



## Midlothian Council Policy:

# Positive Approaches to Attendance

January 2024

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# 1. Introduction

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Midlothian Council is committed to making sure all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved in their education. Education is a key social and cultural right for all children and young people (see Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) and is key to ensuring children and young people feel valued and connected to their communities, have networks of support, attain, and achieve outcomes that lead to positive destinations.

The Council has statutory duties within the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to ensure that all children and young people within compulsory school age receive regular and appropriate education. For most children and young people engagement will be achieved through attendance at their local school, for others it will be through more flexible programmes involving the wider community and organisations.

Promoting engagement and attendance is a complex issue particularly as we move on from the school closures and disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the current impacts of rising poverty. This policy maps out the positive approaches and partnerships to promote engagement and attendance in Midlothian. It details the procedures in responding to concerns around attendance and where needed, the flexible attendance arrangements ensuring we are getting it right for every child in Midlothian.

## 1.1 National Context

The legislation and policies in Scotland which underpin our approach to promoting engagement and attendance for all in Midlothian include:

**Education (Scotland) Act 1980** states that it is the duty of parents to provide an education for their child. They can provide that education by sending the child to school or by other means. This is enshrined in Section 30 of this Act which states that it is the “duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education ...either by causing him to attend a public school regularly or by other means.” The Act also states that educational arrangements are “without prejudice the choice afforded a parent”. Local authorities also have duties placed on them through the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 which says: “pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.” It is therefore incumbent on local authorities to listen to and act upon the decisions that parents make about where they wish their child to be educated.

**The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Records) (Scotland) Act 2002**  
Schools must make reasonable adjustments for the needs of disabled children and schools must not discriminate against disabled children. The Education Authority must prepare and implement an accessibility strategy to increase access to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, to school buildings and to information.

**Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004)** places duties on local authorities to identify, meet and keep under review the needs of pupils for whom they are responsible.

**Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) (2008)** is our national commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time so that they can reach their full potential. It provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people. It is locally embedded and positively embraced by organisations, services and practitioners across Children's Services Planning Partnerships, with a focus on changing culture, systems and practice.

**Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (2019)** promotes a relational approach to consider what schools and local authorities can do to promote good attendance and manage absence to ensure all children and young people are included, engaged and involved in their education.

**Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions (2017)** provides guidance on approaches that can be used to prevent the need for exclusion, ensuring all children and young people are included, engaged and involved in their education and summaries the legislative duties placed on Local Authorities regarding exclusion from school.

**The Promise (2021)** outlines Scotland's promise to care-experienced children and young people – that they will grow up safe, loved and respected so they can reach their full potential. It is built on five foundations of family, voice, care, people and scaffolding.

This policy was also informed by:

[European Convention on Human Rights \(1952\)](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) \(1992\)](#)

[Standards in Scotland's School Act \(2000\)](#)

[The Curriculum for Excellence \(2004\)](#)

[Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[Children and Young People Act \(2014\)](#)

[National Improvement Framework \(NIF\) - Schools \(2014\)](#)

[National guidance for child protection in Scotland \(2021\)](#)

[All Learners in Scotland Matter \(2023\)](#)

## **1.2 Key Duties, Rights and Responsibilities**

There are a number of duties, rights and responsibilities which are fundamental to this policy.

- All children and young people have the right to be provided with an education and this should enable them to develop their personalities, talents, and abilities.
- All children and young people should have the right and the opportunity to be included, engaged, and involved in their learning and to participate fully in the life of their school.
- All children and young people are listened to and have their voices meaningfully included in decisions that affect them now and in the future in line with the principles of UNCRC.
- Parents have a duty to provide education for their child either by ensuring they attend a local authority school, or by making alternative arrangements such as home education or sending their child to an independent school.
- Local Authorities and schools have a duty to provide adequate and efficient education provision in their area. They are also responsible for recording attendance accurately and for making special arrangements for a child or young person to receive education elsewhere if this is not possible.
- Children and young people normally engage in the weekly recommended 25 hours of education for primary phase and 27.5 hours for secondary phase.
- Getting it Right for Every Child advocates preventative work and early intervention to support children, young people, and their families through the provision of strong universal services, and partnership working with other services when needed.
- The National Child Protection Guidance 2021 indicates that all agencies that work with children and their families have a shared responsibility for protecting children and promoting, supporting, and safeguarding their wellbeing. The importance of promoting good attendance at school is highlighted by concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children who are not at school. Child protection is of paramount importance and absence from school may indicate a child is at risk.

## **1.3 Definition of Attendance**

Attendance is defined as participation in educational activities arranged by the school. In addition to attendance within the school, attendance also encompasses a range of other activities. These include:

- Work experience.
- Educational excursions or field trips organised by the school.
- Annual P7 visits to secondary schools. It is the responsibility of the host school to inform the originating school if the pupil is absent.
- Day and residential visits to outdoor centres.

- College/consortium school study.
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education.
- Debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions arranged by or in conjunction with the school.
- Activities connected to psychological services.
- Study leave during the period from the official start date of the national exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons. Study leave must be recorded separately from actual attendance within the school premises.
- Sickness where special arrangements have been made to receive education elsewhere, i.e., tuition via hospital or outreach teaching service.
- Pupils attending alternative and off-site provision as agreed by the Education Department.
- Exceptional school closures for half days or days when the school is closed due to some unforeseen emergency.

