TACKLING ABSENCE

The letter system

previously known as The Three Letter System

Attendance Management

Process part 2
The letter system - sample letters available on the knowledge hub

Schools should ensure they develop their strategic and systemic approaches to manage overall attendance. However the need for schools to be vigilant and able to meet the individual needs of the child and family’s needs is important and needs to be part of the sequential approach. The use of a letter system should be used alongside a range of parent and pupil preventative interventions and is intended to enable schools to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor attendance.

Continuous monitoring is advisable to support the identification of pupils who meet the persistent absence threshold.

The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to the local authority may be necessary. The system is based on model letters that can be adapted by schools to be sent to parents when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

Key Features and Potential Benefits of a Letter System

- Head Teacher/Heads of year and/or Attendance Lead can focus on the attendance of all pupils on a regular basis. E.g. weekly that will allow for regular monitoring and immediate action where required, including referrals to the local authority in a timely manner.

- Developing a Spreadsheet system will allow for ‘ONE STOP Monitoring. This records weekly attendance, when letters have been sent and meetings and interventions offered and attended. Up to date accumulative figures at a glance can be used for Governor Meetings and Ofsted visits.

- Heads of year and/or the head teachers can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern and make contact with the parents to establish if there are any problems and to make an offer of support.

- In most cases an initial chat with a parent and/or a supportive letter being sent brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required.

- The system provides a clear record of the school’s own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve the local authority.

- As the ‘School Attendance’ leaflet is available on the Knowledge hub schools can use this to make parents aware of the role of the local authority prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary.