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Stockton LA Attendance and Absence Management Policy

Adopted by Billingham South

October 2019

STOCKTON COUNCIL PUPIL ABSENCE AND ABSENCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Stockton Council Attendance Team fulfils the statutory duty and responsibilities of the local authority in relation to school attendance. The attendance team promote and enforce regular attendance at school for all children of statutory school age in Stockton and work in partnership across agencies.

Stockton Council absence procedures ensure schools and the local authority provide support and challenge to parents/carers and pupils to afford children of Stockton to take advantage of the best possible educational opportunities available to them.

If a parent/carer of a child registered at a Stockton school fails to meet their parental responsibility in ensuring their child's regular school attendance, then legal action may be taken.

Stockton Council's absence procedures outline the actions schools and the local authority will take to support and enforce the child's attendance at school.

Stage 1 – School Level Intervention

- School will follow their own internal school attendance procedures. This will include first day response, letters to parent(s)/carer where attendance is becoming a concern, discussions with the pupil, home visits to speak with parent(s)/carer in attempt to resolve issues and remind parent(s)/carer of their responsibility in ensuring their child's attendance at school.
- An Early Help Assessment should be completed at this point to assist the parent(s)/carer and pupil with any issues. Other services should be considered and referred to as relevant, examples include EP Service, SEN Team, Early Help Team, Youth Direction, School Health, Preventions, Social Care for Family Support.
- Where a pupil's absence continues following letters and home visit(s), a member of school staff should invite the parent(s)/carer into school to an attendance improvement support planning meeting.
- This meeting should be recorded and minutes produced detailing the discussion, the key issues/barriers to attendance, actions that each member will take to resolve the issues and an attendance target set. The attendance improvement plan should run for no less than 4 school weeks. Parent(s)/carer should receive a copy of the minutes from this meeting. A review date should be set and agreed with parents.
- During the attendance improvement support plan meeting, school staff should detail how contact with the parent and pupil will take place and who will make the contact. This may be a weekly support meeting, a home visit or this is not feasible, a telephone contact as a minimum. It is advisable that from this meeting, further absences are unauthorised unless evidence is provided to school to inform that the absence is for a serious and unavoidable reason. If the absence is for reasons of illness, acceptable medical evidence that should be considered is: prescription slip, sight of medication prescribed by the GP, note/letter from the GP, medical or dental appointment letter, evidence that the pupil was sent home from school too ill to remain in school. In these instances, the absence for the day the child was sent home should be authorised and a common sense approach taken for any further related subsequent absence.
- Parent(s)/carer should be made aware that continuing unauthorised absences can result in a referral to the local authority attendance team.
- On review, the school should decide to extend the attendance improvement support plan, make a referral to the local authority for legal proceedings to commence, or end the attendance improvement support plan if absence is no longer an issue.

The Local Authority threshold for referral is 10 unauthorised absence sessions in the previous eight school week period.

Stage 2 - Local Authority Attendance Team Intervention.

Referrals to the team are accepted when:

- School completes the Stage 1 process.
- Unauthorised absences continue.

- The documentation to evidence completion of Stage 1 interventions by school is provided with the referral form.
- The referral threshold is met (10 unauthorised sessions in the previous 8 school weeks).

It is good practice to inform the parent(s)/carer that a referral has been made to the local authority attendance team.

All referrals should be accompanied by the following supporting evidence:

- Copies of letters to parent(s)/carer
- Details of home visits – dates, outcomes
- Copy of school's attendance improvement support plan
- Copy of the Early Help Assessment and details of review (provide reason if this is not in place)
- Up to date attendance printout
- Details of other agency involvement
- Fully completed referral form
- Details of person/s with parental responsibility
- Signed and dated by the head teacher.

On receipt of all the relevant paperwork, a fully completed referral form and an attendance printout displaying recent unauthorised absence, the attendance team will action the referral within 10 school days.

The attendance team will make a decision to either:

- (A) Follow Stockton local authority penalty notice procedure **or**
- (B) Arrange an Attendance Case Conference

Penalty Notice Procedure

- A penalty notice warning letter will be issued by the local authority to the parent(s)/carers named on the referral form outlining their parental responsibility. The warning letter advises the parent(s)/carer the child should return to school immediately with regular daily attendance.
- The warning letter will cover a 4 week monitoring period and no further unauthorised absence is expected during this time. Evidence to cover absences must be provided by the parent(s)/carer.
- At the end of the 4 week monitoring period, the attendance officer will review the pupil's school attendance. If the target has been met (no unauthorised absences in the 4 week monitoring period) the case will be closed and passed back to school level monitoring.
- If unauthorised absences continue, a penalty notice will be issued to the parent(s)/carer named on the referral form.
- In cases of non-payment, the local authority will consider prosecuting the parent(s)/carer in the magistrate court.
- Parent(s)/carers may not be issued with more than 2 penalty notices in a 12 month period.

Attendance Case Conference

- If parent(s)/carer have been prosecuted previously for failing to ensure their child's attendance, an Attendance Case Conference will be convened.
- A warning letter will be issued to the parent(s)/carer detailing their parental responsibility and outlining the local authority's consideration of prosecution in the magistrate court if unauthorised absences continue.
- The local authority attendance officer will contact school staff to arrange an Attendance Case Conference.
- Once the attendance case conference has been arranged, a letter will be sent to the parent(s)/carer inviting them to attend to the meeting. If other professionals are involved with the family, they will also be invited to the meeting.