#### 1.4 The Impact of Low Attendance

Attendance and engagement in school and education can bring lifelong benefits to children and young people including opportunities to extend learning and skills, build relationships and networks of support, and work towards positive destinations. Attendance can also ensure that support and early intervention is more readily available to children and young people when they need it.

Lower levels of attendance and engagement can have a negative impact on children and young people's life chances. There is a connection between low attendance and lower levels of attainment with challenges securing a positive destination upon leaving school. Low attendance is connected with poorer relationships with peers where children and young people can become isolated from friends and wider peer group and children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health may be negatively impacted. Low attendance at school can also bring risks in relation to anti-social behaviour and youth offending in children and young people.

% attendance	Number of days missed
100% attendance	0 days missed
95% attendance	9 days of absence OR 1 week and 4 days missed
90% attendance	19 days of absence OR 3 weeks and 4 days missed
85% attendance	27 days of absence OR 5 weeks and 2 days missed
80% attendance	36 days of absence OR 7 weeks and 1 day missed
75% Attendance	45 days of absence OR 9 weeks missed

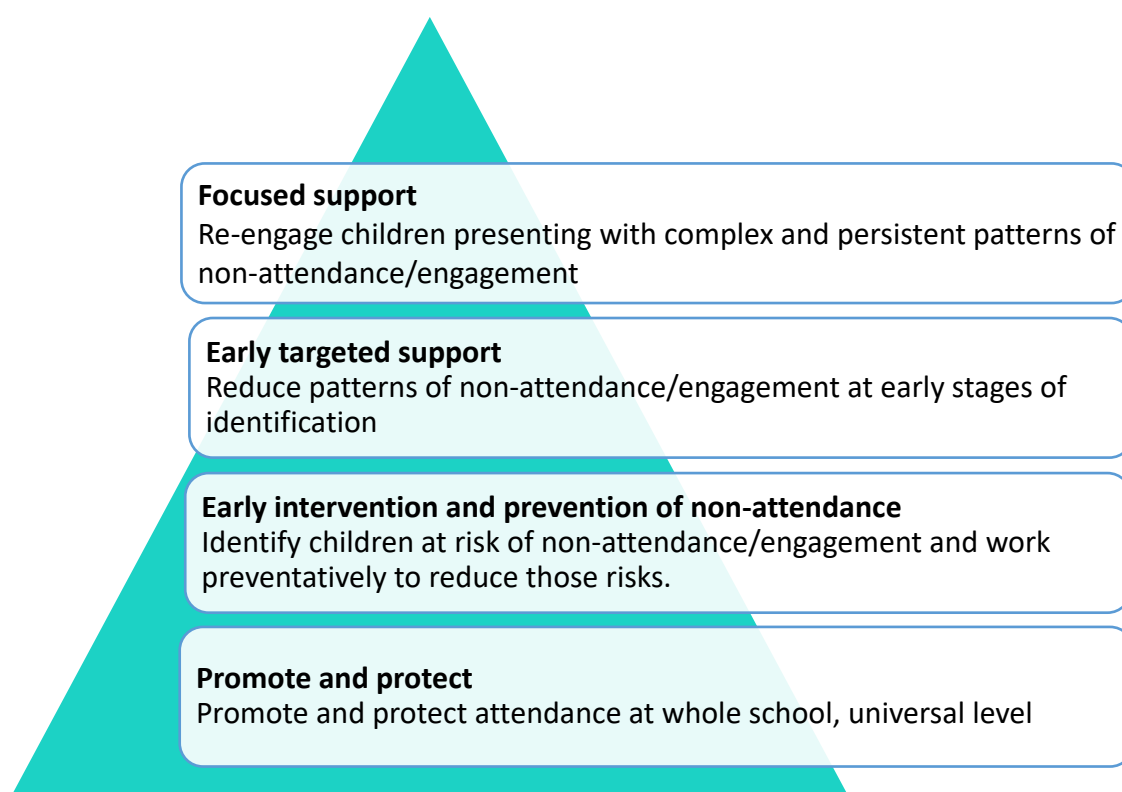
## 2.0 Promoting School Attendance

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Schools and settings use a wide range of approaches at both universal and targeted levels to promote attendance at school and engagement in education. This starts in the early years and progresses through to supporting transition to post-school destinations.

It is recognised that attendance is both multi-faceted and complex with factors relating to the school, community, family and the child and young person. A whole system approach is needed to promote, protect and support attendance through strong partnerships with children, young people, their families, carers and supporting agencies.

To achieve this, Midlothian focuses on 4 key levels of support in promoting attendance and engagement in school and education.



### 2.1 Promote and Protect Attendance at Universal Level

#### *A whole school nurturing, trauma-informed, relational approach*

Schools in Midlothian promote a nurturing, trauma-informed, relational approach where children feel included and connected to the school community and to the learning opportunities. Schools promote a sense of safety, belonging and connectedness through

shared, visible values and by putting relationships at the centre. It is recognised that it is through relationships with significant others that children learn to express and manage feelings, feel safe, develop a sense of belonging, build friendships, and engage in learning. There is a focus on repairing relationships following rupture through a restorative approach. Professional learning and support networks are being developed to deepen knowledge and skills in relational practice across the directorate.

### ***A rights-based approach***

Midlothian schools strive to ensure children's voices are meaningfully included in the decisions made about them. Schools seek to understand what enables children to feel that they are safe and belong within the school community; what elements of the school environment promote connection and aspects that might threaten that. Pupil councils exist across the authority to drive strategy and practice in seeking to create learning environments and opportunities that are meaningful, relevant and enriching.

