



Attendance Recording, Management Guidance and Operational Procedures

INTRODUCTION:

Scottish Borders Council has made the success of our young people a priority and are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and other stakeholders to ensure that, wherever possible, all children enrolled in our schools receive an education that maximises the opportunity for each child to achieve his/her potential.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is the 3-18 curriculum in Scotland which offers a broad and deep general education by providing opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work and obtain qualifications. Ultimately, the aim of the CfE and the Scottish Borders Council is to make our education system fit for the modern world and improve young people's achievements, attainment and life chances; through enabling all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. We believe this can only be achieved through a joint approach to education: we want our students, parents and schools to work together to help our young people achieve their full potential.

There are a number of reasons why children do not manage to attend school regularly or punctually. Schools should take into consideration the individual circumstances for each child and/or family¹ and look for ways to overcome or lessen the challenges. Where there are genuine reasons for absence, the Authority will work with stakeholders to ensure that the child or young person's education will be provided by means other than by attendance at school (eg in the case of children whose health prevents them from leaving their home/attending regularly - see Legal Framework, Medical Absences).

However, persistent poor attendance and poor punctuality are disruptive to the learning of the individual concerned and to the work of the class. It may also be an early warning of other difficulties for the child or family. It is the aim of Scottish Borders Council, to where possible promote principles of Early Intervention ensuring that the appropriate support is sought before a situation escalates.

1. For the purposes of this document, individual circumstances may include those who are refugees, traveller children, Looked After Children (LAC), those for whom English is an additional language, pupils with disabilities, those with recurring illness, family circumstances or respite care or any other vulnerable group identified within the school.

CHILD PROTECTION

Where school staff have any concerns that a child or young person may be a victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, then Child Protection Procedures must be followed and contact made immediately with the Child Protection Duty Team

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

Children Missing from Education is a service established by the Scottish Government to support education authorities and schools to exchange information across Scotland and with other parts of the United Kingdom.

Children missing from education:

- Are of school age but not on a school roll or being educated otherwise (at home, privately or in an alternative provision).
- They have usually not attended school for a period of time (up to four weeks for children with no known vulnerabilities, eg, Looked After, on the Child Protection Register, known to Integrated Children's Services, with additional support needs, etc).
- May be in need of help or support but are unable to access it. Children not in school may not have had their needs identified and there may be no-one actively connecting them to services.
- May be missing important experiences and opportunities to gain knowledge and skills. Schools provide more than subjects, they provide social opportunities, practical skills and practice for life.
- May be isolated from other children and adults who can help them.

Before declaring a child missing from education the school should apply the Attendance Policy and undertake school level checks in relation to the absence, including:

- Telephone call/letter home
- Home visit
- Check with council services and partner agencies, eg, Integrated Children's Services and health for information on move or change of address where appropriate.
- Check with the appropriate Senior Education Officer for information on alternative enrolment within Scottish Borders.
- Check whether authority education officer has been informed that the child will be educated at home.

Where a child or parent informs a school of an intention to leave, the school should record the intended leaving date, reason for leaving and destination against the pupil record in SEEMiS. If the destination is not known, it is important to record any information the parent provided and any other information the school has.

If notification confirming the pupil has enrolled at the receiving school is not received within 10 working days, schools should invoke the 'Children Missing from Education Procedure'. Should the child or young person be classed as Vulnerable or at Risk in any form immediate action should be taken to invoke Child Protection procedures.

If a parent does not inform the school that a child is leaving, and the child fails to attend, the school should continue to mark as not attending and invoke the Child Missing from Education procedures as contained in the following link.

Prompt completion of school leavers within SEEMIS serves two purposes - electronic transfer of pupil information to their next school, and checks at a Scottish Government level to ensure that a pupil does enrol at another school. Where a pupil does not enrol as expected, a CME alert is raised. Note that if a destination school is unknown, or if the receiving school does not make contact and/or the SEEMIS Pupil Report is returned, the child must be referred to the Authority's Child Protection Co-ordinator. Where there are Child Protection concerns about a child, they should be referred to the Child Protection Co-ordinator as soon as possible, or as soon as the school has exhausted reasonable attempts to trace the child, and within one week at the most.

NB: For pupils over 16 years of age, leaving dates are as follows:

- *If 16 on or before 30 September, pupil can leave on 31 May or any date thereafter.*
- *If 16 on or before 28 February, pupil can leave at Christmas or any date thereafter.*

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES 2013

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent and cohesive framework that improves the attendance and punctuality of pupils at school. It provides clear procedures for schools and other agencies to use to support pupils and families to maximise pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- 1.2 The statutory framework this policy sits within includes the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and 1996, Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and 2009, and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The overarching policy framework is the Scottish Government's Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).
- 1.3 This policy recognises that all children are likely to be late to or absent from school at some time in their school career. However persistent poor attendance and poor punctuality are disruptive to the individual pupil and to the work of their class and may be an early warning of other difficulties.
- 1.4 Where there are genuine reasons for prolonged absence, the Authority will work with parents, pupils and other agencies to ensure that the child's education is provided by means other than school attendance.
- 1.5 The aim of the policy is to improve the overall attendance of pupils at school. It seeks to:
- make high attendance and punctuality a priority for parents and school staff, with Scottish Borders striving to achieve 100% attendance during the school term.
 - define respective roles and responsibilities of parents, pupils, staff and multi-agency partners so as to ensure consistency in dealing with issues of attendance and absence.
 - ensure the accurate and consistent recording of pupils' attendance and absence in accordance with Scottish Government guidance, to enable analysis based on reliable information.
- 1.6 This policy replaces the Attendance Policy and Procedures 2008.

2 CORPORATE CONTEXT

- 2.1 This policy supports Council priority 4.3, Young People are successful learners, demonstrating achievement and attainment.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

- 3.1 This document can be made available in large print, on tape or in other languages.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 This policy applies to all Scottish Borders Council schools. This policy is relevant for all staff based in schools, and specifically Headteachers, Depute Heads and pastoral staff. It is also relevant for Education Team Leaders, Senior Education Officers, and Integrated Children's Services Locality Managers.
- 4.2 This policy places specific duties on the Headteacher and his/her delegate in managing and recording absence and lateness. It also makes reference to the role of the Named Person, as detailed in the Scottish Government's policy framework Getting It Right For Every Child. The Named Person role will be implemented in Scottish Borders from October 2013.

