



Guidance for developing an Establishment Attendance Policy

August 2024

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Introduction

National Policy Guidance – Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (IE11, 2019) states:

‘Education authorities should have clear guidance on supporting attendance and managing absence. They should ensure that **all schools have in place policies that promote good attendance** and outline procedures to support the recording and management of attendance. This should be linked where possible to their relationships and behaviour policy.’

This means:

- All educational establishments should have an Attendance policy which outlines the importance of attendance and everyone’s role and responsibility in promoting attendance and minimising absence.
- All learning communities are different and therefore, policies should be contextualised to local needs and are likely to be different for early learning and childcare settings, primary and secondary schools, and other educational establishments.
- Educational establishments should refer to, and adhere to, the local authority operational procedures for recording and managing attendance/absence. Operational procedures are likely to apply across all sectors with little, or no, contextualisation. Standardised operational procedure supports consistency of recording and monitoring across settings.
- Educational establishments, where necessary, should provide professional learning to support the implementation of the policy.

Principles and structure

How the policy is developed and constructed by everyone in the learning community will determine its impact and value

The policy should be created and implemented alongside learners, parents/carers, and staff. Development, implementation, and evaluation as a collaborative process takes time. Renewing the policy should, therefore, be included on the school improvement plan and factored into parental/professional learning programmes.

The policy should reflect a whole school approach

The policy should be relevant to, and accessible by, everyone. It should be easy to read and remember. The policy should be re-producible as a poster and in leaflet format suitable for learners, parent/carers, and partners, and should be referred to in other communications such as the settings website and handbook, and other policies.

What's in the policy?

1. Why attendance matters and the impact of absence
2. Attendance is everyone's responsibility – what's your role?
3. Policy and practice – how we promote and support attendance

In the development of the policy pre-plan how its impact will be evaluated. Evaluation could include feedback from focus groups; wellbeing assessments such as Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile or SHANARRI wheels; improved attendance; reductions in referrals or exclusions; or satisfaction surveys. Feedback and evaluation will help keep the policy responsive and relevant to the needs of the learning community.

Operational Guidance: Schools should have accompanying operational guidance available for staff. Operational guidance will be mainly set by the Local Authority to ensure consistency in implementation across establishments.

Exemplars: Secondary Policy and Primary Poster (these are exemplification only and are not intended to be prescriptive).

Exemplar Policy (Secondary)

Maximising Attendance and Minimising Absence Policy

Our school vision is to create a learning environment where everyone feels welcome, safe, respected, and valued.

To achieve this, we value our relationships with each other and we try to be rights respecting to everyone.

Our values are reflected in how we behave therefore we will be: KIND, RESPECTFUL, INCLUSIVE and RELIABLE.

Importance of attendance

Attendance is important because:

- it supports wellbeing, social connections, social competency, and social cohesion
- it gives us the opportunity to access and engage with learning (in and out of the classroom)
- it provides opportunities to develop skills and confidence, to contribute to and be part of a wider community, and to demonstrate that we can be responsible citizens now and in the future

Other benefits of attendance include things like providing us with a:

- a safe, calm, caring, learning environment
- a place to make and meet friends
- somewhere to develop and learn about ourselves, our emotions, and how we relate to, and respect, others

Every day of absence is a day of lost learning → 1 day absent per fortnight = 1 year of lost learning by S3

Attendance is everyone's responsibility – what's your role?

Learners should:

- take personal responsibility for attending as often as possible
- try not to be late
- engage in all aspects of the life of the school including learning and other social activities
- contribute to the daily life of the school and encourage peers to attend

Parents and carers should:

- ensure their child understands the importance of education and attendance
- support their child to attend as often as possible
- notify the school as soon as possible when their child is unexpectedly absent
- work with staff to minimise absence and reduce any barriers to attendance
- book medical appointments outside school hours where possible and give advance notice if an absence is unavoidable
- keep the school up to date with telephone numbers and emergency contacts

Staff should:

- proactively develop respectful and supportive relationships that support a positive ethos and culture
- regularly promote good attendance through lessons, assemblies, informal and formal conversations, and events
- make learning interesting and relevant and support learner engagement using a range of strategies
- keep regular and accurate records of attendance for every learner
- share concerns about a learner's engagement, attendance or wellbeing, at the earliest stage

- respond sensitively to learners and parent/carers when exploring attendance concerns

Senior Leaders should:

- prioritise attendance and punctuality
- promote attendance through policies, documents, training, meetings and communications
- improve overall attendance and reduce lateness through supportive interventions
- follow-up on all absences and identify and investigate patterns of absence
- ensure consistency in practice that supports attendance and engagement

Promoting attendance

We promote attendance in our school by:

- building relationships and prioritising wellbeing and care
- being inclusive and rights respecting
- involving learners in all aspects of learning and the life of the school including improvement planning and policy making
- having a curriculum which is relevant, engaging, and meets the needs of all our learners
- using a range of teaching styles and approaches that cater for different learning styles - pedagogy
- all adults promoting attendance as well as having specific adults to help learners and families who may need a little bit of extra support – pupil support
- treating parents and carers as partners in supporting attendance - Parent/Carer Engagement and Involvement
- linking into other supporting structures such as Assemblies, Parent Councils, Family-Community Supports, Other School Policies etc. More detail about these supports can be found in the school handbook.

Absence is likely to affect all children at some point in their life at the school. The school will follow up all instances of absence to make sure that everything is OK and learners are safe. To contact parent/carers we may use text, email, phone call or letter. When absence becomes a concern then the school will begin an assessment process, in consultation with learners and parents or carers, to explore the reasons behind the absence and to offer supportive interventions if appropriate.

Supporting families when absence becomes a concern

- STAGE 1 UNIVERSAL** and preventative approaches – this may include adaptations within the normal learning environment in addition to all the approaches listed above that promote attendance
- STAGE 2 ADDITIONAL** school-based supports and planning – this will involve trying to establish the specific reasons for the non-attendance and then trying to provide support to reduce barriers to engagement or attendance. Learners and parents will be involved in this assessment and planning. Examples of support include peer mentoring, establishing a link with a supportive adult for check-ins, a safe space, some withdrawal from class for short term targeted pieces of work to build confidence, understanding or skills, relationship building or repairing, or catch-up learning after an absence.
- STAGE 3 ENHANCED** individualised, potentially multi-agency planning and support – this may involve a more focussed assessment of needs with supporting services such as Educational Psychology, Speech and Language or allied health professionals, Young Carers Service, and/or Youth/Social/Community/3rd sector partners. All partners involved will work together to create a package of supports. This may involve some Stage 1 & 2 supports and some more specific supports such as befriending, counselling, personal development or health related programmes, vocational training, volunteering, work experience, family learning and/or family support programmes etc.

STAGE 4 INTENSIVE support – this may include an individualised timetable or flexible programme, community-based support for the learner or their family, more intensive wellbeing or mental health supports, a split placement between school and an alternative learning provision either within or out with the school, or an alternative placement.

Further information

Learners – talk to an adult, see school posters, listen in assemblies and in PSE classes

Parents/carers – contact the school, attend parent evenings/meetings, join Family Learning sessions, see our information leaflets, school handbook and/or our website

Staff – ask a colleague/manager, consider further professional learning, see Local Authority Policy/Operational Guidelines

Exemplar poster (Primary)

Every Day Counts Policy

Attendance matters because at school we can:

- meet and make friends
- explore and experience new things with adults who know and care about us
- learn about ourselves, and the world around us, in a place that is safe and supportive

Attendance is everyone's responsibility – this means:

Learners

- come to school everyday
- go to, and stay in class
- join in learning activities

Parents and Carers

- get your child to school
- keep in touch with the school about absences
- share any concerns you have

Staff

- are welcoming, caring, and supportive
- help to make school safe, interesting, and enjoyable

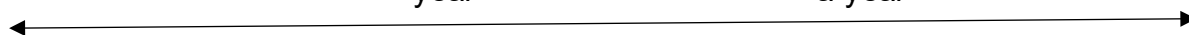
Absence means lost opportunities to see friends and to learn:

Because we care we are concerned when learners miss any days of school but we get more concerned the more days missed

At school everyday

Up to 9 days absence in a year

More than 9 absences in a year



No concerns

Concerned

Very concerned

After a late arrival or an absence, we will always:

- Contact a parent or carer to find out what's up. We do this because we care!
- Ask if we can help and if we can we'll ask what would be helpful
- If the absence is unavoidable, we will offer learning that can be done at home so that the learner doesn't fall behind or miss out

Learners, parents, staff and partners worked together to create this policy

We will review and update this policy every two years. The next review will be March 2025

This policy supports, and is supported by, our other policies on:

Relationships & Behaviour, Learning & Teaching, Making Rights Real, Health & Wellbeing, Parents as Partners, and Inclusion & ASN.

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