Step by Step – fast track to improve attendance

**STEP ONE**

Schools should have their own thresholds for taking action where attendance becomes a concern. Avoid waiting for a child to slip below 90% attendance (the persistent absence threshold). All schools should have whole school strategies where specific members of staff are allocated to different levels of attendance and are alert to drops in attendance.

The important thing is that the school can demonstrate they have done all they can to improve attendance without success.

Before a referral is made to Attendance Legal Panel the school will have applied all school resources without success. For example:

- Inviting the parents to meetings that provide the opportunity for issues to be explored.

- Asking if there is an underlying medical condition – if there are 15 days absence in a term then school need to provide evidence that they have adhered to the medical needs guidance.

- Sending letters to parent outlining concerns about attendance and at the appropriate time informing the parents of their legal responsibilities regarding school attendance

- Reviewing the child/young person’s needs and attendance concern to ensure that provision is suitable for need

- Making referrals for Early Help support

- Making a home visit if the family fail to attend meetings
STEP TWO

The student’s attendance has reached a level where the school is considering referring for legal interventions. In these circumstances the school should call a formal Parent (contract) Meeting. The aim of the meeting is to agree a plan to improve the student’s attendance with a ‘contract’ being agreed that will help focus participants. The contract will include a monitoring period and clear guidance on what will happen if the target is not met.

STEP THREE

The student has further unauthorised absence and the case has reached the authority’s criteria for legal interventions:

• AT LEAST 8 UNAUTHORISED SESSIONS OVER AN 8 WEEK PERIOD.

PN REQUEST FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE - CHECKLIST

Before schools complete the referral form:

• Has the majority or 8 sessions of absence been recorded as unauthorised with appropriate codes (‘O’ code, ‘G’ and ‘U’ code as appropriate)?

• Are there any missing marks or coding irregularities (ensure there are no ‘N’ codes in the register)?

• Have you offered early intervention support to parents to make them aware of attendance issues and create opportunity for them to engage (e.g. school standard letters, attendance / Parenting Contract meetings with targets set over 8 week period, telephone calls & home visits)?

• In your correspondence to parents, have you included all ‘parents’ as per the Education Act (i.e. all adults who have day to day care of children, including step parent, absent parents who do not live together but have regular contacts with children and have had the children staying with them for the period under consideration.)?

• Is the attendance 90% and below in the period being considered?

Completing the Online Referral Form:

• Parents/carers’ full name and language

• Each child must have an individual request, please do not put siblings on one request;
• If there is more than one parent, details of all parents should be completed along with any adults who have had day to day care of the child.
• Address should be checked with the student, if age appropriate;
• A Penalty Notice will be issued individually to both parent/carers;
• Details of previous PN’s issued this academic year for irregular attendance (not including term time leave PN)

Please Note: All Documentation in relation to the issue of Penalty Notice(s) by the Local Authority, will be required as evidence if the PN remains unpaid. It may form the basis upon which any legal action will be taken should payment of the Penalty Notice(s) not be received.

DEFINITION OF PARENT:

A ‘parent’ in relation to any child or young person, includes any person:-

☐ who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child, or

☐ who has care of the child

This also includes absent parents who must have regular contact and an ability to influence the child including his/her attendance. Parental partners can be included (whether or not they are married or the natural parent of the child) as they have ‘care of’ the child. If a pupil lives with a grandparent or older sibling as their main carer they can also be included.