### ***Inclusion of all learners***

Midlothian schools and education services strive to ensure the ongoing development of meaningful and effective inclusive practices across all settings. The CIRCLE framework provides the foundations to inclusive teaching and learning with consideration given to:

- The environment (physical and social) including the attitudes, expectations and actions of peers and adults
- Structures and routines that help learners know and anticipate what comes next and help them enjoy interactions and experiences with others
- Motivation to engage through purposeful, meaningful, enjoyable learning and activities that build confidence and positive feeling
- Skills that promote and enable engagement in school life

All learners are equipped with a device for learning and have access to Midlothian's Google Workspace. Learners are supported to develop the digital skills they need for learning, life and work.

### ***A purposeful and inclusive curriculum***

Curriculum for Excellence promotes creativity and innovation in curriculum design. This includes opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement and active learning, collaboration, and partnership in delivering individualised curriculum pathways to meet the needs of all children and young people. Schools support children and young people's engagement and attendance through offering a coherent 3-18 curriculum that builds skills in literacy (including digital literacy), numeracy and health and wellbeing. This should include a range of work based learning and wider achievement with qualifications beyond the SQA menu of choice. Partners from sectors within and out with the local authority should, where possible, support schools in providing packages of support to engage children and young people.



The National strategy 'Developing the Young Workforce' promotes opportunities for career education, work placements and industry experience as part of the formal educational offer. Schools should have in place programmes of learning with vocational and work experience elements in collaboration with partner agencies to ensure young people are fully engaged and involved.

Educational provision delivered by partners outside school should be included in a learner's attendance records maintained by the school in line with the scope of this policy. Effective use of digital technology and Google Workspace accounts should also support this.

### ***Family engagement, wellbeing, and learning***

Midlothian schools recognise that collaboration and partnerships with families is essential. This is achieved through regular communications, highlighting the importance of attendance and engagement, and working in partnership with families to prevent non-attendance and to understand and resolve any concerns at an early stage. There is an awareness of poverty-related factors that may impact on attendance and measures taken to overcome barriers, such as reducing the cost of the school day.

### ***A strong focus on self-evaluation and improvement***

Approaches to promoting attendance are explored through the process of Quality Improvement visits within Midlothian. Midlothian schools use data dashboards to monitor and analyse attendance patterns over the school year, enabling identification of trends to be identified and further explored, and preventative and/or responsive actions to be targeted.

## **2.2 Early Intervention and Prevention of Non-Attendance**

Through regular monitoring, schools have an understanding of the groups of young people and individuals that may be at risk of non-attendance and non-engagement in education. This is facilitated by data dashboards for each school as well as data analysis across the authority. These groups include children and young people with Additional Support Needs, particularly those presenting with social, emotional and behavioural needs and/or mental health concerns, as well as those in receipt of Free School Meals, Young Carers, and Care Experienced Young People.

Schools ensure preventative plans are in place to reduce the risk of non-attendance particularly amongst those children and young people considered to be most at risk. There are a wide range of effective supports in place aimed at preventing non-attendance including walking buses, breakfast clubs, soft starts, lunch time supports, buddy systems, and key adults for check in and support. Consideration should also be given to how digital technology is used to promote attendance and engagement where risks of non-attendance have been identified.

## **2.3 Early Targeted Support to Promote and Maintain Attendance & Engagement**

School staff have an understanding of the early indicators of non-attendance and strong monitoring systems in place to ensure there is a timely response to concerns raised. Seeking to understand the factors impacting on engagement and attendance allows patterns to be picked up early with targeted support in place to avoid non-attendance becoming entrenched.

Children and young people must be meaningfully involved in all plans and decisions made about them. Plans must include an appreciation of their strengths, hopes and aspirations as well as the challenges and areas of need. Plans and support arrangements must also be informed by a robust understanding of the key issues and factors impacting on attendance through a process of assessment and intervention in line with the principles of GIRFEC. These are likely to be multiple and interrelated such as the child's sense of safety and belonging within the school community; level of anxiety relating to learning; family engagement with the school; relationships with peers; other family or financial concerns. Schools and partners use a range of frameworks and tools to help deepen understanding of factors that influence a child or young person's feelings about school and their attendance and to develop support plans in partnership with them.

A discussion at school level should be had to explore how digital technology and the Google Workspace can be used creatively to maintain connections, and support learners in planning and reviewing learning experiences.

## **2.4 Focused Support**

Where early targeted support has not improved attendance and children or young people present with more persistent patterns of non-attendance, more focussed support will need to be considered involving partner agencies. This should always be discussed and agreed with parents/carers and the child or young person as part of the Learner's planning process and reviewed regularly to build on learning and successes. Support may include more flexible arrangements such as developing a personalised curriculum based on interests and skills, learning through engagement in community settings or organisations, or focusing on building confidence and trust with a smaller team of key adults and peers. Again, a discussion should be had at school level to explore how digital technology and the Google Workspace can be used creatively to maintain connections, and support learners in planning and reviewing learning experiences.

## **3.0 Flexible Attendance Arrangements**

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There may be periods in a child or young person's life, such as periods affected by significant health issues where it is not possible for them to attend school in a full time or conventional way. We must ensure that attendance arrangements continue to meet our duty of care in terms of safeguarding and our responsibilities detailed in 1.2 *Key Duties, Rights and Responsibilities*.

