



Exemplar of Local Authority Policy Guidance - Introduction

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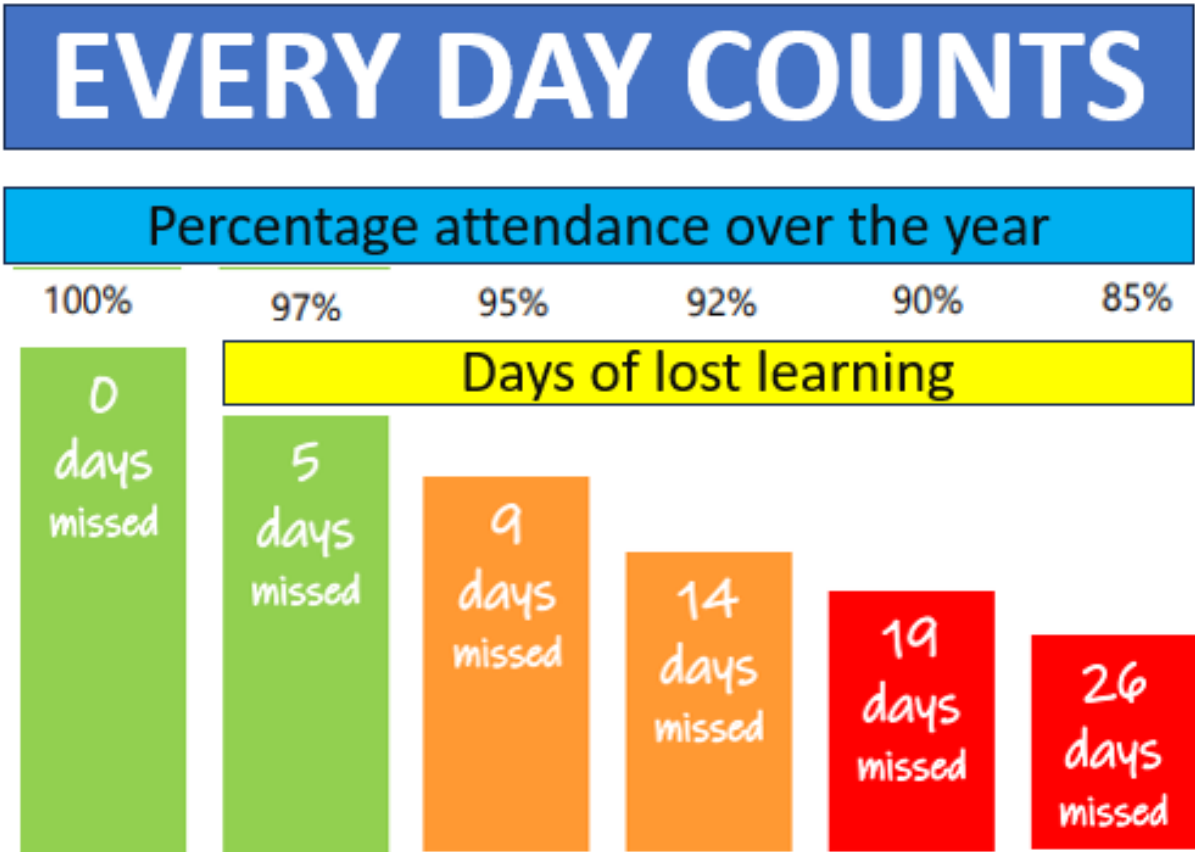
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Maximising Attendance and Minimising Absence Policy & Procedures

“Attending and taking part in learning is fundamental to making sure that our young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.” [School Guidance: a guide for parents \(2009\)](#)

Attendance, either in a school or another educational setting including early learning and childcare, is important because it supports children and young people’s wellbeing and development, progress in learning, and promotes personal and academic achievement. Time spent in an education and learning environment also helps to keep learners safe, provides supportive pastoral care, and maximises opportunities for social and extra-curricular activities beyond the classroom.



[Evidence from the UK Government](#) shows that learners with the highest attendance gain the best academic results. The reason for this is simple, the higher a learner's attendance, the more opportunities there are to learn, and the more likely they are to perform well in assessments and exams.

Time in an educational setting, in the company of peers and caring adults, is about much more than academic success. Time in education helps learners develop the four capacities and provides opportunities to learn positive skills, attributes and behaviours for life, learning and work.

Days missing from education result in less opportunities to learn and achieve. Evidence shows that absence influences not only academic success but also social and emotional learning such as social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management. Over the longer term, further evidence shows that absence, regardless of the reason, reduces the likelihood of attending further and higher education and increases the risk of unemployment.

Part 1: Policy

What is attendance?

In Scotland, attendance is defined as **participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school** (IEI1, p10)¹, including:

- Attendance at school
- Learning out with the school provided by a college or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school
- Educational visits, day and residential visits to outdoor centres
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events
- Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school
- Study leave for learners participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable
- Receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services (see IEI section 4.3)
- Work experience

We aim to ensure that children and young people attend (as defined above), for the recommended hours (25 for primary and 27.5 for secondary). When this is not possible there should be a clear record of the learner's time in education, the type of education being offered, the reasons why the learner is not receiving their full entitlement, and the plan for reviewing and improving this offer as the needs and capacity of the learner changes.

What is absence?

When a learner is not participating in their planned programme of learning then they are **absent**. Reasons for absence may be complex and beyond the control of the child or young person. Educational settings should always seek to determine why a learner is absent, recording the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on local authority guidance². **All** absence is potentially detrimental to a learner's wellbeing and learning progress. **Any** absence that raises concerns either due to a

¹ In national guidance (IEI1) the word 'schools' is used however this term should be viewed as referring to any setting, including ELC and non-mainstreaming provisions, where education, planned by the local authority, takes place, for any age of learner.

² Local authority guidance defines the codes for recording absence as either authorised or unauthorised. For national reporting local authority codes are mapped onto a smaller set of national codes linked to IE1 (See Appendix ? for the mapping of codes).

history of absence, emerging patterns of absence, or risk factors specific to individual, should be followed up at the earliest opportunity (even before the absence reaches a local authority threshold).

Factors that make learners more at risk of lower attendance and higher absence

Learners who often experience lower attendance or are more 'at risk' when they are absent include those who are (not an exclusive or exhaustive list):

- recorded as having Additional Support Needs
- care experienced or on the edges of care
- a Young Carer
- at risk of exclusion
- recognised as having wellbeing or health related issues (physical, emotional, or mental)
- considered to have a protected characteristic or come from complex communities such as gypsy travellers
- on the Child Protection Register
- the subject of child protection concerns

Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin all practice involved in supporting and improving attendance:

- All children and young people have a right to education local authorities have a duty to provide education.
- All children and young people have the right to get the support they need to benefit fully from their education and fulfil their potential.
- All children and young people need to be included, engaged and involved in their learning. Children and young people should be given opportunities to fully engage and participate in the life of their educational setting in order to encourage good attendance.

- Educational settings should actively engage with parent/carers to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are removed.
- Educational settings and partners should work collaboratively to promote and support good attendance.
- The foundation for educational settings is a focus on positive relationships and an inclusive ethos and culture that promotes good attendance. Attendance should not be considered in isolation.

Turning principles into practice is supported by the following national guidance and legislation:

Policy context

- [Getting it right for Every Child](#)
- [Curriculum for excellence](#) – specifically, HWB Responsibility of All
- [National Improvement Framework](#) – particularly, children’s rights and HWB priorities
- [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023](#)
- [Included, engaged and involved part 1: promoting and managing school attendance](#) 2019
- [Included, Engaged and Involved – Part 2 – preventing and managing school exclusions](#) 2017
- [Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour](#) 2018

Legislation (see Appendix X for more detail)

- Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000
- The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Records) (Scotland) Act 2002
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended 2009 & 2018)
- The Equality Act (2010)
- [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act \(2014\)](#)
- European Convention on Human Rights – Article 2 of Protocol 1 ([guidance updated in 2022](#))
- [UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#)

Parental Duty

Parent/carers are legally responsible for making sure a child is educated by attending school or otherwise. Once enrolled in school, the law says the child must attend school unless the parent has the permission from the local authority to withdraw their child (refer to [School attendance: a guide for parents](#)).

Local Authority Duty

Schools (as agents of the local authority) are legally responsible for asking parent/carers why a child or young person is absent. The local authority has a duty to make special arrangements for children and young people granted an exemption from the obligation to attend school (see [Education of children unable to attend school due to ill health: guidance 2015](#)).