

Attendance Graduated Response – “Attendance is everybody’s business.”



Introduction

Every child of statutory school age in the Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Local Authority (LA) is **entitled to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need or disability (SEND)** they may have. This document has been designed to primarily support schools but also the wider professional network within BCP to help pupils attend school and to **access the education they are entitled to**. BCP recognises that “**attendance is everybody’s business**” and improvements in overall school attendance can only be achieved through a **holistic approach across the LA’s multi-agency teams**. A partnership that includes pupils, families, education, health, social care, police, community, and voluntary sector agencies all working together to **bring about positive change using solution-focused, restorative, and trauma-informed approaches**. When collaborating in this way, we can strive towards our LA goal to significantly reduce persistent (<90%) and severe (<50%) absenteeism. Within BCP, we aim to address the underlying, and often complex, issues families and communities face. We acknowledge that for some pupils and their families, the barriers to accessing education are often specific to individual circumstances and may be both within and beyond the school gates. We have a commitment to working as a **team around the family** and **meeting needs to support excellent school attendance and improve outcomes for all**, including **safeguarding** our pupils. Furthermore, BCP want to **build positive attendance habits from the earliest opportunity** and intervening when barriers initially arise to prevent them becoming embedded. By discussing non-attendance in real terms of learning and opportunities lost (rather than just a %), this will keep pupils at the centre of the conversation. Raising the profile of regular school attendance with pupils and their families will **increase the chances of pupils achieving their full potential, both academically and from a social and emotional perspective**. To inform our approach, we adhere to the **statutory: ‘Working together to improve school attendance’** Department for Education (DfE) guidance ([Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). It is important for schools, the LA, academy trusts, governing bodies and parents/carers **to be aware of individual responsibilities relating to attendance**, please refer to: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Possible support options within this ‘Attendance Graduated Response’ have been categorised into three stages (summarised in the graphic below):

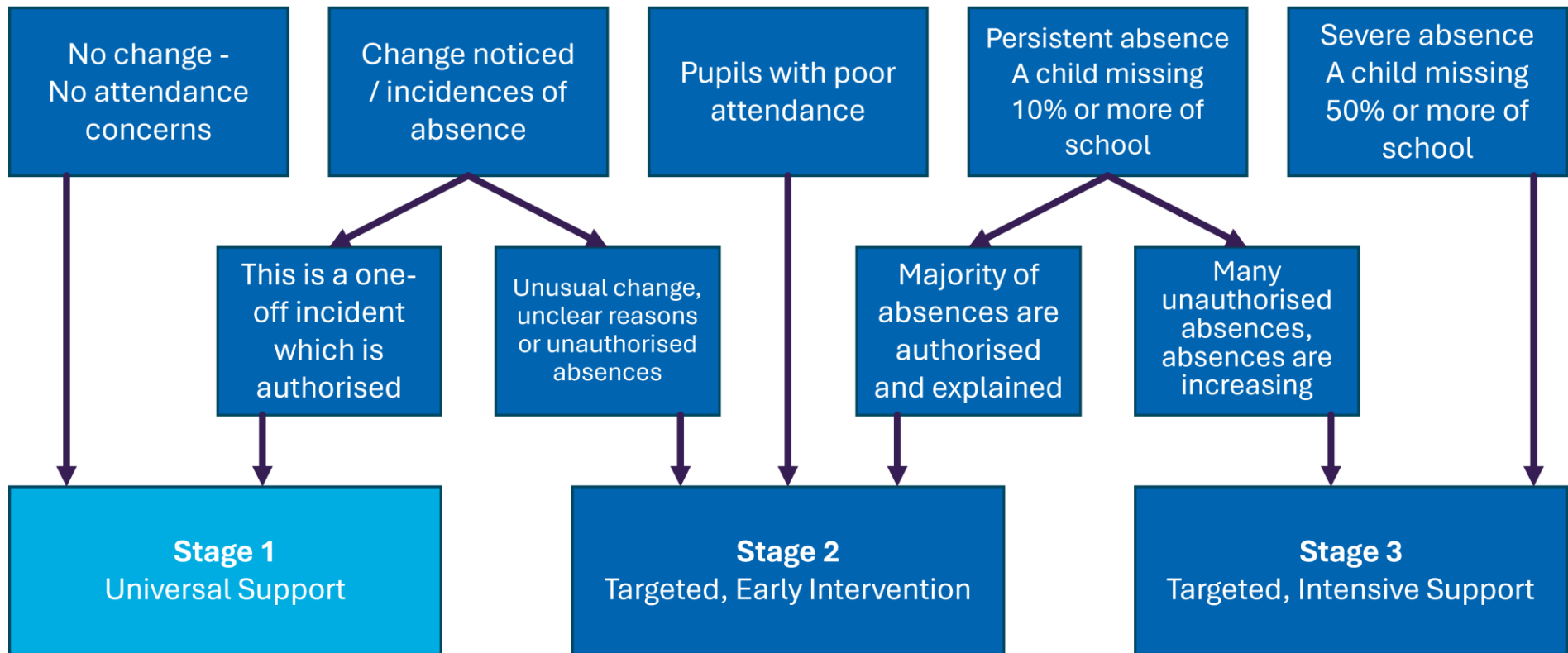
Stage One – Universal support for all pupils: **preventative** approaches.