5 PARENTAL DUTIES

- 5.1 "Parents" should be taken to mean parents, guardians and carers, whether corporate or relatives of a child.
- 5.2 Parental duties relating to attendance are covered under Sections 30 and 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
- 5.3 Section 30 states: "It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education for him suitable to his age, ability and aptitude either by causing him to attend public school regularly or by other means".
- 5.4 Most parents/carers seek to meet their duty by enrolling the child in a Local Authority School.
- 5.5 Section 35 states: "(1) Where a child of school age who has attended a public school on one or more occasions fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly at the said school, then, unless the Education Authority have consented to the withdrawal of the child from the school (which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld), his parent shall be guilty of an offence against this section."

6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

- 6.1 Responsibilities of the Local Authority are covered under Sections 14 and 36 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and Regulation 9 of the Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975.
- 6.2 Regulation 9 of the 1975 Regulations requires each school to keep and preserve attendance registers.
- 6.3 Section 36 of the 1980 Act lays a duty on the Authority where they consider that an offence has been committed under Section 35 to serve notice on the parent/carer requiring them to appear (with or without the child) before the Authority, not less than 48 hours nor more than 7 days from the service of the notice, to explain the reason for the absence.
- 6.4 Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 requires Authorities to make special arrangements for pupils unable to attend school due to prolonged ill-health, or if it would be unreasonable to expect a pupil to attend school for that reason, to receive education elsewhere.

7 PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

- 7.1 Our schools have a strong ethos of promoting attendance at school which is part of our overall approach in promoting positive behaviour and our pastoral care duties. In Scottish Borders Council schools the definition of "poor attendance" is 85% or below. However schools are expected to look at a child's typical pattern of attendance and where attendance is above 85% but below the typical level for that child (without good reason), schools should initiate action without delay.
- 7.2 The standards that guide pastoral care enable staff to:
- be aware of early signs of concern which may lead to absenteeism and allow preventative support to be arranged.
 - develop positive relationships with pupils and parents to ensure difficulties are discussed and resolved.
 - respond quickly to absence, to ensure children are safe and well.
 - follow up on absence, to enable the school and its partners to make an effective response.
 - support reintegration into learning from absence.

- 7.3 Regular and positive communications of the expectations on attendance to parents will help reinforce the critical messages on the need for full attendance and help ensure it remains a priority for parents.
- 7.4 Involving a range of services and agencies at an early stage is vital in strengthening the support to the pupil and their family. The shared goal of collaborative working must be to support the pupil to achieve full attendance.
- 7.5 The agencies/services which may be involved include:
- Home School Link Worker
 - Psychological Services
 - Locality Police Officer
 - ICS/Social Work
 - Health Services
 - Voluntary Sector

8 REASONS FOR ABSENCE

8.1 Section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 gives examples of 'reasonable excuses' for absence. These include:

- There is no school within walking distance of the child's home and the Education Authority has not provided transport or other appropriate arrangement to enable the child to attend school regularly. (If however, as a result of a placing request, a child has been admitted to a school that is further than walking distance from his home, the Authority has no obligation to provide transport. In these circumstances, lack of school transport would not be a reasonable excuse).
- The child has been prevented by sickness from attending school or receiving education as the case may be.
- There are other circumstances which in the opinion of the Education Authority, or the court, afford a reasonable excuse:
 - Work Experience
 - Educational visits
 - Day and residential visit to outdoor centres
 - College study programme
 - Interviews and visits relating to Further and Higher Education
 - Activities in connection with Psychological Services
 - Debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions, etc arranged by, or in conjunction with the school.
 - Medical and dental appointments, where these cannot be scheduled outside school hours.

9 AUTHORISED ABSENCE

9.1 Absence may be authorised by the base school when they are satisfied by a legitimate reason. This reason would usually be provided by the parent or self-certified (via a note, email or phone call) or may be provided by a partner service provider (via a note, appointment card or phone call), such as a Social Worker.

Examples of legitimate reasons to authorise absence include:

- Meetings prior to, and in, court
- Attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Meeting Around the Child (MAC), or appointment with another Service Provider, e.g., Social Worker
- Religious observance
- Bereavement
- Weddings or funerals of those close to the family
- Participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school

- Lack of transport, including due to bad weather
- Gypsies and Travellers: children may travel as part of their tradition for family connections or work commitments. Their absence should be authorised at their base school, which is the school the child attends for most of the year. These children may however enrol temporarily in other schools as they travel.
- Exceptional domestic circumstances (see 11.1)
- Only those family holidays agreed by the school to be taken in exceptional circumstances (see 11.1)
- Period of exclusion (to be recorded in a separate category)

10 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

10.1 Schools must record absence as unauthorised in the following circumstances:

- Family holidays where the school does not agree that there is a satisfactory reason for absence (see below).
- Truancy with, or without, the knowledge of the parent.
- Longer-term exceptional domestic carer circumstance where support has been provided.
- During disputes such as the return of a pupil after exclusion.
- All other unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is later provided.

Only in exceptional circumstances where it is "important to the well-being and cohesion of the family following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events" or where a parent's employment is of the nature where school holiday-leave cannot be accommodated (for example emergency or armed services) may holidays in term time be authorised.

11 ABSENCE DUE TO ILL-HEALTH

- 11.1 School absence which is legitimately attributable to ill-health is recognised as an authorised absence.
- 11.2 If staff have concerns about the legitimacy of repeated absences on health grounds the school should contact the relevant Senior Education Officer or Education Team Leader for advice. The Senior Education Officer may also consult with the Locality Integrated Children's Services office should the situation warrant.
- 11.3 If a pupil is unable to attend school due to prolonged ill-health, the school must discuss the child's situation with the Senior Education Officer and the ICS Locality Education Team Leader to determine if and how arrangements will be made for education.
- 11.4 'Prolonged' ill-health is usually taken to mean 15 continuous school days, or 20 days of intermittent absence for verified ill-health reasons. However if it is clear that a pupil will be absent for 15 days (or more) then the school should not wait for the end of the 15 days before considering if and how to make alternative arrangements for education. If alternative

arrangements for education are provided then this will be counted as an attendance against the pupil's attendance record.

- 11.5 Decisions on education for pupils absent for ill-health reasons must be informed by appropriate health care advice. This may be done through individual consultation with the appropriate Health Care Professionals, or where appropriate through a Meeting Around the Child (MAC).

12 PUPILS WHO ARE 'LOOKED AFTER' OR 'LOOKED AFTER AND ACCOMMODATED'

12.1 A child is Looked After when he or she is:

- subject to a supervision requirement made by a Children's Hearing.
- subject to an Order, Authorisation or Warrant according to which the Local Authority has responsibilities in respect of the child. These include a Child Protection Order, a Child Assessment Order, an Authorisation from a Justice of the Peace to remove a child to a place of safety or maintain a child in a place of safety, removal to a place of safety by a Police Constable, or a Warrant to keep a child in a place of safety made by a Children's Hearing or a Sheriff.
- subject to a Permanence Order made after an application by the Local Authority.
- provided with accommodation by a Local Authority under section 25 of the 1995 Act.