### **3.1 Flexible Curriculum**

A flexible curriculum provides the duty of education in a variety of settings or contexts to meet the needs of the learner. Where flexible curriculum arrangements are required they should form part of the Learner Planning Process and be regularly reviewed. Digital technology and the Google Workspace can be used as the basis to planning, reviewing and maintaining connection. The views of the child or young person and their family are central to this process. Arrangements should be informed by an understanding of their strengths and aspirations as well as a robust understanding of their needs. Flexible arrangements should be approved by DHT/HT within the Learner's Plan and may involve other providers such as therapeutic interventions, skills development or work experience in local community settings such as 3rd sector organisations or local employers.

### **3.2 Build-up Timetables**

In all cases, build-up timetables must only be used to progress planning towards children and young people's inclusion, achievements and wellbeing in line with the Midlothian guidance. Build up timetables are used only as a temporary measure which is reviewed regularly with a clear vision for full time reintegration into school. The timetable should be planned and reviewed through the Learner's Planning Framework in consultation with the child or young person, parent/carer and other agencies involved including social work and health. Parent/carers must be in agreement and able to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing when not in school.

### **3.3 Flexi-schooling and Home Education**

A flexi-schooling arrangement means that the local authority alongside parents/carers agree to have joint responsibility for educating the child or young person. The child or young person would attend school some of the time (e.g. certain days, or certain subjects) and be educated at home the rest of the time. Flexi-schooling is different from a build-up timetable where the local authority remains responsible for all of the child or young person's education. The local authority and schools consider requests for flexi-schooling on a case-by-case basis taking into account the specific strengths and needs within each situation.

## 4.0 Tracking and Monitoring Attendance

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Children, young people and their families should be aware of responsibilities and guidelines around attendance, and these should regularly be shared within the school community to remind everyone of their responsibilities. Individual school handbooks should promote attendance and be clear on the expectations of parents/carers in relation to notifying the school of any absence. There should be a variety of methods available to families to report an absence such as telephone absence line, email and/or text via Groupcall. For safeguarding purposes, it is the school's responsibility to verify the authenticity of parent/carer communication.

All schools and settings have established internal protocols for tracking and monitoring attendance and responding to absence to include:

- Clear roles and responsibilities for monitoring attendance, identifying patterns of absence or lateness, raising any safeguarding concerns associated with absence and making phone calls to parents/carers
- Clear procedures for who logs absence within the school
- Systems for communication with Senior Leadership Team around patterns of attendance and planning and support needed
- Systems for communicating with parents/carers regarding their responsibilities in reporting absence
- A daily absence procedure involving an automated message sent to parent/carer for any single or multiple unauthorised absence

### 4.1 Recording Attendance and Lateness

It is essential that schools maintain a relentless focus on monitoring attendance and following up on absence in consistent ways.

Absence is coded as authorised or unauthorised based on the descriptions below.

#### ***Authorised Absences***

As long as the school has been informed of the reasons for a child's absence and the school is satisfied that this is a valid reason, these would be called authorised absences.

The category of **authorised absence** includes absence deriving from reasons such as:

- They are ill and /or attending a doctor or hospital appointment.
- They are going to a meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children's Hearing, care review or court.
- If they are involved in an activity and the school agrees in advance.
- Someone close to the child has died.
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in the family.

- They are going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them.
- If they are a Gypsy/Traveller family and while you go travelling, you keep in touch with your child's teacher.
- Your family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative.
- In some circumstances absences linked to parent/carer if they are active Army personnel.

### ***Unauthorised Absences***

The category of **unauthorised absence** includes absence deriving from reasons such as:

- Family holidays during term time that are not judged to be important to the well-being and cohesion of the family.
- Long-term exceptional domestic circumstances where additional support services have not been accessed to support the pupil.
- Unreasonable excuse, where a parent refuses to send their child to school following a dispute with the school.
- Unexplained absence.
- Truancy (unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of pupil, parent or both).

*Absence due to prolonged ill-health:* Where parents/carers cite ongoing medical issues as a reason for absence and where the school does not have corroborative information around the health needs, the school can request the School Nursing Service to review health records to confirm health needs and ensure appropriate support is in place. Referrals can also be made to Community Child Health if there are concerns around health issues and/or where schools feel a child/young person's health needs are not being met.

*Absence due to religious and/or cultural practices:* Absence from school for religious reasons can be authorised where the day being taken as absence must be set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the child's parents/carers or (beyond the age of 12) young person themselves belong.

### ***Recording Attendance***

Consistency of the recording of attendance across the authority is crucial to the monitoring process. Schools are responsible for the registration and recording of attendance through the SEEMIS recording system. Against the name of each pupil, the relevant code should be entered in respect of each morning and each afternoon for

any day that the school is opened or closed. A list of definitive codes for attendance and absence can be found within the SEEMIS system (see appendix 1)

On the first day of absence, parents/carers should be asked to confirm the following no later than 9:30am:

- Likely length of absence
- Reason for the absence

It is vitally important that schools know our children and young people are safe. There must be a reason provided for each absence and attempts should be made daily to ensure that that information is obtained and recorded. All absences should be 'closed off' at the end of the day. If it has not been possible to clarify the reason for absence after all attempts have been exhausted, the absence should be marked as *unexplained*.

When a pupil is on shared placement, their catchment school will hold their full SEEMIS record and a copied record will be held in the other school they attend. For example, a pupil spending two days a week in a provision will have a copied record in the provision and the full record in their catchment school.

The code "OAT - Other Attendance Out of School" should be used in the catchment school on the days that pupils attend elsewhere. If a pupil is absent while on a shared placement, their catchment school should be notified and the OAT register mark replaced with the appropriate absence code.

Only full SEEMIS records are counted against a school for the purpose of the bi-annual Scottish Government Attendance, Absence and Exclusion Return. The copied records of children and young people do not count towards a school's overall attendance.

### ***Recording Lateness***

Accurate recording of lateness is just as important as attendance. Lateness should be recorded in the following way:

**Primary:** If a pupil arrives late to either morning or afternoon opening, this should be marked using LAT.

**Secondary:** If a pupil arrives after school start time but in time for the **beginning** of a period, they should be marked present from when they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code for the preceding time.

E.g. Jack arrives at the beginning of period 4 because he had a dental appointment:

- Period 1-3      PER (medical appointment)
- Period 4      Present

If a pupil arrives after school start time and **during** a period, they should be marked LAT in the period they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code the preceding time.

E.g. Jack slept in and arrived during period 2:

- Period 1            OUA (unauthorised)
- Period 2            LAT

As with absences, codes should be updated at the end of the day once a reason for absence/lateness has been established. If a reason cannot be sought, this should be marked as unexplained (UNA).

## **4.2 Protocol for Tracking & Monitoring Attendance**

The following steps 1 to 4 provide a staged approach to support and intervention in relation to attendance concerns. These steps are mapped out in a flowchart in appendix 2. Where improvement is made but not sustained at any given step, it is expected that schools will resume the protocol at the step they were at rather than starting again from step 1.

It is noted that monitoring attendance by percentages needs to be carefully considered particularly in the first 6 weeks of term due to the impact of any absence skewing the percentage.

### **Step 1: Contact with parents/carers when attendance drops <90%**

When a child or young person's attendance falls below 90% **over a 4-week period** without a valid reason:

- Phone contact should be made with the parents/carers, and/or a letter sent to the home address (see appendix 3a) with an invitation to discuss absence concerns either by phone or at a meeting.

The purpose is to identify issues and barriers quickly and work with the child or young person and their parents/carers towards attendance patterns being restored.

**If the pupil is missing from school and there is no contact from home and if the school has safeguarding concerns, the school should contact Children Services on 0131 271 3413 asking for duty Team Leader or the allocated Social Worker/Team Leader without delay.**

### **Step 2: Continued Absence / no improvement or engagement in plan**

If absence continues or if there has been no recognised improvement in attendance **within an 8-week period**:

- Letter 2 (appendix 3b) should be sent to the parent/carer and the young person inviting them to a Learner's Planning Meeting with a meeting date and time. Phone contact should be made to confirm receipt of the letter and attendance at the meeting. If the parent/carer does not contact the school or attend the

meeting the school should issue the letter via Royal Mail 'Signed For' inviting the parent/carer to a meeting in school.

The purpose of this meeting is to explore reasons for non-attendance, identify barriers or unmet needs within the school and/or further information that is required and to develop a plan to address these issues. The child or young person must be supported and encouraged to be active participants in this process and their views meaningfully included. A plan should be agreed and documented with the child or young person and parents/carers to improve attendance and provide details of any additional supports or measures to be taken.

Attendance concerns should be raised with the Midlothian Locality Team including Educational Psychology with the aim of resolving local issues or barriers to attendance and ensuring approaches and supports are targeted to best effect.

### **Step 3: No improvement in attendance and/or no engagement in plans**

If there is no improvement **after 12 weeks** or no response from the parent/carer in relation to the proposed plans:

- Letter 3 (appendix 3c) should be sent to the parent/carer and the young person inviting them to a Learner's Planning Meeting with a meeting date and time. Phone contact should be made to confirm receipt of the letter and attendance at the meeting. If the parent/carer does not contact the school or attend the meeting the school should issue the letter via Royal Mail 'Signed For' inviting the parent/carer to a meeting in school.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the previous plan and identify barriers to progress. Further insights are sought into the factors influencing the child's attendance and the plan of support reviewed and strengthened where appropriate.

Further supports may be sought, with parental and young person consent, through the following:

- Referral to Wellbeing Meetings (High Schools) or Team around the child (Primary) for solution-focussed discussion and further school and community supports, including the Family Wellbeing Service and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies.
- Request for involvement with the Educational Psychology Service.

Attendance should continue to be monitored on a 4 weekly basis with the child or young person, family, school and agencies involved. This 4 weekly monitoring period may be repeated where progress is slow but where there is evidence of efforts and engagement to improve attendance.



#### **Step 4: Ongoing non-attendance following implementation of the plan**

If there are no significant improvements in a child or young person's attendance and all resources, multi-agency support and voluntary options have been fully explored and reviewed through the Learners Planning Framework, then schools should discuss the case with the team leader for the Family Wellbeing Service to agree on the next steps.

Where a child or young person fails to attend school regularly without a valid reason, as detailed above, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011. This option may be appropriate where there are a range of other concerns which together with non-attendance, form grounds for referral.

