Parents need to be made aware of their responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

Schools are expected to develop a graduated response when engaging parents before the Local Authority will consider a referral for more punitive sanctions.

A parent contract meeting is an opportunity for the school and parent/s to discuss a child’s attendance and to review the impact of school interventions thus far offered. It provides the opportunity for parents to discuss more generally any difficulties which the family are having and types of support that may be helpful to them.

- Parent contracts are a formal written agreement to improve attendance.

- They are voluntary but are set within the context of possible legal action in the future.

- They commit both parents and the school (or other alternative education provider) to work together to bring about improvements.
Parent Contract Meetings are used where parents need to be reminded of their statutory duty and where a greater sense of partnership may help to move things forward. They are included in the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and referred to in the DfE Guidance on the range of statutory responses available to combat poor attendance.

A parenting contract is a formal, written and signed agreement between parents and the school and should:

- be written down and copied to everyone in clear and accessible language that everyone understands.
- be realistic, setting out achievable improvements to be made within a reasonable timeframe, and not expecting everything to be put right from day one.
- set out exactly what parents are expected to do, so that whether or not they complete their goals, can be fairly assessed. (The contract may also set goals and tasks for the child but the contract itself is with the parents, not with the child.)
- address identified specific obstacles to the child’s regular attendance and how it is planned to overcome them. They don’t just make general statements of good intentions on either side.
- recognise that the school may be part of the problem as well as part of the solution.
- encourage imaginative changes on both ‘sides’ on the basis that if we all carry on doing what we have always done we will probably carry on getting just more of the same.

Further resources

- *School attendance parental responsibility measures: Statutory guidance for local authorities, school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and the police*
# Top tips for chairing a PCM

**Chair person’s checklist:**

1. **Introductions**
   - Ensure there is a private meeting room
   - Ensure introductions of all present
   - Explain role of all present
   - Explain confidentiality and the sharing of PCM with Local Authority if required
   - Explain reasons for meeting
   - Explain and check understanding of legal process

2. **Beginning**
   - Reflect on previous meeting/ phone calls/letters sent
   - Check what has happened since last meeting/ phone call/letters sent
   - Praise any achievements and identify strengths shown when the child attends school
   - Identify problem areas, risks and vulnerability concerns relating to non-attendance
   - Respond to challenges presented by parent/s in getting their child to school
   - Agree purpose of meeting – *how to ensure that the child attends school*
   - Explore the willingness for parents to engage

3. **Middle**
   - Ask open questions and listen to parents responses
   - Delivery of Intervention – consider what has promoted engagement

4. **End**
   - Pull together the interaction and summarise the intervention
   - Agree needs, actions, further interventions and offer other support
   - Agree action plan and set targets
   - Explain legal position, enforcement – hand out legal leaflet
   - Set clear Attendance targets