"Looked after" is generally taken to mean the child is subject to a Supervision Requirement or Order but still living at home with the parents or usual carers. "Looked after and accommodated" means the child is living with foster carers or in accommodation provided by the local authority such as a children's home or residential school.

12.2 Children who are looked after (LAC) can be particularly vulnerable and schools need to be especially vigilant with this group of children. It is essential that schools accurately record the status of a looked after child in SEEMIS and know where parental responsibility for the child lies.

12.3 Where a child is looked after (LAC) or looked after and accommodated (LAAC) or where there is Social Work involvement on a voluntary basis, the allocated Social Worker must be informed at once of any concerns relating to the child, including non-attendance and truancy from school.

12.4 Persistent non-attendance or lateness may be an early indicator of other concerns. An appropriate course of action may be to convene a Meeting Around the Child (MAC), including the child's parents or carers. Advice may be sought from the allocated Social Worker or Senior Education Officer or the Education Team Leader.

12.5 Where there is agreement that the parent of a Looked After Child be referred to a meeting of the Schools Attendance Sub Committee (see section 20), the school must:

- Confirm where parental responsibility for the child lies.
- Clearly indicate the child's Looked After status in the report to the Attendance Sub-Committee
- Invite the child's allocated Social Worker to attend the Attendance Sub-Committee. If the Social Worker is unable to attend, they must provide a written summary update to the Committee.

13 PUPILS ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

13.1 The school must notify the Locality Integrated Children's Services office by telephone of the absence of any child who is on the Council's Child Protection Register. The Duty or case

Social Worker will decide the required course of action and inform the school of that decision.

14 BULLYING

- 14.1 Absence may be a sign of difficulties at school, including experiencing bullying behaviour. Scottish Borders Council has a Respectful Relationships Policy, developed in partnership with young people, to promote respectful relationships and reduce the incidence of bullying behaviour. Where bullying behaviour is affecting a child or young person's attendance, the school should ensure it refers to the Respectful Relationships Policy and the tools this policy recommends.

15 MANAGING A RETURN TO SCHOOL FOLLOWING LONG TERM ABSENCE

- 15.1 'Long term absence' generally means a period of four weeks or more of continuous absence. However on occasion shorter but repeated patterns of absence will be treated in the same way.
- 15.2 If appropriate advice should be sought from the Senior Education Officer or the Education Team Leader when a pupil is planning to return to school after a long term absence. Advice about the pupil's health care needs may be required to determine the extent to which a pupil is fit for school. It may be necessary to consider a phased return or providing education through another route.
- 15.3 Where there is multi-agency involvement (eg, Health Practitioners), a Meeting Around the Child (MAC) is the best process for planning the return to school.
- 15.4 The pupil's Named Person or Lead Professional will arrange a meeting with relevant multi-agency colleagues within and outwith the school; the parents and the pupil. Consent must be sought to share information as appropriate.
- 15.5 A return to school or education may prompt a review of a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) or Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The Meeting Around the Child (MAC) may consider it appropriate to propose a Co-ordinated Support Plan, assuming the child meets the CSP criteria.
- 15.6 In all cases it is important that care is taken on an ongoing basis by the Named Person, Lead Professional or School Coordinator to ensure that the parents and pupils understand the role of each professional, are given the opportunity to give their views, and are supported to participate in the planning process.
- 15.7 Please see the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF) Manual for further information about holding a Meeting Around the Child, obtaining consent, and ensuring involvement and participation of families.

16 PUPIL RECORDS AND RECORDING OF ABSENCE

- 16.1 Accurate and timely recording of attendance and absence is a prime responsibility of schools. As well as being a legal obligation, these records are used in the generation of reports for both the Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council information. They will constitute the *Certificate of Attendance* presented in any court proceedings. They may form part of the evidence to the Children's Reporter which could constitute grounds for compulsory measures of supervision.

Standardised attendance codes have been established for SBC schools that comply with Scottish Government's Included, Engaged and Involved publication – Part 1 Attendance in Scottish Schools. This document provides specific guidance to Schools and Education Authorities on the categorisation and recording of pupil absences.

17 PROCEDURES

1.	School roll	ACTION
1.1	All schools in the Scottish Borders will use SEEMiS to record attendance and absence.	Headteacher School Administration
1.2	In all schools, a register will be taken at least twice a day and the management information system will be updated daily.	Headteacher School Administration
1.3	Attendance and absence will be recorded using the codes set out in Appendix 7.	Headteacher School Administration
1.4	Each school must also record pupils who arrive late for school (or individual lessons in secondary school). Persistent lateness, or lack of preparedness for lessons, must be treated as potential signs of a child in difficulty. Schools will monitor and take action to address this.	Headteacher School Administration
2.	Notifying the school of absence	
2.1	Parents are asked to notify the school, before the start of the school day, on the first day of absence.	Parent
2.2	Parents should also notify the school of expected late arrival, for example due to a medical or dental appointment.	Parent
2.3	Parents may notify the school by telephone, letter, email or in person. Where possible the parent should indicate how long the absence is expected to be.	Parent
3.	Use of Group Call	
3.1	SBC uses a messaging system that sends a text message to a parent of any child who is unexpectedly absent. This message will be sent as soon as the absence is noted to ensure that immediate action can be taken to find any children 'missing' from school.	Headteacher School Administration
3.2	Schools must have a logging system to record notifications of absence and forward these to Class or Register Teachers and Administration staff. Please note this information could be required to substantiate the Authority's case in a Court of Law and may be used by the Reporter to the Children's Panel to establish grounds for a Children's Hearing.	Headteacher School Administration
3.3	Parents are responsible for ensuring schools have accurate contact information and for providing an emergency contact number to the school and ensuring this is kept up to date. Parents agree to respond promptly to contacts from the school.	Parent
4.	Unexplained Absence and Risk Management	
4.1	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.	Headteacher or Delegate
4.2	Where a parent is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school, the parent will be responsible for taking appropriate action.	Parent
4.3	Where the parent cannot be reached, the school will attempt to contact the emergency contact provided by the parent.	Headteacher or Delegate

