team school.admissions@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk Further details on applying for a school place are available at School admissions - apply for a school place | Westmorland and Furness Council. The child must continue to attend the school they are on roll at until a start date for a new school has been agreed, and they start to attend.

Sources of further information

Further information, including legal guidance, guidance on the marking of attendance registers and strategies for improved school attendance can be found in the following documentation.

DFE School Attendance: guidance for schools including coding
Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

DFE Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance
Children missing education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

DFE Keeping Children Safe in Education
Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

DFE Ensuring a Good Education for Children who cannot attend school because of Health Needs

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

DFE Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

DFE Mental health issues affecting pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Elective Home Education
Elective home education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions
School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK

SARAH WRIGHT
Access to Education Service Manager

CS/EI/LIS/AE/SW August 2026

Westmorland & Furness Council

ATTENDANCE REFERRAL FORM

Name	
Address	
Date of birth	
School and year	
Parent/Carer name/s	
Parental responsibility	
Any sibling/s? If Yes, please give details including school and year group if possible.	
Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)?	
Is there Social Care involvement and, if so, at what level: CiN, CP? If yes, please provide Social Worker's details.	
Professional referrals made?	Eg Ed Psych, Targeted Youth Support, CAMHS, GP, Police, EHA/EHP, PRU
Please provide details of any other agencies involved	
Please provide any further relevant background information about the child/YP and family	

Please also provide evidence of school interventions, including:

- Attendance record covering the period of concern.
- Case Summary/Witness Statement covering the period of concern.
- Evidence of the Attendance Response being followed including the education/attendance plan informed by Assess Plan Do Review process including notes from meetings/attendance panels.
- Copies of correspondence sent to parents, including letters warning of possible legal action.
- Records of home visits and phone calls.
- An up-to-date attendance record (with reasons for absence/comments from your attendance system).
- Copies of assessments, eg Early Help Assessment.

If evidence/information meets the requirements for an Attendance Review Conference (ARC) a date will be agreed with the Attendance Support Officer inviting parent/s to attend along with school staff. Where further intervention/information is deemed necessary, the Attendance Support Officer will contact school to discuss the case within 10 working days.

Outcome

Referral accepted and ARC to be arranged:		Further intervention/information required. Attendance Support Officer to liaise with the school:	

Pro forma 1 – nursery concern letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: name of child

Regular and punctual attendance is essential if children are to make sustained progress, reach their full potential, and feel part of their class and whole school community. Regular attendance at nursery establishes good habits from an early age and contributes to the development of a positive approach to school and education.

As part of our Attendance policy, we are required to monitor attendance and punctuality of all our pupils, including those at nursery. We have concerns about your child's attendance, and we would like to invite you to a meeting to give you an opportunity to discuss any reasons for your child's absences, and to establish how we can support you.

The meeting will be held at **school** on **date** at **time**.

If this date or time is inconvenient, please contact school to arrange another appointment.

It is important that you attend the meeting so that we can work in partnership to improve your child's attendance. If you would prefer the meeting to be held at an alternative venue, the please contact school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 2 – initial concern letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Your child's attendance is currently XX%, which is below our school's expectations as outlined in our Attendance policy.

As a result, we will continue to monitor your child's attendance. If you or your child are experiencing any barriers to accessing their education, please contact XX to discuss how we may support you and your child to attend school every day.

It is important that you support us by ensuring that your child attends school on time, every day. If your child is unable to attend, then you should contact school on the first day of any absence or if there is any problem which may be causing your child to miss school.

Please be reminded that, under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, you have a legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and failure to do so could ultimately result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty fine and/or a summons to appear at Magistrates' Court.

There is a strong link between poor attendance and low academic attainment and as a school we are committed to supporting you and your child to enable them to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 3 – ongoing concern letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

I have contacted you previously regarding your child's attendance at school. Unfortunately, we have not seen the necessary improvement in the three weeks following my letter.

I am writing to you again as your child's attendance is now an ongoing concern. Currently, your child's attendance is …… %. Please find enclosed their attendance record for you to look at.

If you or your child is experiencing any barriers to attending school then please contact ……to discuss how we may support you and your child to attend school every day.

If we do not see any improvement in your child's attendance in the next three week period then we will take further action.

It is important that you support us by ensuring that your child attends school on time, every day. If your child is unable to attend then you should contact school on the first day of any absence or if there is any problem which may be causing your child to miss school.

Please be reminded that, under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, you have a legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and failure to do so could ultimately result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty fine and/or a summons to appear at Magistrates' Court.

There is a strong link between poor attendance and low academic attainment and as a school we are committed to supporting you and your child to enable them to reach their full potential.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 4 – invite to meeting letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Further to our previous communications, your child's school attendance continues to be a cause for concern.

Currently, your child's attendance is …… %. Please find enclosed their attendance record for you to look at. Out of a possible XX sessions, XX sessions have been missed due to absence, XX of which are recorded as unauthorised.

The government expects schools and local authorities to promote good attendance and to work with pupils and their families if attendance dips below expectations.

There is a strong link between poor attendance and low academic attainment and as a school we are committed to supporting you and your child to enable them to reach their full potential.

We are now inviting you (and your child if appropriate) to a School Attendance meeting. The meeting will be held at **school** on **date** at **time**.

If this date or time is inconvenient, please contact school to arrange another appointment.

Please be reminded that, under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, you have a legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and failure to do so could ultimately result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty fine and/or a summons to appear at Magistrates' Court.

It is important that you attend the meeting so that we can work in partnership to improve your child's attendance.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 5 – non-engagement letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Further to my previous letter inviting you to a meeting to discuss your child's attendance, I have arranged a second meeting which I hope will be more convenient for you.

The meeting will be held at **school** on **date** at **time**.

If this date or time is inconvenient, please contact school to arrange another appointment or if you would prefer the meeting to take place in your home.

I would appreciate this opportunity to discuss the barriers to your child's positive attendance and to discuss any support we may be able to offer.

Please be reminded that, under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, you have a legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and failure to do so could ultimately result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty fine and/or a summons to appear at Magistrates' Court.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 6 – meeting follow-up letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Thank you for meeting with school on XX to discuss your child's attendance. Please find enclosed a copy of the meeting record outlining the agreed actions.

We will continue to monitor your child's attendance. The meeting to review progress and discuss any further actions will take place on date at time in school.

If you have any matters that you wish to discuss, then please contact XX.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 7 – invite to attendance contract meeting

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Your child's school attendance record continues to give cause for concern.

We would like to meet with you to formalise the support we as a school can offer, and create a contract of agreement between us.

This is known as an attendance contract, which is a formal written agreement between parent(s) and the school to address irregular attendance. A contract is not legally binding, however it allows a more formal route to support families where previous plans have not worked.

We are inviting you (and your child if appropriate) to a School Attendance meeting to agree the attendance contract. The meeting will be held at **school** on **date** at **time**.

If this arrangement is inconvenient, please contact me as soon as possible so that an alternative time and date can be arranged.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 8 – Year 11 letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

I am writing to you regarding concerns over your child's attendance at school. I enclose a copy of the attendance record for you to look at. If you were unaware of the scale of these absences, or if there are any problems which may be preventing your child attending school regularly, then please contact …….

All Year 11 pupils remain on the school roll until the last Friday in June and must continue to attend school as usual, unless there is official study leave or your child is attending work/college placements.

This is an important year in which students need to complete coursework and can benefit greatly from the help and support from staff in school. There is ongoing careers advice and support, which is important to support young people to make the right choices and to received practical support in securing college places or other training provision.

Please be reminded that, under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, you have a legal obligation to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and failure to do so could ultimately result in the Local Authority issuing a Fixed Penalty fine and/or a summons to appear at Magistrates' Court.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 9 – punctuality initial concern letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

It has been brought to my attention that your child has arrived late to school on XX occasions this academic year. XX of these absences have been after the register has closed, resulting in an unauthorised late mark (U) in accordance with our School Policy. Please find a copy of your child's attendance record enclosed for you to look at.

We expect all our pupils to attend school on time. If no improvement is seen, you may be invited into school for a meeting to discuss the issues affecting your child arriving at school on time. Continued lateness may lead to a penalty notice being issued.

The school doors are open from XX am with school starting at XX am. If your child arrives between XX am and XXam this will be recorded as an authorised late mark (L). If your child arrives after this time your child will receive an unauthorised late mark (U).

There is a strong link between poor attendance and low academic attainment and as a school we are committed to supporting you and your child to enable them to reach their full potential.

If you are facing issues that are impacting on you getting your child to school on time, please speak with XX in the first instance.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 10 – request for medical information letter

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

Further to my previous contact with you regarding your child's attendance, we now request that you provide medical information from a GP, or other medical professional, to support your child to access education.

Medical information can take the form of:

- Medical appointment card with pupil's name, date, and **one** appointment detailed.
- Print screen of AskMyGP website showing their response to your contact.
- Evidence of a consultation with NHS 111.
- Medication prescribed by a GP, with the dispensing label attached.
- Copy of prescription.
- Screen print of medical notes.
- Letters concerning hospital appointments.
- Slip with date, pupil's name and surgery stamp, signed by Receptionist.
- Letter from a professional such as a hospital Consultant or Psychologist.
- Stamped copy of the enclosed medical card.

Please note that Doctors 'sick' notes are not required. Please do not request them from your GP.