Stage Two – Targeted support for pupils where there are attendance concerns: **early intervention** approaches.

Stage Three – Intensive support for pupils where there are persistent or severe attendance concerns: **targeted support** approaches.

Universal Support for all children

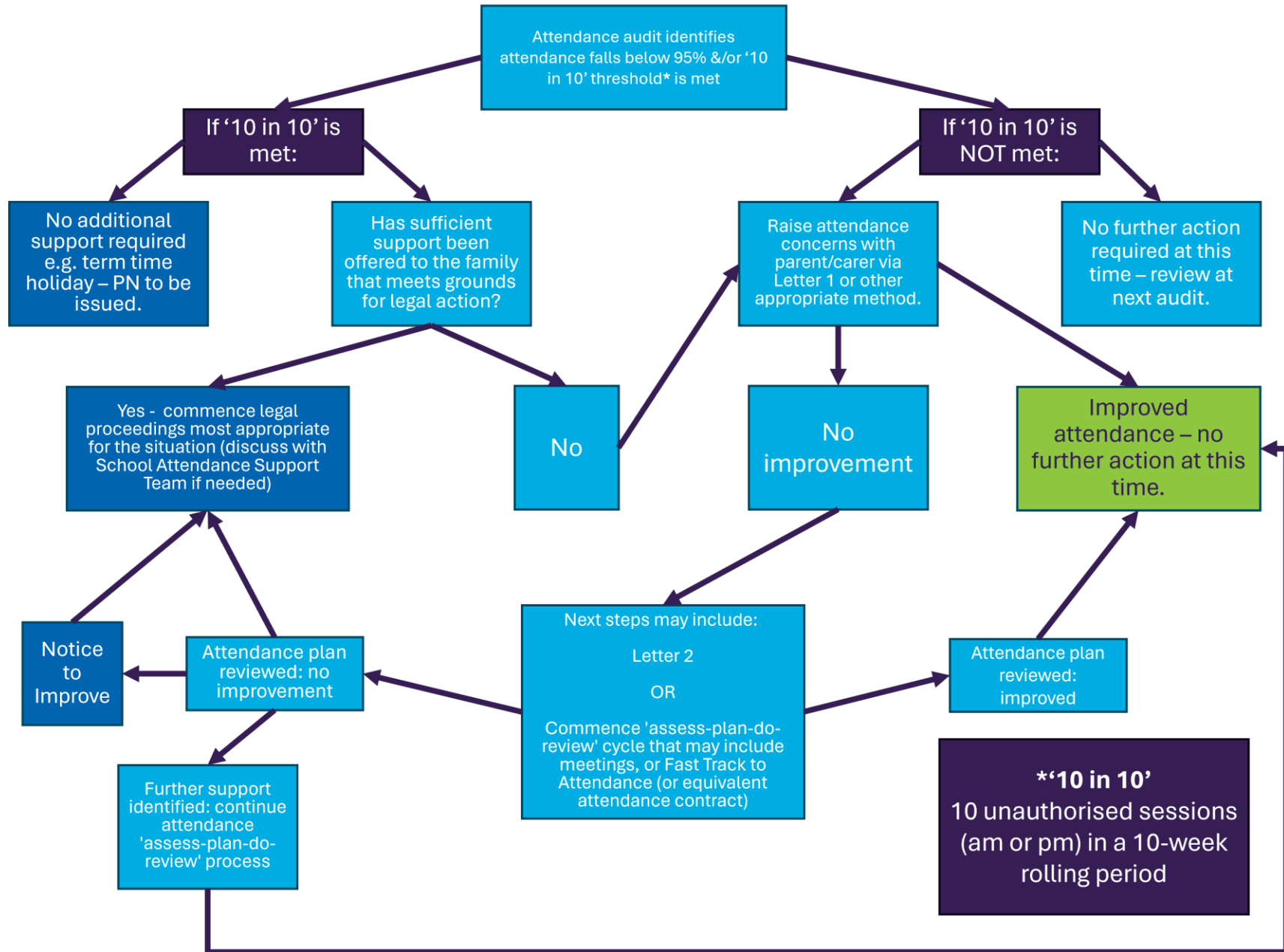
All children are monitored for patterns and changes in behaviour around school attendance.