4.4	Where contact is achieved by telephone with the parent or the emergency contact, the reason for absence will be established and recorded by the school.	Headteacher School Administration
4.5	Where no explanation of an unexplained absence has been received by the school by 11.00 on the first morning of absence the Headteacher will ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the circumstances of the child. Effective assessment requires high risk/protection factors to be identified through multi-agency contact and collaboration. These will include likely harm to the child and ways to protect the child from that harm.	Headteacher
4.6	Where there is no reason to suspect that the pupil is at risk, the school will continue to attempt to contact the parent. If no contact with the parent can be achieved, emergency contacts will be contacted. The school will continue to monitor the pupil's attendance/absence. Should any change in circumstance be identified that place the child at risk, action should be taken as detailed in 4.7.	Headteacher
4.7	In cases where a child is on the Child Protection Register, be LAC/LAAC, be deemed to be vulnerable or at risk and is known to have a Social Worker, the relevant Integrated Children's Services Locality Office will be informed of the absence and asked to contact the family. The past attendance record and history of parental contact will also be considered. In this case, responsibility for contacting the parent or taking other action, for example contacting the Police, will pass to the Locality office to allow them to proceed with their statutory duties.	Headteacher ICS Locality office
4.8	In case of any doubt early discussion between the Headteacher and the Integrated Children's Services Locality Office shall take place. In all cases Headteachers shall have regard to the Child Protection Guidelines.	Headteacher
4.9	Where no contact can be achieved by telephone on the first day of absence a record of this must be made. Where no contact has been made within 48 hours a letter notifying the parent of the absence and requesting an explanation of the reason shall be sent by first class post on the second day of absence. (Appendix 5/6) NB: Should a child be thought to be at risk, refer to Child Protection Procedures.	Headteacher School Administration
5.	Absence beyond the expected date of return	
5.1	Where a pupil fails to attend school on the expected return date, the process is followed as above and a letter sent to the parent. (Appendix 4/5)	Headteacher or Delegate
5.2	If the school is concerned by the parental response or any other aspect of the child's attendance, it should consider the issue at either an internal school meeting (e.g. a School Liaison Group) or consider convening a Meeting Around the Child (MAC) with other involved professionals.	Headteacher or Delegate
6.	Child Missing From Education (CME)	
6.1	If the child has not attended and attempts to contact the parent have failed, the Headteacher should implement the Children Missing from School Procedures for alerting the CME service (see Appendix 4).	Headteacher or Delegate

PERSISTENT NON-ATTENDANCE

- 17.1 Schools are expected to develop internal procedures for management and teaching staff to regularly meet and discuss issues of concern regarding attendance and persistent late-coming. These will vary from school to school but should involve Senior Management representation, Guidance staff (in secondary schools) and the Class Teacher (Primary Schools). The goal of these meetings should be to establish any possible causes for absence and/or lateness, and to agree strategies for each individual (see Appendix 1).
- 17.2 It is expected that these meetings will include the member of staff with Named Person* responsibilities for the learner/s in question. The group should agree as part of their discussion whether the absence and/or lateness constitute a cause for concern that should be recorded by the Named Person (as well as by the School).

** Please note that the Named Person role, as described in Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), will be implemented within the Scottish Borders by November 2013.*

18 COMPULSORY MEASURES

- 18.1 Measures for compulsory attendance are expensive, time consuming and can lead to further unnecessary interventions into family life. Scottish Borders Council will always seek to work with parents and learners in the first instance to resolve difficulties.
- 18.2 Where efforts to engage learners and families in voluntary measures to improve attendance have failed, the Education Authority may consider calling a School Attendance Sub-Committee (SASC) of Elected Members (see section 20). The SASC may make a decision to apply the following measures:
- Attendance Orders (see section 21)
 - Referral to the Reporter to the Children's Panel (see section 22)
 - Prosecution (leading to, if convicted, a fine of up to £1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one month)

19 SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE SUB COMMITTEE

- 19.1 A School Attendance Sub Committee (SASC) has been established with delegated powers to deal with parents who are failing to meet their responsibilities regarding their child/children's attendance at school. Democratic Services will establish and support the Committee.
- 19.2 Where interventions have failed and there is evidence of parental non-engagement and there is considered no reasonable excuse for non-attendance. Headteachers in consultation with the relevant Senior Education Officer (SEO) should contact the Head of Schools to seek authorisation to convene a SASC. The Headteacher will provide the evidence referred to above for the Head of School's consideration.
- 19.3 If the Head of Schools agrees to the SASC, he/she will inform the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning, the Head of ICS and the relevant ICS Locality Manager in writing of the intention to hold a SASC. The ICS Locality Manager should be given a copy of the evidence in order to prepare for the meeting.
- 19.4 The Headteacher should also consult with the Clerk to the Council of the intention to hold an SASC and agree a suitable date within the legally required time frame.
- 19.5 The Clerk to the Council shall serve a formal Notice on the parent informing them of the requirement to attend the SASC. To allow the parent time to prepare, the statutory timescale for the SASC is not within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification. The parent should be advised in the letter that the SASC will still go ahead if the parent chooses not to attend.

- 19.6 If a parent fails to satisfy the Sub Committee that there is a reasonable excuse for a pupil's non-attendance at school, the Sub Committee may:-
- Warn the parent and postpone a decision for a six- week period. In this case only, if the child of school age, the Sub-Committee may make an Attendance Order under Section 38 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980;
 - Refer the child to the Authority Reporter;
 - Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal; or
 - Proceed to prosecution through the Sheriff Court.
- 19.7 Following the conclusion of the SASC Head teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in line with school policy and any recommendations made by the committee.
- 19.8 The Procedure for calling a SASC is at Appendix 9.

20 ATTENDANCE ORDERS

- 20.1 In the circumstance where the Education Authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the pupil is of school age (5-16), make an attendance order. An Attendance Order requires the parent to ensure the child attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children residing in the same neighbourhood as the child).
- 20.2 An attendance order:
- Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child at a school named in the order.
 - Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the Authority.
 - May name a Public School, or other school which is willing to receive the child. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.
 - Shall not name a Special School unless the child has additional support needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at the school.
- 20.3 A copy of the attendance order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child's regular attendance at the named school. If parents are unhappy with the making of an attendance order, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the Sheriff. The Sheriff is able to amend, confirm or annul the Order. The decision of the Sheriff is final.
- 20.4 Once made, an Attendance Order remains in place for as long as the child is of school age, unless it is annulled by the Sheriff or revoked by the Education Authority.

21 REFERRAL TO THE REPORTER TO THE CHILDREN'S PANEL

- 21.1 Non-attendance at school without reasonable excuse is a ground for referral to the Children's Reporter. However, a referral may only be made if it is considered that the child is in need of compulsory measure of supervision. This would mean that the child would attend a Children's Hearing and may be placed on a supervision requirement, which could include a condition of attendance at a named school.

21.2 A referral must **only** be made following a Meeting Around the Child (MAC), including representation from the Locality Integrated Children’s Services Office. Non-attendance at school is likely to be indicative of other difficulties in the child’s life, which may also be grounds for referral to the Reporter. Schools should contact the Locality Integrated Children’s Services Office for advice in this regard.