We do appreciate that there are times when medical difficulties and illness impact on attendance. If you have an ongoing concern that this is not being addressed, we may be able to support you by contacting health services on your behalf.

Failure to supply this information will result in your child's absences being unauthorised and could lead to further action.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 11 – letter to GP

Date

Dear GP

Re: Name of child, DOB, a registered pupil at XXXX School

I am writing to you as we have significant concerns regarding XXX's school attendance and the serious impact this is having on their education. XXX's attendance meets the government's definition for persistently/severely absent.

The child's parent/s / carer/s report that the majority of absences are due to XXXXX illness. However, due to the frequency of absences, future absences will be unauthorised unless medical information is provided.

High levels of absence put the parents at risk of prosecution. Therefore, I ask for your professional opinion as to whether the absences are medically justified to the level shown. Please note that I respect your patient's confidentiality and am not requesting details of any medical conditions. XXX has given me written consent to contact you and to provide the attendance record, documents enclosed.

I would appreciate it if you would complete the check box below/on the sheet enclosed and return to us via email XXXXXXX

GP's response:

It is my opinion that the absences are currently medically justified. **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐
This should be reviewed in …… days/weeks

Does the nature of the illness allow for the pupil to undertake any education e.g. work at home, online learning, reduced timetable? Please advise :

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Enc: Attendance record
Parental consent

Pro forma 11A – Parental Consent Form

Medical Consent Form

I hereby give permission for the disclosure of information to the Head Teacher of XXX School, regarding my child's medical fitness to attend school.

Child's name	
Date of birth	
Child's address	
School name	
Current level of attendance (%)	
Name of parent/carer	

Name of Doctor	
Address of Doctor	

Signed: ..... **Date:** .....
(Parent/Carer)

Pro forma 12 – Medical Card

MEDICAL CARD

To Whom It May Concern

The child named below needs proof of attendance of a doctor's appointment. Please would you date, sign or stamp the card.

Child's name	
Date of birth	
Doctor's name	
Doctor's address	
Doctor's telephone number	

Thank you for your support.

Head Teacher

Date		**Surgery stamp/Doctor's signature**
Description of illness/medical issue		

Date		**Surgery stamp/Doctor's signature**
Description of illness/medical issue		

Pro forma 13 – example leave of absence request form

Notification of a pupil's leave of absence

Pupil name		
Form/Class		
Date of first day of absence		AM or PM
Date of return to school		AM or PM
Number of school days that your child will be absent from school		

Time lost by children and young people due leave in term time can be disruptive to their education. Wherever possible, absence from school should be avoided as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress and can create difficulties for them on their return to school.

Statutory guidance prevents a headteacher from authorising a leave of absence in term time unless exceptional circumstances apply. The guidance is clear that a leave of absence for a holiday, leisure or recreation would not be considered exceptional. There are new codes for the school register which make it clearer as to the reason for the absence. The registers are legal documents and school must use the codes correctly.

Please select:

☐ G – Term Time Holiday

☐ C – Leave of absence for Exceptional circumstance

☐ C1 – Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance, eg show, modelling

☐ J1 – Leave of absence for attending an interview, employment, or an education establishment

☐ P – Approved sporting activity

☐ R – Religious observance

Please provide all relevant detail of the reasons for requesting a leave of absence. Please note we are unable to consider additional information after the leave of absence has been taken.

I understand that if the absence request is unauthorised, the Local Authority may be notified and a penalty notice may be issued. I understand that a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school. A penalty notice is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days. I also understand that failure to pay a penalty notice will result in prosecution, except in limited circumstances.

Name(s) of Parent/Carer(s) making application

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/…..	First name		Surname	
Signed			Date	

Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/…..	First name		Surname	
Signed			Date	

Please ensure you are giving at least 14 days' notice of the proposed absence; retrospective applications cannot be authorised.

NB The maximum number of fixed penalty notices that can be issued to a parent in respect of a child is two within a rolling three year period. Should a further offence be committed in this time the LA will be required to consider alternative legal measures, including prosecution. Penalty notices are issued in accordance with the Code of Conduct which is available at: School attendance | Westmorland and Furness Council

For school to complete:

AUTHORISED	
UNAUTHORISED	

Pro forma 14 – response to leave of absence request

Example letter with options

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Name of pupil, DOB

Application for leave of absence

Thank you for your request for XXXX to take time off school during term time. XXXXX's current school attendance is **%.

At ***** School, we have always endeavoured to be as reasonable as possible where occasional, one-off term time absences are concerned but, as you are aware since the 19th August 2024, there has been a change to the legislation regarding absences during term time for those in statutory education and this has affected our ability to authorise them. The Department for Education allows a Head Teacher the discretion to consider authorising a leave of absence in term time, only in 'exceptional circumstances'. The reason you have given for the absence does not constitute an exceptional circumstance, therefore we are unable to authorise the absence.

