

This guidance has been produced to assist your preparation for the implementation of the revised Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) Statutory Guidance from 19th August 2024 and to share some key messages ahead of the changes.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance - Guidance for Suffolk Schools

Introduction

With the fast approaching the end of this academic year, The School Attendance and wider services here at SCC (Suffolk County Council) would like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication to ensuring as many young people are in school regularly as possible. The work you do to ensure children are attending and accessing all the opportunities school can offer will have a major impact on their learning, development, choices, and chances as they mature into adults.

Thank You!

This guidance has been produced to assist your preparation for the implementation of the revised Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) Statutory Guidance from 19th August 2024 and to share some key messages ahead of the changes.

Below are links to the Key DfE documents:

[Working together to improve school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024](#)

• [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024](#)

Task Checklist in Preparation for 19th August 2024.

This half term has always proven to be a crucial period for attendance during the academic year – tying up loose ends, preparing for the next year, transition work, exam window etc. With so much to pack in, in just a few weeks we have devised a checklist that we hope will support your work on attendance. [Link to checklist](#)

WTTISA Guidance – 19th August 2024 – The role of the School Attendance Champion

It is vital the School Attendance Champion (SLT lead for attendance) and indeed ALL staff are aware of the new guidance, how this will affect the job they do and the role they play in supporting and promoting attendance. A clear and comprehensive understanding of the new guidance is essential before the start of next academic year. It is advisable key staff come together to review the document and agree a plan for implementation before schools open after the summer break.

The DfE Webinar on the role of the [School Attendance Champion](#) is a useful resource to support those undertaking this role.

Transition

Remember ALL children experience transition at the end of the academic year and so it is vital the important work schools dedicate to those leaving or arriving also needs to be considered for those staying and moving from year group to year group.

Positive transition = positive attendance, and so those first few weeks in the new academic year are crucial if schools want to maximise the opportunity for good attendance. Pupils in your

school who you know struggle to attend following a break must have plans in place to welcome them back in September.

****Remember** Any child who experiences an absence in the first week of school is 4 times more likely to end the academic year Persistent Absence (PA).**

If you want more information on transition planning, please do not hesitate to contact your EWO for support and guidance.

Attendance Policy Guidance

We have produced attendance policy guidance for schools to consider reflecting the new WTTISA guidance and the new national framework for penalty notices.

The policy guidance can be found via the Learning Hub website [HERE](#) and should be amended accordingly to reflect the specifics of your individual school.

Please note there are changes in the WTTISA guidance specifically relating to registration periods. It is important all schools understand these changes, amend their practices to reflect the new expectations and detail the changes in their attendance policies.

Attendance leaflets for schools to share with parents are available on SCC website:

[School attendance - Suffolk County Council](#)

Sharing Your Attendance Data

For the last 2 academic years, DfE have invited schools to share their attendance data to be able to produce national, regional, and county average statistics. 90% of all schools in England and Wales have signed up to this scheme and already share data on a regular basis. The sharing of information happens automatically and requires no effort on behalf of the schools once the link has been set up.

From September it will be mandatory for all schools to share their attendance information in this way. In order to be best prepared it is advised all schools have this link already established before the end of this academic year.

By sharing your attendance information, you will also be able to access the DfE database for attendance where schools can create tables, compare attendance statistics, and gain access to national, regional, and county averages.

Again, the DfE Sector Comms YouTube channel [DfE Data sharing via Wonde](#) has instructional videos for schools to access that guides on this process and how to best take advantage of the information on the DfE attendance platforms.

Attendance Codes

From 19th August 2024 there are several changes to attendance codes

Changes include:

- Removal of some historic codes
- Introduction of new codes including multi-character codes
- Introduction of Statutory Explanation

An Attendance Code Sheet for use from the 19th of Aug 2024 can be found [here](#).

Remote Learning

Under the new DfE guidance remote learning has been more clearly defined and attendance codes updated. DfE have confirmed the following:

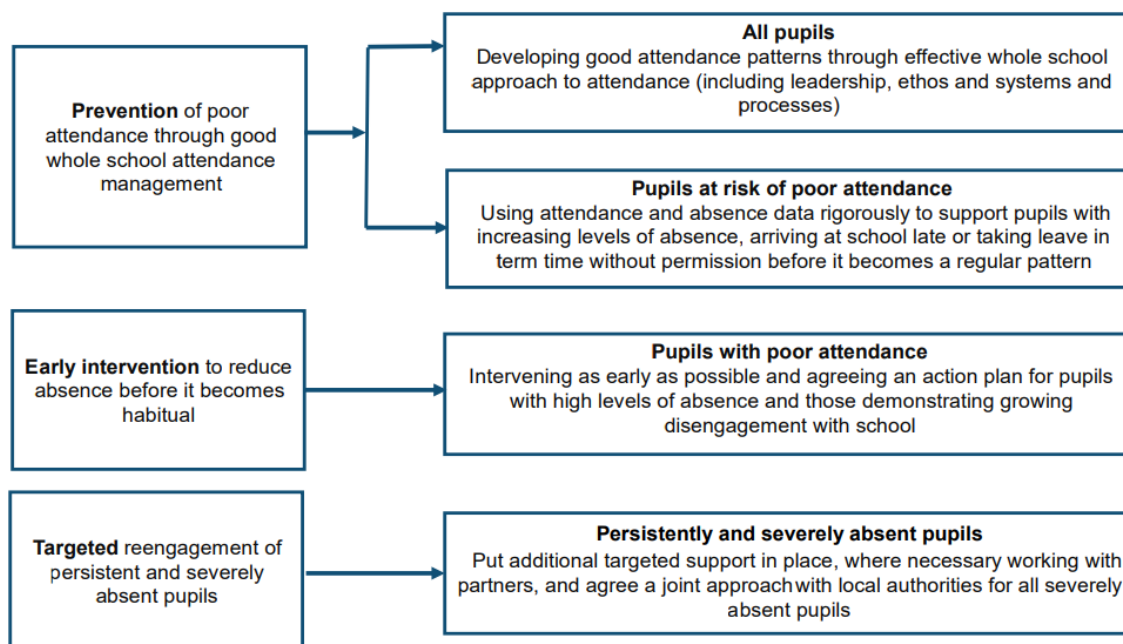
The attendance register is a legal record of which pupils are physically present in school when the register is taken for the session in question. The Department's guidance to schools on remote education (first published in 2022) makes clear that a situation where a pupil is participating in remote education must therefore be recorded with the appropriate absence code as the pupil is not physically in school at the time.

Supervision for the purpose of this code means the pupil is physically supervised by someone who meets the definition set out in the Regulations. Remote education does not meet this definition and so a pupil who is not in school and receiving such education is instead to be recorded with the appropriate authorised absence code in line with the Regulations.

In short, only pupils who are attending a session, other than at school, AND that session is physically supervised can be coded B.

Any sessions that are attended at home and/or remotely supervised must be coded with an authorised absence mark.

Effective school attendance improvement and management



A Focus on the Support First Model for Attendance.

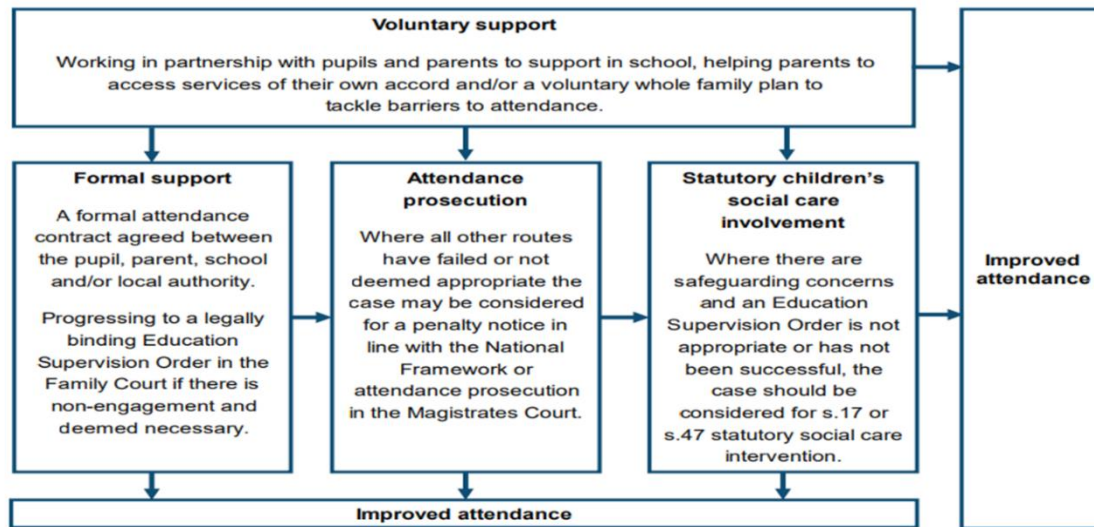
Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong, trusting relationships, and working together to put the right support in place.

For unauthorised absences not directly related to term time leave of absence support should be provided straightaway. In most cases this support is provided at school level and should start early when absence issues are first detected.