22 EQUALITIES

22.1 The Attendance Policy contains specific guidance for managing the attendance of vulnerable children and young people.

22.2 It is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this policy.

23 APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Strategy Checklist
- Appendix 2: Absence Guidance
- Appendix 3: Flow Chart
- Appendix 4: Risk Assessment
- Appendix 4: Guidance for letters
- Appendix 6: Sample letters
- Appendix 7: SEEMIS Code Guidance
- Appendix 8: Scotxed flowchart

24 MONITORING AND REVIEW

24.1 This policy will be reviewed on a three yearly cycle by a Senior Education Officer nominated by the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning or his Delegate.

24.2 If appropriate, a report will be submitted to the Education Executive to request changes to the policy.

24.3 The first policy review will be in January 2016.

25 VERSION CONTROL

Name of Document: Attendance Policy		Version Number: 1
Approved by:		
Date first approved:		Date of Review:
Name of officer responsible for the review: Amanda Cronin		
Changes to the policy		
<i>Paragraph No:</i>	<i>Wording that changed</i>	<i>Reason for change</i>

CHECKLIST OF POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

To ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to secure the pupils attendance at school, the following checklist has been compiled for guidance:

Interview with pupil by Support for Pupils Staff or Class Teacher	
Appropriate letters have been sent in line with SBC policy	
Has school made contact with parent to offer an opportunity to meet to discuss concerns?	
Has consideration been given to supporting attendance with an Attendance Card or Target Sheet where appropriate?	
Is there an issue which can be addressed by provision of free meals, financial assistance with clothing, footwear etc where parents are eligible for qualifying benefits?	
Are peer group relationships a problem? If so, would club, social group or individual activities help? Has the Respectful Relationships Policy been applied?	
Are there domestic circumstances which may be affecting attendance which the school has the resources to change?	
Is there any Behaviour/ Learning Support available within the school and if so, do Behaviour/Learning Support Staff have a role to play in improving pupil's attendance?	
Has the pupil been referred for a Meeting Around the Child (MAC) with appropriate consent?	
Has an Individualised Education Plan been established?	
Has consideration been given to a modified timetable that could enable the young person to work in another location both within and outwith the School, attend College or Community Based Programmes, or work with a peer or mentor who is able to better support their style of learning?	
Has the parent been invited to, or participated in, any Parenting Strategies, or Local Support Groups or agencies?	

Pupils who are absent at Registration or After Lunch Break: Operational Guide for Headteachers, Deputes and Designated Staff

1 Child does not appear at start of day/after lunch break

Where there are already concerns regarding a child/young person, i.e. they are on the Child Protection Register, or s/he is regarded as vulnerable, the Class Teacher/Register Teacher must inform the Headteacher or delegate, to action urgent contact with family and/or other agencies, particularly the supervising Social Worker, to trace the child.

2 Designated administrator initiates parental contact

Attempts should be made to contact the parent via SMS text/phone by 11.00 am and within 30minutes of returning from lunch break.

3 No response from parent

Designated administrator notes no response by 10.00 am / within 1 hour of returning from lunch break (except for vulnerable children/young people who will have been dealt with as 1 above). At this point, the Headteacher or delegate should be contacted to make decisions regarding next steps. This should be done by working through the following checklist:

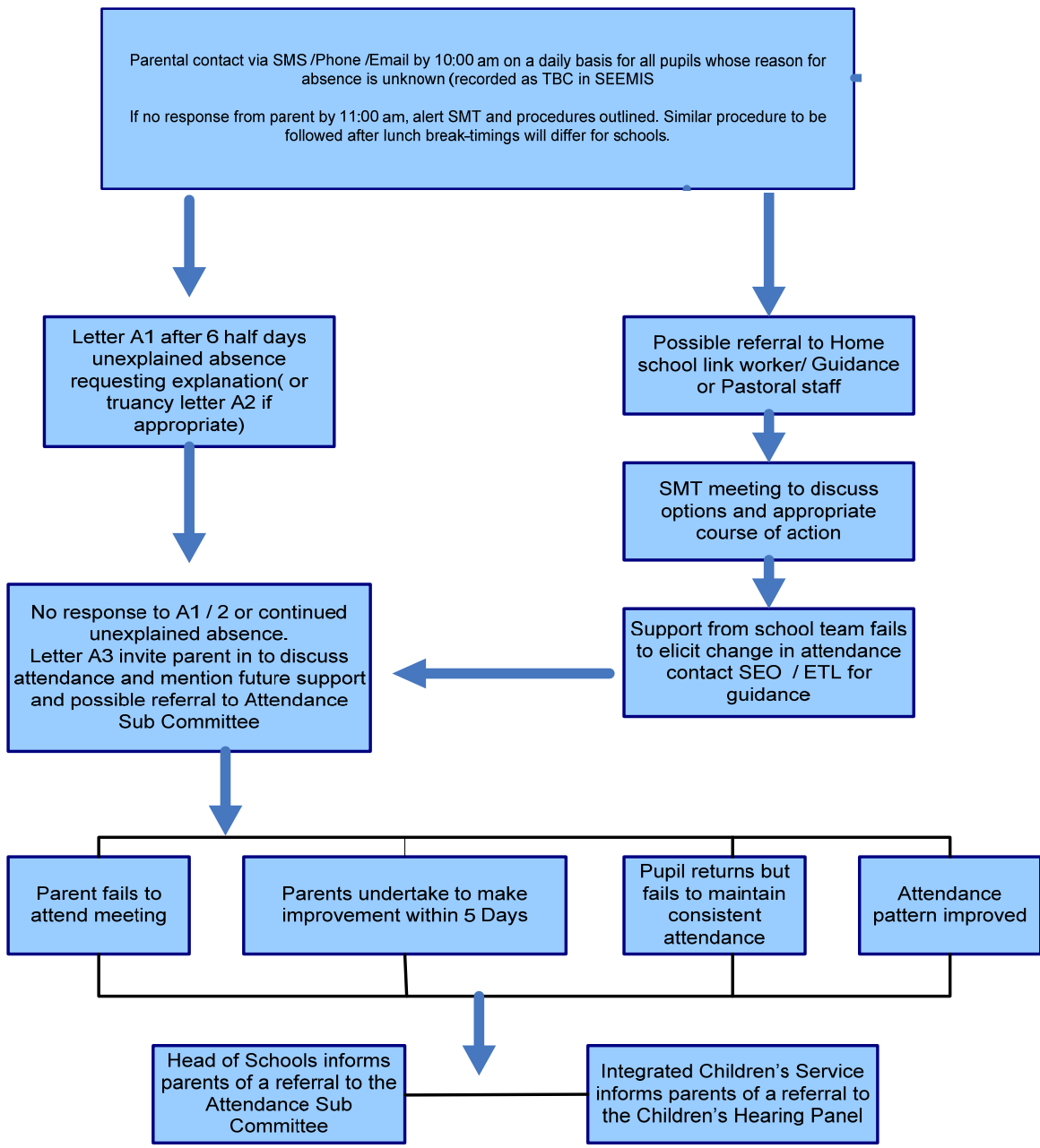
- age of child
- previous pattern of lateness/absence
- knowledge of the family circumstances
- information from siblings/peers
- any current/ previous child protection concerns
- any known health problem/concern regarding state of mind/individual stresses or circumstances
- any Social Work involvement

Where another contact number is known such as Social Worker/Voluntary Agency you should consider contacting to help collect information.

