

Education, Sport and Culture Department Policy

Title:	School Attendance Policy
Date:	May 2014
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1. Overview

This policy has been updated to take account of procedures that have changed due to the development of the Education Welfare Service and the use of electronic registration.

This document describes the procedures relating to school attendance for pupils of compulsory school age. It sets out the arrangements that must be implemented to enable pupils to benefit fully from the educational opportunities available and to support parents in fulfilling their statutory obligations regarding school attendance.

The Education Welfare Service consists of centrally based education welfare officers and the school based attendance officers in the four 11-16 schools.

2. Scope

This policy provides a framework which underpins the role of parents, schools and the DfESC and upholds the principle that children attend school regularly as stated in the Education Law (Jersey) 2000 article 12, Para 1.

'A parent of a child of compulsory school age shall ensure that he /she receives full time education appropriate to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school at which he/she is a pupil or otherwise, in accordance with Article 13.'

3. Responsibilities and distribution

It is the responsibility of headteachers to ensure that all staff with a responsibility for recording pupil attendance are aware of the legal requirement placed upon them in regard to these procedures. Further, headteachers should encourage all staff to maximise pupil attendance

and work proactively to that end in that school attendance is a major factor in successful outcomes for pupils.

4. Policy/Standards

The DfESC undertakes to:

- Be proactive in ensuring that all pupils have access to education according to their age, ability and any special needs they may have
- Assist schools in raising levels of attendance and reducing truancy and disaffection
- Secure and allocate appropriate manpower, finance and ICT resources required to support the achievement of the Department's objectives.

School staff must follow the procedures in this policy.

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Parent's / Carer's Responsibility

Parents / Carers are required by law to ensure that any child of compulsory school age (5-16) receives efficient full time education, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school in line with DfESC policy.

This extends beyond ensuring regular attendance and requires that the child arrives at school on time, properly dressed and in a condition to learn.

Parents can help their child by keeping requests to be absent to a minimum. They should not automatically assume that schools will agree to such requests. Nor should they condone unjustified absence from school. If the pupil is unable to attend for whatever reason, the parent is responsible for informing the school on the first day of absence and for notifying the school of absence on subsequent days.

Parents do not have the right to authorise the absence of a registered pupil: only schools can do this.

Parents should see themselves as partners with schools in matters concerning their children's education, actively supporting school policies on attendance, behaviour, homework etc.

Parents should avoid taking their children out of school for holidays during term time. Such absences can seriously disrupt continuity of learning and schools should grant leave only in exceptional circumstances.

Schools' Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the school to record, monitor and encourage attendance and to alert the Education Welfare Service where absence is a concern. Schools should adhere to Department for Education Sport and Culture policy on school attendance which incorporates the following:

- Each school to have a School Attendance Policy which staff are familiar with which:
 - a) sets out targets for improving attendance
 - b) contains statements about how communication between partners in the process will be implemented
 - c) details who does what, and when
 - d) explains referral criteria to support services
 - e) describes strategies to be used to improve attendance such as:
 - First day response, rewards, certificates, re-integration programmes, modified curriculum packages, Individual Action Plans etc.

- Identify a member of staff to take responsibility for attendance
- Maintain accurate registers, using the recommended system for the categorisation of absence. (Appendix 1)
- Submit annual statistics
 - Submit attendance returns for students referred to the Education Welfare Service
 - Keep students and parents informed of expectations and consequences regarding attendance and punctuality. Attendance percentage and punctuality to be recorded in school reports
 - Involve parents as early as possible when a problem is identified and communicate regularly thereafter
- Consult regularly with the education welfare officer for the school and work closely with the Education Support Team in cases of long term absence.

The Education Department's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of The Department for Education, Sport and Culture (Education Welfare Service) to work in partnership with schools and parents, to provide support, advice and guidance and to determine the appropriate action needed where concerns emerge regarding attendance. This involves:

- Working closely with schools in identifying poor attenders. Regularly checking attendance data and advising on good practice, attending school liaison meetings and assisting schools in formulating attendance policies and monitoring the implementation of those policies.
- Responding to referrals from school, parents and other agencies, making contact with the home and feeding back information to the school
- Liaising with other agencies as appropriate
- Reviewing and recording progress and, if necessary, initiating further appropriate action and intervention
- Liaising with the Education Support Team and particularly educational psychologists when working with long term absentees and disaffected pupils.
- Holding formal attendance panel meetings for families where legal proceedings are under consideration.
- Initiating legal proceedings as necessary providing detailed reports for the court.
- Applying for and supervising Education Supervision Orders where appropriate,

- Establishing effective links with the parish authorities, the police and the Probation Service and considering initiatives for combating truancy.
- Collating and analysing attendance data to assess local trends.

School Attendance Procedures

The following procedures underpin the previous principles, and generate good practice in matters concerning school attendance.

Registration

In addition to an admission register, which serves as the school roll, schools are required to maintain an attendance register.

Attendance registers must be called twice a day

- At the start of the morning session; and
- Once during the afternoon

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by the staff and pupils.

Pupils must be marked either

- Present
- Engaged in approved educational activity away from the school site or
- Absent

If a pupil is absent, the appropriate symbol should be inserted in the register as soon as the reason for the absence is known. Schools must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Hard copies of class lists should be kept in the school office in case of emergency evacuation.

Recording Attendance

Registers

Attendance registers are legal documents and particular attention should be paid to accuracy. Incomplete or unclear entries or inappropriate authorisation of absence can impede the work of the Education Welfare Service and may compromise subsequent court proceedings.

Absences should be authorised by way of a written or verbal communication with parent/guardian. The appropriate code should be entered into the register and reason of absence entered on the CMIS Database. Schools should make every effort to ascertain the reason for any absence if the parent has not made contact. The school should contact the parents on the first day of a pupil's absence if they have not heard from them.

The fact that an explanation has been offered does not mean that the school is obliged to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation given, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and an education welfare officer consulted.

Since register entries may form an important part of the evidence in the event of the prosecution of parents under Article 12 of the Education (Jersey) Law 2000, or in seeking an Education Supervision Order, it is necessary to institute certain safeguards in electronic records. These safeguards relate respectively to the correction and the preservation of the register.

The regulations require that the original entry in a register and any subsequent correction should be clearly distinguishable. The original entry cannot itself simply be amended. The original entry and the correction should both be preserved in such a way that, on printing, the entries appear in chronological order. As this is a requirement of the Department for Education in England this is already implemented in CMIS.

Secondary schools are required to either make a print out of the attendance register or back up their CMIS database on to a removable storage medium at least once a month. This should be kept in a fireproof safe. Primary school data is backed up externally and there is no requirement for the school to do this.

Codes for absence

When recording attendance and absence, schools are required to use the codes in the appendix to this document.

Attendance Returns

Annual attendance returns must be submitted to the Education Department in June each year (date to be agreed by Senior Education Welfare Officer)

The following information will be required within these Returns:

- Number of pupils attending school
- Possible Attendance for the date range
- Number of Authorised Absences
- % of Authorised Absences
- Number of Unauthorised Absences
- % of Unauthorised Absences
- Total % of Absence
- Total % of Attendance

Punctuality

Schools should actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. Patterns of lateness can also lead to full absence if left unchallenged. Schools should exercise some flexibility where local conditions such as bad weather or occasional transport difficulties affect punctuality. This may mean keeping the register open for a reasonable period to cater for late arrivals. Schools should be consistent when classifying pupils as late, so as not to be seen as unfair particularly when siblings may be arriving at the same time.

- Pupils arriving **up to** 30 minutes after registration has closed should be marked as late. **(L)**
- Pupils arriving **more than** 30 minutes after registration has closed who provide an adequate explanation should be marked according to codes provided. This will be counted as an authorised absence.
- Pupils arriving **more than** 30 minutes after registration has closed but who fail to provide an adequate explanation should be marked as **(U)** for that session. This will be counted as an unauthorised absence

Pupils who arrive up to half an hour late to school as a result of a medical appointment can be marked as present. The school must have prior notification of such appointment which should be entered into the CMIS Data Base as a record of the appointment.

Pupils arriving late must sign in at the school office, recording time of arrival, for purposes of emergency evacuation.

Alternative Provision

Transfer

Study Leave

A pupil who is receiving **part time/ temporary** education or training away from the school site but is retained on the roll of the school should be marked as **(B)** in the register. This also applies to pupils on work experience programmes who should be marked as **(W)** in the register. In both cases the pupil will be counted as present for statistical purposes although the supervising member of staff must check that the pupil was in attendance at the relevant place of instruction before making the appropriate entry.

On occasion a pupil may be educated on a modified timetable, for example, following a period of non attendance and during reintegration. The school must first discuss this with the educational psychologist as any request for a modified timetable must be made through the Education Support Team panel as the school has a duty to provide full time provision.

A pupil who is receiving **all** of his/her education at a separate provision and will not be returning to the school should be marked as 'left'. This will remove

them from the roll and they will no longer be counted in the school's figures from the date the pupil started on the alternative provision.

In the case of pupils transferring to a special school for a period of assessment / remand, the receiving school should register the pupil and the school of origin should not count the pupil in its attendance figures during that period. The pupil should be registered as B (educated off site). Should the pupil return to the school of origin, he/she will be registered in the normal way from the first day back. Should the pupil not return to the school of origin after the period of assessment / remand, he/she should be marked as 'left' and continue to be registered at the special school.

e.g. D'Hautree House / Greenfields Centre

Transfer

Where pupils transfer to another school, the receiving school must notify the relinquishing school that the pupil has been admitted on the first day that the pupil starts at the new school so that the relinquishing school can mark the pupil as 'left' from their roll.

Study Leave

Study leave should be used sparingly and only for pupils in Year 11 during mock and public exams. Study leave should not normally exceed 15 days prior to the exam period starting during year 11. Regard should be paid to the individual pupil's ability to manage study leave and benefit from it.

Unsupervised study leave is not an 'approved educational activity' and must be counted as authorised absence.

School leavers mid academic year

If a pupil leaves a school and is not transferring within the island, the Projects and Planning Department should be notified.

Family holidays during term time

Schools have a discretionary power to grant leave for holidays in accordance with the policy of the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and must request permission in advance from the headteacher.

Parents must make a strong case to justify taking pupils out of school during term time as the absence can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is expected that parents will support their child's education by arranging family holidays to coincide with school holidays (13 weeks annually). Parents wishing to appeal against a decision by the headteacher should do so in writing to the Director of Education. Requests for holidays exceeding 10 school days must be made to the Director of Education, Sport and Culture.

Schools should consider each request carefully, taking into account:

- the age of the child
- the time of year
- the nature and purpose of the trip – e.g. maintaining family ties and cultural links
- the duration of the trip and the effect on the continuity of learning
- the family circumstances
- the attendance pattern of the child
- previous requests

Where leave is approved by the school, the absence is considered authorised and a date should be agreed for the pupil's return. If the child is away from school longer than the agreed period, the excess absence should be treated as unauthorised. A similar line should be taken where parents fail to apply for permission in advance or take the pupil away without permission.

Parents ought to be made aware that should they consider removing a pupil from school for a period of six weeks or over, that pupil will be removed from the school roll. In such cases parents may be required to re-apply for that placement.

School Responses to Absence

Schools have a responsibility to work with the Education Welfare Service where a pupil's attendance or punctuality is giving cause for concern. It is anticipated that schools will have employed certain strategies of their own in attempting to improve matters prior to referral.

First Day Response

One such strategy involves making contact with the parent on the first day of absence. This approach makes it clear to pupils and parents that absences will be followed up rigorously. It also shows that the school considers the whereabouts and safety of the pupil to be of paramount importance.

Independent research has shown that 'First Day Response is the single most effective initiative in improving rates of attendance' - in some schools by as much as 10%.

The school should, therefore, make every effort to discuss the absence with the parent.