**Prior to any referral being made to the Children's Reporter schools must involve the team leader of the Family Wellbeing Service, who will advise wider Children's Services of the decision.**

- If the family is engaged with the Family Wellbeing Service (FWS) but there has been no significant progress the social worker/team leader from the FWS should meet with the family to explain the possibility of referral to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and the implications of statutory measures. If there remains no improvement and the multi-agency group agree there is a need for a referral to SCRA, the FWS, along with the school will write a report to make a collective referral to SCRA.
- Where a family refuse to provide consent for referral to the FWS – the social worker or the team leader from the FWS should visit the family or attend a meeting to explain the role of the FWS as a voluntary support. They should explain their role in supporting families to improve outcomes and avoid statutory services, the possibility of referral to the Children's reporter and the implications of statutory measures. If the family continue to refuse and the multi-agency group agree a referral to SCRA is appropriate the school will make the referral.

Midlothian Council is committed to ensuring that efforts to improve outcomes for children involve an appropriate and proportionate level of intervention. Only after there is agreement by school and Family Wellbeing Service, and where possible the family that **all** voluntary measures have been fully explored a referral may be submitted to SCRA detailing ongoing concerns.

If required, staff within the Family Wellbeing Service will progress an assessment report at the request of the Reporter to ascertain if there are legal 'grounds' to convene a Children's Hearing. This assessment will be undertaken in conjunction with the family, school and any other agency involved.

If legal 'grounds' are proven as set down in section 67(2) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, and a Children's Hearing is planned, Family Wellbeing Service/Children's Services staff along with schools and any other relevant agency involved with the family may be asked to provide reports and if required, attend the Children's Hearing. If a child or young person has a Compulsory Supervision Order

imposed, then there will be an allocated Children's Services Social Worker (not the Family Wellbeing Service) who will become the Lead Professional at that stage.

Attending a children's hearing can be a stressful experience for a child or young person, and there is little evidence that imposition of legal sanctions improve attendance. It should be seen as a last resort.

### **4.3 Children Missing from Education**

A register of admission and withdrawal of children and young people has to be kept at every school in respect of each school year. This register will show:

- Each pupil admitted or readmitted to the school.
- Their full name and date of birth.
- If the pupil has been withdrawn from the school at any time, the date of, and reason for this withdrawal.
- The educational establishment the child or young person will now be attending.

If a child is deemed to be missing from education and no forwarding address or contact from a prospective new school has been received, then a referral must be completed using ([CME - request for a search.doc](#)) and progress to:

- The allocated Children's Services worker as soon as possible
- If there is no allocated worker, then a referral should be sent to Sam Smith (ASN Team) using the CME mailbox – [cme@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:cme@midlothian.gov.uk).

### **4.4 School Leaving Arrangements, Employment and Further Education**

#### ***School Leaving Arrangements***

School leaving arrangements are defined in terms of the **Education (Scotland) Act 1980**. There are statutory summer and winter leaving dates in each year.

Summer Leaving Dates:

- a pupil whose sixteenth birthday is on or after 1 March but before 31 May can leave school on 31 May.
- a pupil whose sixteenth birthday is on or after 31 May but before 1 October can leave on 31 May.

#### Winter Leaving Dates:

- a young person whose sixteenth birthday is on or after 1 October but before the first day of the Christmas holiday period can leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).
- a young person whose sixteenth birthday falls after the winter leaving date but before 1 March can leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).

**Entry to Employment:** Young people who have reached school leaving age can take up full time employment even though they may not have reached their sixteenth birthday. Certain industries may have a minimum age for entry.

Under no circumstances should a young person of school age be allowed to leave school to take up full time employment. Apprenticeship is considered to be full time employment. There are statutory restrictions on part-time employment of young people of school age, which are defined in local bylaws. For further information please refer to Policy Guideline 3.12 on “*Part time employment of pupils*”.

**Entry to Further Education:** A young person of school age can be given exemption from school attendance to begin a full-time course of Further Education. Such cases should be considered on their merit depending on the educational needs of the young person and in consultation with the young person’s parents/carers and the Principal of the Further Education College.

Head Teachers should advise the Head of Education of any young person still of school age who wishes to begin a full-time course of vocational further education.

## Appendix 1: Click & Go Attendance and Absence Codes

Note - screens and printouts in SEEMIS use either a single letter attendance code (e.g. "D") or a three-letter code (e.g. "SEL") - both types codes are shown in the descriptions below:

Reason for Absence and Associated Codes	Absence Recorded
<b>Sickness / Medical or Dental Appointments</b>	<b>Counts as</b>
<b>D (SEL) – Self Certified Medical</b> – this includes any time where a pupil is off sick, with proof of illness such as a parental letter or medical certificate. Counts as <b>Authorised Absence</b> .	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>B (SEP) – Sickness with Educational Provision</b> – Use where a pupil is off sick and an appropriate level of educational provision is being provided – e.g. where a pupil is receiving tuition in hospital.	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>P (PER) – Medical / Dental Appointments</b> – to be used for all medical / dental appointments outside of school.	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>Late coming</b>	
<b>L (LAT) – Late</b> - Use when pupil arrives late during the first half of an opening.	<b>Late</b> (does not count towards overall absence percentage)
<b>K (LT2) – Late 2</b> - Use when pupil arrives late during the second half of an opening.	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>Parental Holidays</b>	
<b>G (UPH) – Unauthorised Parental Holiday</b> – the following are examples of reasons that would cause a family holiday to be classed as unauthorised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of cheap holidays</li> <li>• The availability of desired accommodation</li> <li>• Holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term</li> <li>• Parental difficulty obtaining leave (with local judgement applied in cases where evidence is provided by the employer that it cannot accommodate leave during school holidays without serious consequences)</li> </ul>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>