Please Note: The response of Schools must be proportionate. By methodically considering all information available, Schools will be in a position to make good judgement regarding appropriate action. It is not appropriate to contact Integrated Children's Services with the list of everyone whose parent does not respond to SMS text/phone but it is wholly appropriate to make contact when the information gathered is a cause for concern.

Procedure for unexplained absence

Attendance flow chart 2013



Guidance for Headteacher on Assessment of Non-Attendance

This Risk Assessment should be used following no parental response to message by 11.00 am/ post lunch break.

Categories of Risk

Before deciding on action you must take when a child or young person is absent from school without explanation from the parent, Headteachers should consider all information available. This can be complex and, to assist Headteachers in this process, enabling them to make an informed decision based on all available information guidance has been developed below. Consideration should be given to the points in each category to help categorise information into Green, Amber and Red Responses. The risk grading should never be seen as fixed and there must be regular reviews to ensure that the initial grading is still appropriate.

‘Green Response’: Missing Person – Relatively Low Risk Indicators

What follows are examples only:

- Young Person unlikely to be at risk when missing (whether because of age, maturity, knowledge of the area, etc).
- Young person known to need some time to themselves away from school.
- Other absences have not resulted in harm and there are no significant differences in the circumstances on this occasion.
- The absence is lateness following some appointment that is known about.
- The young person is likely to arrive late, as there is a pattern of this.
- The young person truants regularly and is likely to return at lunchtime or the end of the day.

‘Amber Response’: Missing Person – Higher Risk Factors

Again, what follows are only examples:

- No pattern of absences in the past.
- It is not clear why the young person may have absented themselves.
- They are unlikely to be with any other known person when missing.

BUT

- Not seen as likely to come to physical harm.
- Poses no threat to the community.
- Not prone to self injury.
- Not likely to commit a serious offence while missing.

‘Red Response’: Missing Person – High Risk Factor

There will be some children and young people where the level of concern is immediately high should they fail to turn up, or leave school without authority.

Examples which would fall within this category are:

- On the Child Protection Register.
- Absence is unexplained and out of character.
- Young person likely to be/potentially at risk when missing (whether because of age, maturity, knowledge of the area etc).
- The young person is vulnerable to physical harm, exploitation or abuse by others.
- The young person may injure himself/herself if not found quickly.
- The young person is likely to act recklessly, putting himself/herself, or others, at risk. The young person is likely to commit a serious offence.
- The age/additional needs of the child means that they will be unable to sustain themselves or resist physical harm, exploitation or abuse by others.

Action

In all cases where additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern that suggests a criminal act has been perpetrated, e.g. abduction, Schools must make immediate contact with the local Police Station by telephone or the Locality Integration Police Officer.

In any case, where there is a Red Response, and a Headteacher is considering contacting the Police, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Gather together all information, including name, date of birth, address and who the pupil lives with.
2. Contact Locality Duty Social Worker.
3. Inform them of your intention to contact the Police and ask if there is any information that is pertinent to the young person or family.
4. Discuss your evidence and reasons for contacting the Police.
5. Contact the Police.

* *Referral to the Head of ICS should be completed in collaboration with the Head Teacher and Senior Education Officer who may at this stage request an Attendance Sub-Committee be called.*

NB for further information see the Attendance Sub-Committee procedure

Sample Letter A1

Name and Address of School
Contact:
Our ref:
Your ref:
Date:

Dear

Keeping children and young people safe from harm is a high priority for Scottish Borders Council. One area of concern is children who are absent from school we have recently reviewed our procedures for managing pupil absences.

By working in partnership, parents can keep their children's school informed about reasons for absence and schools can inform parents when their children are not in school.

If we do not hear from a parent, we assume they may not know their child is absent and we send a text message or phone your contact number. Most parents contact the school and give a reason for their child's absence or, if they are unaware of the absence, they are able to follow this up with their child.

I am writing to you because you have not responded to our text or phone messages on more than one occasion. It may be you have changed your phone number and not yet informed us. If this is the case, please contact us to give us your new number.

The contact details we have currently for you are _____
Our partnership is to ensure that children are looked after and the procedures in place are only successful if everyone involved participates. By failing to respond to our text or phone messages, our partnership is not effective and School Staff cannot be held responsible for your child's safety.

We will continue to try to contact you by text and telephone. However, if you continue to fail to respond, you will be contacted by letter from the school which we expect you to respond to. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Depute Headteacher

As your child _____ Class _____ was absent from school on the following date(s) it is necessary that I should have the reason for his/her absence(s). Please fill in the undernoted information and return this form to me as soon as possible.

If, on receipt of this letter, your child is still absent, please complete the section dealing with the expected date of return.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Depute Headteacher

Reason for Absence

- Medical*
- Appointment (Hospital/Dentist)*
- Funeral/Bereavement*
- Other* _____

Expected Date of Return _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

Change of personal details

Home telephone no _____

Mobile telephone no _____

Sample Letter A2

Name and Address of School

Contact:

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date:

Dear

I am writing to you to let you know that _____ has been absent on several occasions resulting in his/her attendance dropping to _____%.

Scottish Borders Council and **SCHOOL NAME** are committed to raising standards of performance and achievement in its schools.

In order for pupils to have the best possible chance of achieving their potential, it is in their best interests to attend school regularly. In the Scottish Borders, we strive to achieve 100% attendance for all of our pupils and an expectation that we will work with parents and pupils to achieve this.

I would like to meet with you to discuss if there is anything we can do to improve this situation and would ask you to contact the school office to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Depute Headteacher

Sample Letter A3

Name and Address of School
Contact:
Our ref:
Your ref:
Date:

Dear

I wrote to you on _____ seeking an explanation for _____
absence(s) on. As yet I have not received an explanation for these (*insert number of absences*)
absences and would, therefore, ask that you call to see me so that we may discuss the situation.