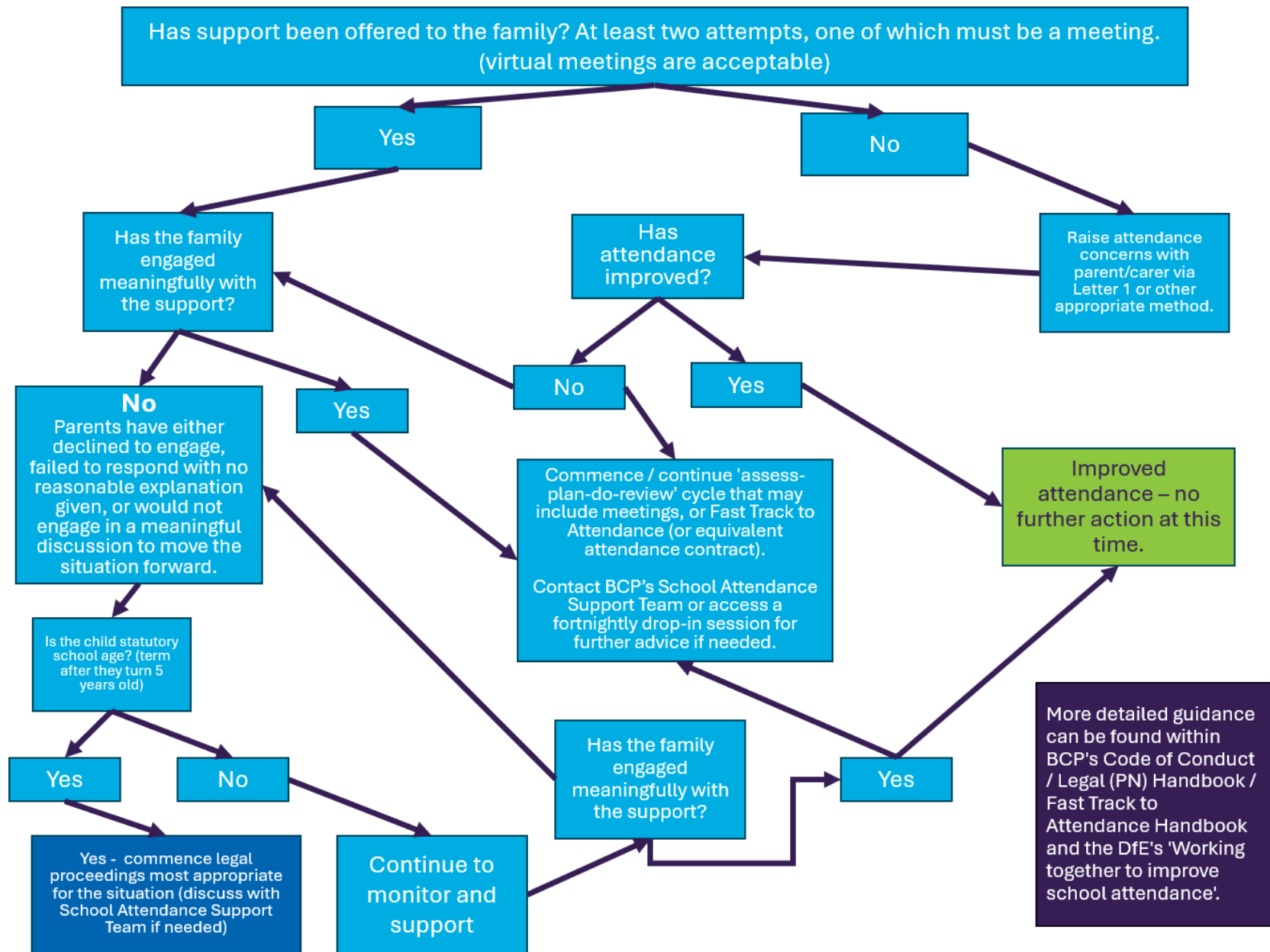
Schools should always follow their own safeguarding procedures where a child is absent from school and hasn't been seen.