Standard Letters

When no explanation has been received for absence the school should send a letter to the parent requesting verification of the absence. If this is not forthcoming the absence should be recorded as unauthorised and the parent/s should be invited in to a school meeting to discuss the absence. If

there are concerns or a family cannot be contacted liaison with the education welfare officer is advised.

Early intervention

Irregular and / or poor attendance should be tackled at the earliest opportunity. A positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality can be established early by helping children develop good habits, stressing the importance of regular attendance and good timekeeping, and conveying to parents the message that unjustified absence will be challenged.

Transition

Transfer from primary to secondary school is often a critical time which some children find particularly difficult. School staff should be alert to the potential problems which may develop at this point and work together to support the pupil's transition in line with the DfESC Transition Policy. Schools currently have a variety of arrangements to ease the transition for vulnerable students and the Education Welfare Service supports schools with some students through transition where there is concern regarding future attendance. Pupils thought to meet the criteria should be identified to education welfare officers early in Year 6 or before so that specific support can be planned.

Recognising good attendance

Schools should advocate a positive attendance culture and continue to develop strategies to improve attendance and punctuality. Care should be taken to recognise the potential pitfalls however (i.e. drawing attention to pupils who are absent for genuine reasons).

Emotionally Based School Refusal (EBSR)

It is important to distinguish between truancy and emotionally based absence. For the purposes of diagnosis and treatment, truancy is regarded as a behavioural issue while EBSR is considered to be an emotional disorder. EBSR is often the result of a number of contributing factors and research has indicated that it is frequently symptomatic of underlying separation anxiety. Physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach disorders often accompany refusal to attend school and the involvement of the GP / Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services at an early stage may prove helpful in assessing the condition. It is important to work closely with the educational psychologist with pupils displaying emotionally based school refusal.

During the process of assessment and subsequent treatment, which may take some time, all parties involved should try to remain positive and patient. Any treatment programme should have a time limit with review dates specified.

Stages of Intervention

Stage 1 School Monitoring

Internal school registration and monitoring procedures as well as school responses to absence, as described previously, will apply to all pupils on roll. Where school strategies have not been successful, advice can be sought from the education welfare officer.

Attendance officers in the four 11-16 states secondary schools will liaise with the senior education welfare officer and discuss cases during regular supervision sessions.

Stages 2 & 3 Initial Contact / Assessment by EWO

Where appropriate the education welfare officer/attendance officer will make contact with the parents and aim to establish the reason for the absence. In some cases, it may be that only one or two visits are required to re-establish regular school attendance. In cases where it appears that there are underlying problems, an initial assessment of the situation will be carried out with a view to planning any appropriate multi-agency intervention and action required. In all cases the education welfare officer/attendance officer will take appropriate steps to support regular school attendance, keeping all parties aware of recommended actions.

Stage 4 Warning Letter

Should there be no significant improvement in attendance; a warning letter may be sent to parents reminding them of their legal responsibility with regard to ensuring regular school attendance. In the first instance the warning letter will be sent by the school. If no improvement is evident the senior education welfare officer will send a formal warning letter.

Stage 5 School Attendance Meeting

Parents may be required to attend a meeting in school in order to discuss their child's attendance and to examine ways of working together to improve the situation. The meeting may be chaired by the headteacher, senior teacher, head of year or education welfare officer/attendance officer and attended by either the special educational needs co-ordinator (ENCO), or a designated teacher with particular responsibility for attendance. An Individual Action Plan (IAP) may be drawn up to assist the parents and the pupil in reaching agreed targets. Progress will be reviewed after an agreed period of time.

Stage 6 DfESC Attendance Panel

Should no significant improvement be achieved at the end of the agreed period, either:

- a) The Individual Action Plan (IAP) should be re-drafted and a further review date set or
- b) The case should be referred to the DfESC attendance panel

A parent / pupil will be referred to the attendance panel where there has been no significant improvement in attendance. This is likely when the pupil has:

- sporadic attendance at school below the level expected for his / her age
- a long term record of school refusal
- where the parent has not cooperated with measures designed to improve attendance
- where poor punctuality is impacting significantly on school attendance

The panel will consist of the senior education welfare officer, senior manager from the Department for Education, Sport & Culture, Children's Service manager, school staff and officers from other departments as required.

The panel will consider individual cases meeting the above criteria, referred by the Education Welfare Service. The parent(s) and child/children (if age appropriate) will be required to attend the attendance panel meeting. The panel has the following delegated powers:

- To recommend a) referral to the parish hall with a view to prosecution or b) applying to the court for an Education Supervision Order.

The attendance panel will meet on a needs basis to consider cases where prosecution may be likely.

Stage 7 Parish Hall Enquiry / Education Supervision Order

Parish Hall Enquiry

Prior to charging parents under article 12 of the Education Law, a referral to the parish authorities will be made. Under procedures agreed with the Comite des Connetables in 1997, parent(s) will be warned to attend a parish hall enquiry with their child (if age appropriate) and asked to explain the reason for the child's poor attendance. The Education Welfare Service will provide details of the pupil's recent attendance for at least the previous 12 school weeks.

Deferred decision

The centenier may decide that the pupil's attendance / punctuality will be monitored over a period of time and if it is considered that there has been no significant improvement, and no acceptable explanation can be given for the lack of improvement, he /she may;

- a) defer charging the parents on condition the parents enrol on a parenting course
- b) defer charging the parents for a further period subject to an improvement in attendance.
- c) charge the parents, giving a date for a court appearance

Stage 8 Prosecution

Prosecutions will be initiated when parents are considered to have ignored or rejected advice given at parish hall and there is no improvement in attendance or when the terms of an ESO have been breached.

Education Supervision Orders

In line with The Education (Jersey) Law (1999), an application to the court for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) may be made. The purpose of an ESO is to place a child of compulsory school age who is not being properly educated under the supervision of the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

The ESO ensures that

- The child receives efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs, he/she may have.
- The child and parents receive sufficient support, advice and guidance.

Implications

- ESO's can be helpful where the parents find it difficult to exercise a proper influence over their child and the child's school attendance is irregular.
- An ESO gives a court's backing to the supervising officer's work and can help to bring home to parents the need to meet their legal responsibilities for their child's education.
- The Department for Education, Sport and Culture may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as instituting legal proceedings against the parents.
- Applying for an ESO would **not** be appropriate where the parents are actively hostile to intervention. In these cases the Department for Education, Sport and Culture may seek to prosecute the parents.

Following a successful application to the court for an ESO, a supervising officer will be appointed to work with the pupil and the family offering advice

and assistance as well as having the power to give directions as he/she sees fit, in order that the child receives an appropriate full time education.

Complying with Directions

If parents persistently fail to comply with directions:

- The supervising officer must draw this to the court's attention and inform the Health & Social Services Department.
- The parents must be informed in writing that they are legally required to follow the supervising officer's directions and that they may be guilty of an offence by persistently failing to comply.
- On conviction, parents are liable to a fine not exceeding level 2 on the standard scale.
- The H&SSD must investigate the child's circumstances and consider whether to act to secure the welfare of the child, provided this does not cause undue delay.
- If it is clear that improvements in attendance are not being achieved, the H&SSD has a duty to consider seeking a care order.

These stages of intervention have been streamlined to maximise the time of education welfare staff and that of colleagues from related agencies. It must be acknowledged that the procedures are subject to flexibility, providing a framework for monitoring, consultation and review between schools, parents and relevant agencies to ensure that appropriate action is taken, support offered and targets achieved.

Appendix 1

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed) (extended defined as greater than 10 school days)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed) (up to a maximum of 10 school days)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Date Issued	Issued by	Reason for Change
0.1			First Draft for review
0.2	19/08/11	[Name Redacted]	Update
0.3	May 2014	[Name Redacted]	Change of ownership to Senior Education Welfare Officer Remove instructions for using database Recognising good attendance: Remove examples of good practice

APPROVAL

Presented To	Approved by:	Date
Secondary Head Teachers		07/07/11
Primary Head Teachers		05/07/11
Police / Honorary Police	N/A	
Senior Management Team		10/05/11

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Planned review date:	Distribution:	
Associated policies	Name	Reference