- A parenting contract and a 6 week attendance plan will be negotiated and put in place at the meeting. The parent(s)/carer will be cautioned according to PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, PACE).
- The attendance officer will visit the parent(s)/carer within one week of the meeting to deliver the minutes and parenting contract. The parent(s)/carer will be invited to sign the parenting contract. All parties will be asked to sign the contract: school representative, parent, pupil, and local authority attendance officer.
- Further home visits will be made at least fortnightly during the period of the plan to offer advice and support to the parent and pupil.
- On review, if the attendance target set at the attendance case conference is achieved, a further 4 week monitoring period will take place. The attendance officer will maintain contact with the parent(s)/carer and pupil during this period. If targets continue to be met, the case will be closed and passed back to school level monitoring.
- If new information becomes available to the attendance officer during the intervention that suggests the family circumstances have changed or a significant need emerges relating to the family, then it may be appropriate to return to attendance case conference to ensure the plan is fit for purpose.
- If the targets set at the attendance case conference meeting are not met then the local authority will consider prosecuting the parent(s)/carer in the magistrate court.

Stage 3 Legal Process

- The case file of intervention will be reviewed and authorisation sought from the Attendance and Safeguarding Manager.
- Papers and witness statements will be prepared and sent to Stockton Council's Law and Democracy Department to obtain a summons from the Magistrate Court.
- An attendance certificate detailing the period of prosecution signed by the head teacher is required and will be requested by the attendance officer to accompany the paperwork sent to the solicitor prosecuting on behalf of the local authority from the Law and Democracy Department.
- In some circumstances, school staff may also be asked to provide witness statements and appear in court as a witness for the prosecution where a not guilty plea is entered by the parent(s)/carer.

Following Prosecution

- If the pupil's school attendance has improved, the case will be passed back to school for school level monitoring and should unauthorised absences reoccur, then the school should commence their school attendance procedures.
- If unauthorised absences continue, the attendance officer will arrange a post court attendance case conference. If the parent(s)/carers received a disposal from the magistrates court that is suspended, the parent should be aware that a subsequent prosecution within the time period of the suspended disposal will result in that disposal being imposed along with additional sentencing for the current offence.

In certain circumstances and if deemed necessary, consideration will be given to changing the attendance officer working with the family.

Schools should follow their Safeguarding Procedures for first day response throughout this process.

ATTENDANCE TEAM REFERRAL FORM

PERSONAL/SCHOOL DETAILS																																	
Name of Pupil:		School:																															
Date of Birth:		Year:																															
Date of Birth:	Ethnicity/Language:	Number of unauthorised sessions in previous 8 school weeks ____																															
Overall Attendance at Referral %:																																	
Gender: Male/Female		SEN Support <input type="checkbox"/>	Pupil Premium <input type="checkbox"/>																														
Address:		FSM <input type="checkbox"/>	CIN <input type="checkbox"/>																														
Post Code:		CYPIOC <input type="checkbox"/>	CP <input type="checkbox"/>																														
EHCP <input type="checkbox"/>		EHA <input type="checkbox"/>																															
Siblings: name/dob/ school																																	
PARENT/CARER DETAILS																																	
Name:		Relationship:																															
Parental Responsibility: Y/N		Parental Responsibility: Y/N																															
Parent aware of referral: Y/N		Parent aware of referral: Y/N																															
Address:		Address:																															
Post Code:		Tel:																															
Tel:		Post Code:																															
SCHOOL ACTION PRIOR TO REFERRAL (Please note – referral will not be accepted without evidence of School Action)																																	
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 35%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Letters sent to parent/carers</td> <td style="width: 30%;">Date:</td> <td style="width: 35%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Meeting in school</td> <td>Date:</td> <td>Parent attended Y/N</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Attendance Plan</td> <td>Date:</td> <td>Reviewed Y/N Date:</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Home Visit/s</td> <td>Date/s:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Early Help Assessment Completed Y/N</td> <td>Date:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion with pupil Y/N</td> <td>Date:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Referral to other agencies Y/N</td> <td>Details/Date:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>.....</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other Y/N</td> <td>Details/Date:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>.....</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>(Please attach copies of Attendance Certificate/Minutes of Meetings/Letters/EHAs etc.)</p>				<input type="checkbox"/> Letters sent to parent/carers	Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting in school	Date:	Parent attended Y/N	<input type="checkbox"/> Attendance Plan	Date:	Reviewed Y/N Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Visit/s	Date/s:		<input type="checkbox"/> Early Help Assessment Completed Y/N	Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Discussion with pupil Y/N	Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to other agencies Y/N	Details/Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Other Y/N	Details/Date:	
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<input type="checkbox"/> Other Y/N	Details/Date:																																
																																
COMMENTS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION																																	

REASON FOR REFERRAL

OTHER AGENCIES/PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED							
	AGENCY	WORKER	TEL. NO.		AGENCY	WORKER	TEL. NO.
<input type="checkbox"/>	EPS			<input type="checkbox"/>	CAMHS		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Early Help			<input type="checkbox"/>	YOS		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Support			<input type="checkbox"/>	Preventions		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Care			<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Direction		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inclusion Team			<input type="checkbox"/>	Police/Antisocial		
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Nurse			<input type="checkbox"/>	Alliance		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eastern Ravens			<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	GP			<input type="checkbox"/>	Other		

PARENT/CARER	
Has parent engaged? Y/N	Details:
Are you aware of any concerns with regard to carrying out home visits? Y/N	Details:

Name of Referrer/School Contact:

I confirm this is an accurate record of’s attendance

I agree the Local Authority will give consideration to the issue of a penalty notice warning letter: **Y/N**

Signature of Head Teacher/Principal Date

Please note: If this referral form is incomplete or relevant information is not attached, it will be returned to school

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:
Attendance Team
Education Improvement Service
EDC@SSFC
Stockton Sixth Form College
Bishopton Road West
Stockton-on-Tees
TS19 0QD
attendance.team@stockton.gov.uk

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Date received:	Referral accepted: Y/N