Reason for Absence and Associated Codes	Absence Recorded
<p><b>E (PHL) - Family Holiday Authorised</b> – The majority of holidays taken within term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence. However, it is acceptable under exceptional circumstances to authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Authorised Absence</b></p>
<p><b>Z (EXL) - Extended Leave With Parental Consent</b> - should not be considered the same as a family holiday. Extended leave with parental consent will be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence and includes circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school</li> <li>• short-term parental placement abroad</li> <li>• family weddings or funerals or other events and exceptional circumstances which may require children to travel (e.g. overseas) or participate in extended preparations, for cultural reasons</li> <li>• leave in relation to children of travelling families.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Not counted as absence OR attendance.</b> This code reduces total number of possible attendances for a pupil and must be used with care.</p>
<p><b>Refusal to attend</b></p>	
<p><b>7 (RFS) – Refusal to attend</b> – use this category where a pupil refuses to attend school.</p>	<p><b>Unauthorised Absence</b></p>
<p><b>9 (RSA) - Refusal - Social Anxiety - Education Provision</b> - should be used where a pupil is refusing to attend school as a result of diagnosed social anxiety and is also receiving education provision. <b>Note</b> - this code should only be used where education provision is being provided and the pupil, school, parents and other relevant practitioners are in agreement with the plan in place.</p>	<p><b>Attendance</b></p>

Reason for Absence and Associated Codes	Absence Recorded
<b>Other Authorised Absences</b>	
<p><b>A (ABS) – Other Authorised Absence</b> – this category cover situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate family weddings</li> <li>• Bereavements</li> <li>• Religious observances</li> <li>• Attendance at court</li> <li>• Attendance at childcare review</li> <li>• Attendance at children’s hearing</li> <li>• Lack of transport – including due to bad weather</li> <li>• Sporting &amp; cultural events not arranged by school, but approved by them</li> </ul>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>Other Unauthorised Absences</b>	
<p><b>U (UNA) – Absence – Reason Unknown</b> – use where no reason has been given for the pupil’s absence. Counts as <b>unauthorised absence</b>.</p>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<p><b>@ (TRU) – Truancy</b> – use for Truancy.</p>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<p><b>T (TBC) - To be confirmed</b> - used only by class teachers when they are recording attendance for a period or opening</p>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<b>Exceptional Domestic Circumstances</b>	
<p><b>Q (DCA) – Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Authorised</b> – covers situations such as: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The period immediately after an accident or illness</li> <li>• A period of serious or critical illness of a close relative</li> <li>• A domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home, causing temporary relocation.</li> </ul>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>

Reason for Absence and Associated Codes	Absence Recorded
<b>R (DCU) – Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Unauthorised</b> – used for all other exceptional domestic circumstances not included above.	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>
<b>Part time timetables</b>	
<b>Y (PTX) – Part Time Timetable (exclusion related)</b> – use where a pupil is attending school on a part time timetable to reduce risk of exclusion and build positive engagement as part of a build-up timetable. <b>Note</b> - this code should only be used in the period <b>after</b> an exclusion where a pupil is on a phased return.	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>= (PTH) – Part Time Timetable (health related)</b> – use where a pupil is attending school on a Part Time basis - this counts as authorised absence.	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>Other attendance in and out of school</b>	
<b>O (OAT) – Provision Elsewhere</b> – use where a pupil is receiving educational provision at another establishment e.g. pupil attending another school for subjects not available in base school, pupil attending college, pupil attending special unit etc.	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>~ (SCH) - In school but not in class</b> - used where a pupil is not in their timetabled class, but is elsewhere in school e.g. learning support base, musical instrument tuition	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>S (STY) – Study leave</b> – use from the start of the official exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons in school. This category counts as <b>attendance</b> .	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>V (VIS) – School visit / excursion</b> – use for trips out of school arranged or approved by the school.	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>V (FLD) – Field trip</b> – use for field trips related to school coursework.	<b>Attendance</b>
<b>W (WRK) – Work Experience</b> – included work experience or volunteering, arranged, or approved by the school.	<b>Attendance</b>

Reason for Absence and Associated Codes	Absence Recorded
<b>Exclusions</b>	
<b>X (EXC) – Exclusion</b> – used for temporary exclusions.	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Missing from Class</b>	
<b>M (MIS) - Missing</b> - a high school only code which indicates that a pupil has been marked as absent by a class teacher from one or more periods in an opening. This code is automatically generated by Click & Go and only appears on a pupil's attendance summary printout.	<b>Attendance</b>



## Appendix 2: Flow Chart for Tracking & Monitoring Attendance

### Step 1 Attendance < 90% at 4 weeks

School sends Attendance Letter 1 (Appendix 3a) home.  
School make phone call or meet with parents/carers with aim of exploring issues, identifying any support needs and overcoming attendance concerns.



### Step 2 Attendance < 90% at 8 weeks

School sends Attendance Letter 2 (Appendix 3b) home with invitation to meet with follow up call to confirm attendance.  
A Learners Planning Meeting is held to explore issues, identify support needs and plan to restore attendance.  
School raises concerns with locality team.



### Step 3 Attendance < 90% at 12 weeks

School sends Attendance Letter 3 (Appendix 3c) home with invitation to following up meeting.  
A Learners Planning Meeting is held to review plan, further explore issues and support needs and adapt or strengthen planning where appropriate.  
School presents to Wellbeing Meeting/Team around the Child to explore supports from partner agencies including Family Wellbeing Service and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners. Consideration given to EP involvement or referral to wider partners.  
Progress continues to be reviewed on a 4 weekly basis.