Scottish Borders Council strives to achieve 100% attendance of pupils in order that they are safe
and have opportunity to achieve their potential.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places a duty on parents to ensure their child attends school
regularly. If a child does not attend regularly, without reasonable for non-attendance, the parents
are committing an offence against the Act.

It is important that we meet within the next seven days. In the event that you do not contact me
I will consider a referral to the Attendance Sub Committee which considers serious cases of school
non-attendance.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher/Depute Headteacher

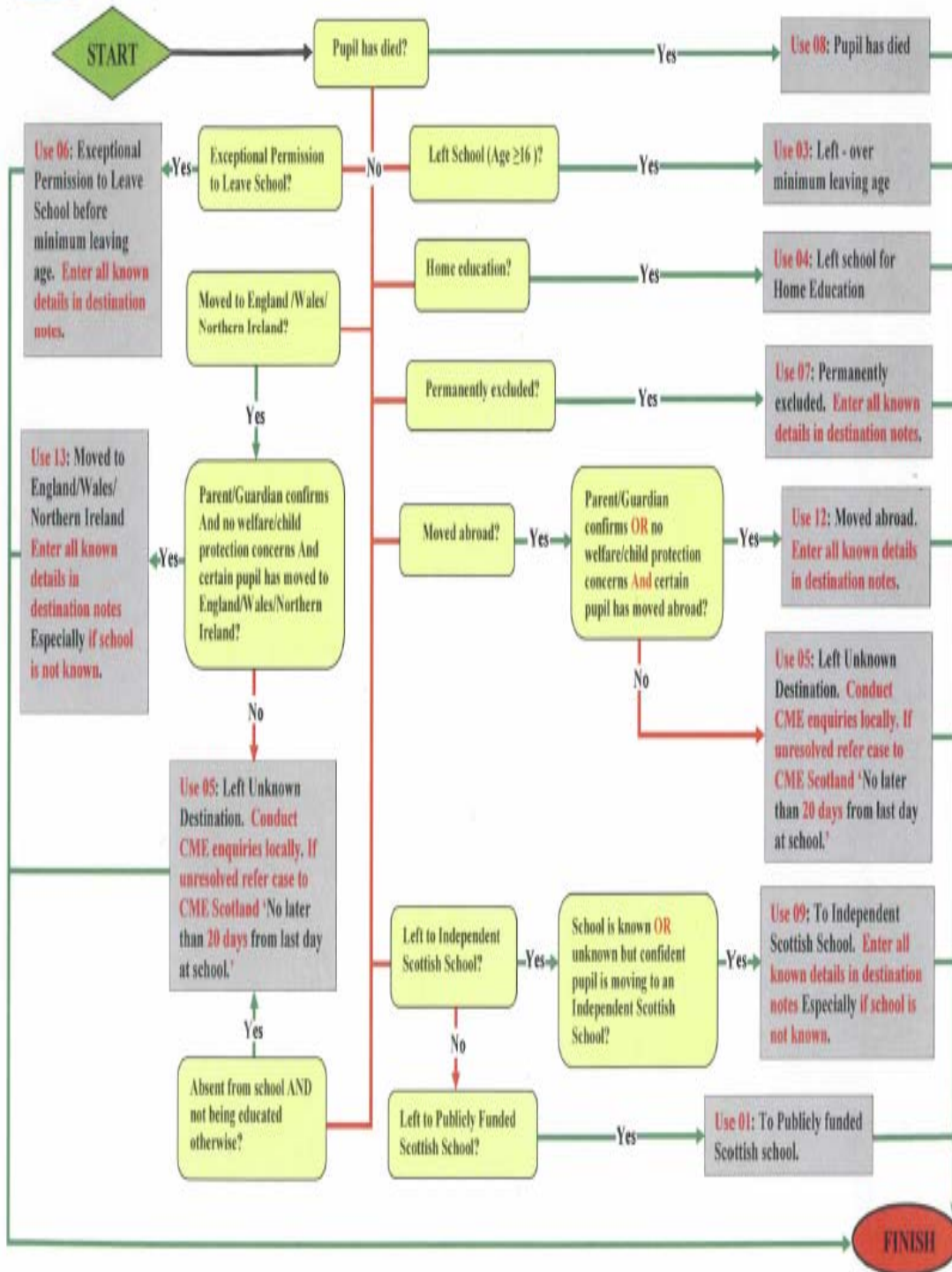
Appendix 6:

SEEMIS CODES

	Present	Default code - pupils assumed present unless marked otherwise.
LAT	Late	Pupil arrives late to school but before mid opening.
LTB	Bus Late	Late arrival of school transport.
MIS	Missing	To be used when a Child Missing from Education procedure is in place
OAT	Other Attendance Out of School	Day release to college or another school for a specific subject. It is the responsibility of the teaching centre to inform the base school if the pupil is absent. Please note: This code should be used where bad weather prevents school transport from running.
VIS	School Visit	Any trips to other schools for visits
FLD	Field trip	Any external visit organised by school, e.g. field trips; theatre visits.
SCH	In School But Not in Class	Music lesson; appointment with guidance teacher; careers appt.
PER	Medical or Dental	Attendance at medical or dental appointments.
SEP	Sickness with Educational Provision	Pupil on sick leave or maternity leave, with proof such as parental letter or medical certification and where educational provision has been made.
EXL	Extended Leave with Parental Consent	Extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school; short-term parental placement abroad; family returning to country of origin (to care for a relative or for cultural reasons).
STY	Study Leave	Exam study leave.
WRK	Work Experience/ Placement	Work experience or volunteering, arranged or agreed by school.
SNA	Should Not Attend	Use for P1 pupils who initially attend part of the day only.
CLO	School Closure	Closure due to weather, elections, emergency closure. Please note: where bad weather prevents school transport from running, absence should be recorded under OAT: Other Attendance Out of School.
ABS	Authorised Absence	Immediate family weddings; bereavements; religious observances; attendance at court/ children's hearing/review; sporting & cultural events not arranged by the school, but approved by them.
LT2	Very Late	Pupil arrives late to school after mid opening.
MED	Sickness	Sickness - advised by parent or certified by doctor.
NIM	Notifiable Illness - Medically Certified	Medically certified notifiable illness, e.g. Swine Flu. DO NOT USE UNLESS AUTHORISED
SEL	Sickness - Self-Certified	Self-certified illness excluding notifiable illnesses.
NIS	Notifiable Illness - Self-Certified	Self-certified notifiable illness, e.g. Swine Flu. DO NOT USE UNLESS AUTHORISED
PHL	Parental Holiday (authorised)	Extended visits overseas to relatives for a period of more than 4 weeks.
DCA	Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (authorised)	Relates to short-term exceptional circumstances such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • period immediately after an accident or illness; • period of serious/critical illness of a close relative; • a domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation.
DCU	Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (unauthorised)	Relates to short-term exceptional circumstances, this might enable the monitoring of pupils' absences.
TBC	To Be Confirmed	Default absence code; should be used in all cases where reason for absence is not known.
UPH	Parental Holiday (unauthorised)	Family holidays during term time unless criteria for authorised absence met.
UNA	Truancy	All absence for which no adequate explanation has been provided.
OUA	Other Unauthorised Absence	Pupil absence without school approval but with parental/carer knowledge.
EXC	Exclusion	Temporary exclusion from school.