Failing to ensure regular school attendance by taking your child out of school in term time for a holiday is an offence under section 444 (1) or section 444 (1A) of the 1996 Education act. The maximum penalty for these offences is a fine of £2,500, three months' imprisonment, or both. Alternatively, the local authority/school may choose to impose a Section 444A Penalty Notice in the order of a fine instead of prosecuting for the offences given above. The amount of the penalty notice is £160 (per parent, per child). There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in prosecution, except in limited circumstances.

As this absence is not authorised we will be required to notify the local authority.

Absence due to holidays in term time impact on student's attendance records and much of the work students miss when they are absent is never completely made up and can leave them at a considerable disadvantage. As a school, we expect parents will ensure that work that is missed will be collected from school and completed.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 15 – leave of absence no request

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Unauthorised leave of absence (no request)

Name of pupil, DOB

I write with regard to the above named child who was absent from school **(insert dates)** a total of --- days. I have tried to contact you with regard to this period of absence and have been unsuccessful.

I am satisfied, however, that you have been on a family holiday – which is deemed to be an unauthorised leave of absence.

You should be aware that, as stated in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance, Head Teachers ***may not*** grant a request for a leave of absence ***unless*** an application has been made in advance to the school, when such a request is made any leave can only be authorised if there are exceptional circumstances relating to that application. Retrospective applications and information cannot be considered.

In this case, no such request for a leave of absence has been made, so there were no exceptional circumstances to consider. As a result, the period of absence referred to above has been recorded as an unauthorised family holiday on the register.

Failing to ensure regular school attendance by taking your child out of school in term time for a holiday is an offence under section 444 (1) or section 444 (1A) of the 1996 Education act. The maximum penalty for these offences is a fine of £2,500, three months' imprisonment, or both. Alternatively, the local authority/school may choose to impose a Section 444A Penalty Notice in the order of a fine instead of prosecuting for the offences given above. The amount of the penalty notice is £160 (per parent, per child). There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice will result in prosecution, except in limited circumstances.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 16

Attendance Meeting Minutes

Name of Student:
School:

Date of meeting:	**Time and place**:
Present at meeting:	**Apologies received**:
Invited but no apologies received:	
Purpose of meeting: To address attendance concerns.	

What's working well?
What are we worried about?

Date of next meeting:

Signed (Chairperson)

Pro forma 17 – letter regarding children involved in performance

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

As a school we support our children to have interests/hobbies/activities outside of school and will always endeavour to be as flexible as we can to support these within reason. We need to bear in mind that these activities must not have an adverse effect on the child's school attendance and attainment.

Under Section 37 of The Children and Young Persons Act 1963 and The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014, performances (amateur or professional) are approved by the Local Authority through the issuing of Child Performance Licences to children or by issuing an exemption known as a Body of Persons Approval to an organisation. The licensing system is designed to provide a checking process to ensure that those responsible for involving children in performances are safeguarding the children within the parameters of the legislation.

This legislation is in force to secure the health, proper treatment and education of children whilst taking part in performances. There are restrictions in place in relation to the time children spend in entertainment (finishing times and the latest time a child can be in a venue) and production companies must adhere to these times to ensure children's daily lives are not detrimentally affected by their involvement in performances.
It is not acceptable for children to be absent from school the day after a performance due to tiredness.

If there is school absence following a performance, the Local Authority will reconsider if such performances can go ahead in the school week and may impose a condition on the child's licence or BOPA exemption issued to an organisation. Such condition may result in performances only being held on weekends and during school holidays to minimise the impact of children being tired following an event.

Parents need to make informed choices around what their child can manage so that they do not become over tired. Keeping your child off school the day after a performance not only could have an adverse effect on your child in school but could also jeopardize the production company being granted a BOPA Exemption by the Local Authority in the future. This is something we all want to avoid.

Therefore as a school, we cannot authorise a child being absent from school following a performance simply because they are tired. We expect all children to be in school the morning after a performance. We thank you for your support with this matter.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Pro forma 18 – attendance contract

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CONTRACT			
****SCHOOL NAME****			
Student		**Date of birth**	**Date of action plan** to run for six weeks from
Attendance is **% **Target of X in next six weeks**			**Aim: to increase attendance**
Agreement	**Action**	**Timescale**	**Outcome**
Pupil			
Parent/Carer			
School			
Other LA Attendance Officer	 To follow Local Authority process on ensuring school attendance		

I confirm that this Attendance Contract was agreed by all present.

Signed

..... Parent/Carer ..... School representative

..... Pupil ..... Other agency