### Step 4 No significant progress at 16 weeks

School discuss case with team lead and/or Social Worker for the Family Wellbeing Service to consider next steps. This will include multi-agency review of plan with the child or young person, family, school, Family Wellbeing Service and partners to explore ways forwards. Further support and planning may be agreed or where all possible support has been tried and reviewed a referral to SCRA may be progressed.

### Safeguarding

Where there are immediate Child Protection concerns, schools and partners must follow Child Protection guidelines.

If the pupil is missing from school, there is no contact from home and if the school have safeguarding concerns the school should contact Children's Service on 0131 271 3413.

Schools should ask for Duty Team Leader or allocated Social Worker without delay.

Appendix 3(a): **Attendance Letter 1 (4 weeks)**

Date

Name

Address

Dear

Child /Young Person's Name

I am writing to advise that (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period. I have sent you an attendance summary printout for your information.

We would like to work with you to support (insert child young person's name), understand the reasons for the absence and help to improve their attendance at school.

I will phone you in the coming days to discuss this with you in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Name

Designation

Appendix 3(b): **Attendance Letter 2 (8 weeks)**

Date

Name

Address

Dear

Child/Young Person's Name

I wrote to you on (insert date) to let you know that (insert child/young persons name)'s attendance had fallen below 90%. We have reviewed (insert child/young persons name)'s attendance again, and their attendance is now at \_\_\_\_% over the past eight-week period. I have sent you an attendance summary printout for your information.

We know how important attendance can be in supporting a child or young person's learning, relationships and wellbeing. Together we have legal duties to support your child/young person to participate in education and there are a variety of ways we can work in partnership to do this.

We would like to invite you (and your child/young person) to a Learner's Planning meeting with \_\_\_\_\_ on (insert date and time of meeting) to discuss this with you. We will work together to understand any issues affecting attendance and plan how to address these and improve (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance.

Please contact me on the number below if you cannot attend this meeting and we will arrange another time.

Yours sincerely

Name

Designation

### Appendix 3 (c): Attendance Letter 3 (12 weeks)

Date

Name

Address

Dear

Child/Young Person's Name

We met on (insert date) to discuss (insert child/young persons name)'s attendance. We agreed some ways forward to improve their attendance at school. We have reviewed (insert child/young persons name)'s attendance again, and their attendance is now at \_\_\_% over the past twelve-week period. I have sent you an attendance summary printout for your information.

We know how important attendance can be in supporting a child or young person's learning, relationships and wellbeing. Together we have legal duties to support your child/young person to participate in education and there are a variety of ways we can work in partnership to do this.

We would like to invite you (and your child/young person) to a Learner's Planning meeting with \_\_\_\_\_ on (insert date/time of meeting) to discuss this with you. We will review the plan that we agreed at our last meeting. We will also work together to further understand issues that might be affecting (insert child or young persons' name)'s attendance and explore any further support that might be available from school and partner agencies to help address these and improve attendance. We want the best for (insert child or young person's name) and are here to help.

After this meeting, we will keep monitoring (insert child/ young persons name)'s attendance. If there is no improvement, we will seek advice from Children and Families to explore any further supports or resource that may be available. Where it is agreed that all supports have been tried and reviewed and there is no significant improvement in attendance over time, consideration will be given to whether a referral should be made to the Children's Reporter. We hope to avoid this where we can by working with you and (insert child/young person's name).

Please contact me on the number below if you cannot attend this meeting and we will arrange another time. It is important that we meet together so that we can make sure we are making a difference for (child or young person) and they receive their right to an education.

Yours sincerely

Name

Designation

Appendix 4 (a): Late Arrival Letter (Primary)

Date

Name

Address

Dear

Child/Young Person's Name

In (school name) Primary School the class teacher meets regularly with the Headteacher to review children's attendance and late arrivals to school.

Being on time for school is important and valuable for children to connect with peers and adults, settle in and prepare for the school day ahead.

A recent review of attendance with (insert Headteachers name) has shown that (the child's name) has been persistently late for school. I enclose an attendance summary printout for your information.

We are keen to understand any factors that might be impacting on (child's name)'s arrival at school and if there is anything that we can do within school to support with this. Please could you let us know any information you are able to share on the lateness noted. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me on the number below.

In the meantime, the (insert Headteacher/class teacher's name) will continue to monitor the (child's name)'s arrival on a regular basis.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Enclosed: Attendance Summary.

#### Appendix 4(b): Late Arrival Letter (Secondary)

Date

Name

Address

Dear

Child/Young Person's Name

In (insert school name) High School the Guidance/Pupil Support/Depute's, meets regularly to review pupil's attendance and late arrivals to school.

Being on time for school is important and valuable for children to connect with peers and adults, settle in and prepare for the school day ahead.

A recent review of attendance with (insert Depute's name) has shown young person's name has been persistently late for school. I enclose an attendance summary printout for your information.

We are keen to understand factors that might be impacting on (child's name)'s arrival at school and if there is anything that we can do within school to support with this. Please could you let us know any information you are able to share on the lateness noted. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me on the number below.

In the meantime, (insert Guidance//Depute Head teacher) will continue to monitor (insert young persons name) arrival n a regular basis.

Yours sincerely

Guidance Teacher/ Depute Name

Enclosed: Attendance Summary