S2S Leaving Reasons Flowchart



PROCEDURE FOR CALLING AN ATTENDANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Education & Lifelong Learning

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1. This guidance explains the procedure for calling a Schools Attendance Sub-Committee to manage persistent truancy.
- 1.2. It references the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and the Scottish Government's national guidance on managing attendance, Included, engaged and involved part 1: attendance in Scottish schools.

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1. Parents who have enrolled their child at a Public School at any time, are then required to ensure their child attends, unless the Education Authority have consented to the withdrawal of their child from education (Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 35).
- 2.2. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an Education Authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36). The Education Authority notifies the parent that a meeting or hearing is required, and that an explanation for non-attendance must be provided to the Authority. In the Scottish Borders, the meeting is referred to as a Schools Attendance Sub-Committee.
- 2.3. Where a child is attending a school in another Authority area and the Education Authority providing education believes that a parent should explain the non-attendance of a child at school, the Authority in which the child resides is responsible for arranging a meeting and serving notice on the parent to attend the meeting or hearing for an explanation to be provided.

3. CALLING A SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

- 3.1. **A Schools Attendance Sub-Committee (SASC) should not be considered until all interventions at school and Learning Community level have been exhausted.** Schools should have consulted the Locality Integrated Children's Services Office and considered the involvement of other partners such as Health, the Police and the Voluntary Sector. Evidence of joint working in the form of Meeting Around the Child (MAC) paperwork and A Certificate of Attendance must be provided to the Head of Service to demonstrate the interventions tried with the child/young person and family prior to a SASC being requested. The Headteacher should also provide copies and/or a log of correspondence with the family to indicate the parent's level of engagement.

- 3.2. Where interventions have failed, there is evidence of parental non-engagement and there is considered no reasonable excuse for non attendance, Headteachers in consultation with the relevant Senior Education Officer (SEO) should contact the Head of Schools to seek authorisation to convene a SASC. The Headteacher will provide the evidence referred to above for the Head of School's consideration.
- 3.3. If the Head of Schools agrees to the SASC, he/she will inform the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning, the Head of ICS and the relevant ICS Locality Manager in writing of the intention to hold a SASC. The ICS Locality Manager should be given a copy of the evidence in order to prepare for the meeting.
- 3.4. The Headteacher should also consult with the Clerk to the Council of the intention to hold an SASC and agree a suitable date within the legally required time frame.
- 3.5. The Clerk to the Council shall serve a formal Notice on the parent informing them of the requirement to attend the SASC. To allow the parent to prepare for the SASC, it will not be held within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification. The parent should be advised in the letter that the SASC will still go ahead if the parent chooses not to attend.

4. SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND PROCESS

- 4.1. Selection of Schools Attendance Sub-Committees; All members of the Education committee shall be members of a Panel including Religious, Parent and Teacher Representatives from which the member of specific School Attendance Sub committee shall be drawn.
- 4.2. Each Schools Attendance Sub-Committee shall be selected by the Clerk to the Council or her Authorised Representative in consultation with the Chairman of the Panel.
- 4.3. The Clerk to the Council or her Authorised Representative, in consultation with the Chairman of the Panel, shall appoint the Chairman of each Schools Attendance Sub-Committee.
- 4.4. **Three Members of an individual Sub-Committee shall constitute a Quorum.**

5. FUNCTIONS REFERRED

- 5.1 The following functions shall stand referred to the Committee:-
 1. Deal with parents who are failing to meet their responsibilities regarding a child's attendance at school, if a parent:-
 - Fails to provide a reasonable excuse for the child's absence from school.

6. POWERS OF A SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

- 6.1. If a parent fails to satisfy the Sub-Committee that there is a reasonable excuse for a pupil's non-attendance at schools, the Sub-Committee may:-
 1. Proceed to prosecution through the Sheriff Court;
 2. Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal;

3. Warn the parent and postpone a decision for a six- week period. In this case only, if the child of school age, the Sub-Committee may make an Attendance Order under Section 38 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
4. Make an Attendance Order, having first obtained the views of the parent on which school he desires his child to attend; or
5. Refer the child to the Authority Reporter.

7. FUNCTIONS DELEGATED

- 7.1. All of the functions referred to the Sub-Committee.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

- 8.1. The Clerk to the Council or her Authorised Representative shall act as Clerk to the Attendance Sub-Committee and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning or his representative shall present the case for the Council at any Attendance Sub-Committee Hearing.

9. ATTENDANCE ORDERS

- 9.1. In the circumstance where the Education Authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the pupil is of school age (5-16), make an Attendance Order. An Attendance Order requires the parent to ensure the child attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children residing in the same neighbourhood as the child).
- 9.2. An attendance order:
 - Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child at a school named in the order.
 - Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the Authority.
 - May name a Public School, or other school which is willing to receive the child. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.
 - Shall not name a special school unless the child has additional support needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at the school.
- 9.3. A copy of the Attendance Order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child's regular attendance at the named school.
- 9.4. It is the responsibility of Legal Services to draw up and serve the Attendance Order. The covering letter should be signed by the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning.

Amending an Attendance Order

- 9.5. If the Attendance Order is later amended (e.g. a different school is named) the Education Authority should inform the parent of the proposed amendments and allow the parent fourteen days to make objections. If objections are made and not upheld by the Authority, the parent can appeal to the Sheriff as below.

Right of Appeal

- 9.6. If parents are unhappy with the making of an Attendance Order, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the Sheriff. The Sheriff is able to amend, confirm or annul the Order. The decision of the Sheriff is final.

VERSION CONTROL

Name of Document: Procedure for calling a Schools Attendance Committee		Version Number: 1
Approved by:		
Date first approved:		Date of Review:
Name of officer responsible for the review: Amanda Cronin: Policy, Planning & Performance Team		
Changes to the policy		
<i>Paragraph No:</i>	<i>Wording that changed</i>	<i>Reason for change</i>