Support should be activity intended to improve the child's attendance. Examples of support include action taken in school such as written communications to parents and meetings with parents and pupils to understand barriers and plan targeted support together. The form of support will be specific to the pupil and family and could include a range of actions including additional learning support, moving tutor group or school uniform provision. Some support would involve the local authority or other community services such as an early help assessment and support, Attendance contracts, transport provision or housing support.

A template action plan to support your work with pupils and families is available [here](#)

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



Fixed Penalty Notices

Key principles

- Penalty notices are not a punishment; they are a tool to change behaviour
- If it will not change future behaviour in the individual case, use a different tool

Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

Penalty notices for holiday absence/where support is not appropriate.

Things to Consider:

- Are parents aware of the consequences of taking holiday in term time? Are parents aware of the higher second PN; 2 PN limit; risk of prosecution even below the threshold?
- How effective are letters to parents refusing requests for term time holiday?
- Do schools try to speak with and dissuade parents when a holiday is requested?
- What else can be done to reduce holiday absence? Penalty notices are not the answer on their own.
- Do schools use peer pressure effect to influence parents? E.g. X% of parents do not take leave in term time.
- Are parents aware of what topics will be missed / the disruption for their child / to teachers / peers / the curriculum?
- Do schools plan the term so that ends of term are exciting and important?

- ‘Assume positive intent’ in discussions with parents and take harm reduction approach (can we reduce absence of 3 weeks to 1 week?)
- Taking children out of school during term time can damage their education; if children are taken out of school for a one week holiday every year and have an average number of days off for sickness and medical appointments, then by the time they finish year 11 at age 16 they will have missed the equivalent of two entire terms of their schooling.

The new national framework includes a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

There is a requirement that when the national threshold is met, schools make an assessment on a case-by-case basis whether a penalty notice should be issued. The following should be considered:

- If support or further support is appropriate instead, and whether there is a different tool or legal intervention that is more likely to improve attendance in this particular case.
- The option of using a Notice to Improve where support is appropriate but not working or being engaged with, to give a parent a final opportunity to engage in support before they are issued with a penalty notice if it is appropriate in the individual case.

Notice to Improve

If the national threshold is met and offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent(s) or have not worked, then a Notice to Improve should usually be sent. This is to make clear that without improvement or engagement in support, legal action is likely to be taken.

- Use the threat of a PN to encourage parent to engage in support and change behaviours.
- Timescales as outlined in the Notice to Improve have been set to encourage swift action and bring about quick impact but are long enough for that improvement to be sustained. The move to a FPN can be taken before the end of the notice period when no improvement is evident.
- Schools can provide ongoing feedback during the improvement period to motivate families

A notice to improve template has been provided. This notice will be sent by the school and is co-signed by the local authority. Schools should continue to monitor attendance during the notice period and keep records updated regarding progress for sharing during termly visits support and where further action is required.

[A Notice to improve template is available here:](#)

Changes to the FPN Costs & Criteria from 19th August 2024

- An increase to the rate of a penalty notices from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days, and £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days.

- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period being charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.
- A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).

A summary flow chart is available here – <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/Summary-of-New-National-Framework-for-Penalty-Notices.pdf>

The SCC Code of Conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices which must be adhered to by all schools issuing a penalty notice has been revised to reflect the changes and can be found here: [Link to code of conduct](#)

Fixed Penalty SCC Portal close down

PLEASE NOTE: the current portal will close on the 31st of July 2024 for updates to take place. All FPN requests for the academic year 23/24 must be submitted by this date.

The proposed date for relaunching the portal will be 9th September were requests for FPN relating to absences since 19th August 2024 will be accepted.

The Use of FPN Funds

Monies collected are used for administration of the penalty notice system and prosecutions. Any surplus left after this is spent on attendance support. This revenue is not considered part of wider local authority funding and is not used to fund the core attendance expectations.

Examples of how surplus this year has been spent:

Supporting case work which allows us to keep the costs to school as low as possible.

Access to Educational Psychologist for EWO's with challenging cases.

Bikes, Bus passes and other transport for pupils in emergency accommodation to allow them to remain on role at their current school.

Mental health toolkit training for EWO's

An Attendance outreach project with rural schools.

DfE Webinars

The DfE have produced a range of webinars to support with the implementation of the guidance which can be viewed using the link below. Further webinars will be uploaded following the general election on the 5th of July 2024.

[Working together to improve school attendance local authority effective practice examples - YouTube](#)

Microsoft Teams

East of England Regional meeting

2024-01-09 15:06 UTC

Presented by
LAVERY, Vicci

Organized by
LAVERY, Vicci