(Best practice is for 'safe and well checks' to be completed or child to be seen every 10 school days as a minimum.)

Attendance auditing processes



If '10 in 10' is met or below 95% and not a holiday PN:



More detailed guidance can be found within BCP's Code of Conduct / Legal (PN) Handbook / Fast Track to Attendance Handbook and the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance'.

Assess-plan-do-review

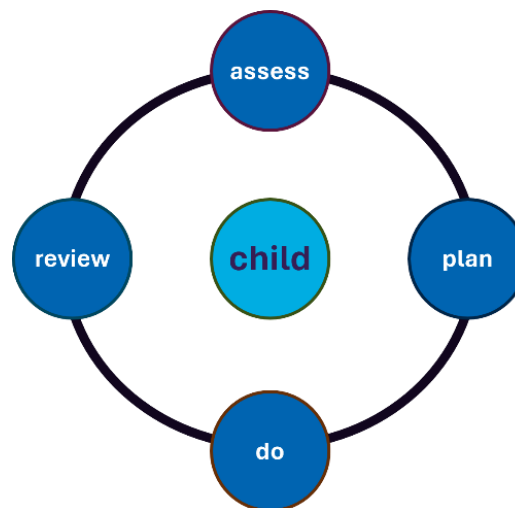
We recommend an **'assess-plan-do-review' approach** to monitoring attendance which **builds strong relationships between schools, pupils and their families** and utilises a range of strategies to improve attendance when necessary. These should be **realistic, sustainable and involve all relevant partners, including the family**, so they **feel empowered to be part of the solution**. There is a general expectation that **schools should complete a cycle of 'assess-plan-do-review' before requesting support** from the BCP School Inclusion service as this will be our initial recommendation. BCP School Attendance Support Team can provide a template for documenting this process on request.

Assess – Identification of barriers. Time should be taken to discuss the possible barriers for the pupil and family to school attendance and understanding possible past experiences that may be impacting it.

Plan – Action plans should be developed in partnership with everyone involved and clearly documented. The purpose of the planning stage is to find possible solutions for the previously identified barriers, which may include reasonable adjustments. It should state who is responsible for each action and by when. Ideally this would be for a 10-week period initially, with a mid-way review.

Do – Deliver the plan as agreed with all partners involved, to the timescales agreed.

Review – As with all interventions, it is important to review and reflect on what has or has not worked before re-assessing the needs and developing a new plan considering what has been learned from the previous plan(s). Has it raised more questions that need to be addressed in the assessment stage? What next steps need to be taken?



Legal action

Where parents/carers decide to have their child registered at school, they have a **legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly**. As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools and local authorities should always work together with other local partners to **understand the barriers to attendance and provide support**. Where that is not successful, or is not engaged with, **the law protects pupils' right to an education** and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, enforce it through prosecuting parents/carers. **Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age** and decisions should be made on an **individual case by case basis**. Where appropriate, and it is evidenced that support put in place has failed, **legal action should be considered but should work alongside continued attempts to engage with and support the child and family involved**. For the use of Penalty Notices for parents/carers that choose to take their children away on an unauthorised holiday during term-time, additional support is unlikely to be appropriate. Further information about the use of Penalty Notices for unauthorised holidays can be found in **BCP's Code of Conduct and Legal Handbook; letter templates can be provided by the BCP School Attendance Support Team**. Additionally, **schools and local authorities should adhere to the guidance within the 'Attendance Legal Intervention' recommendations** (Chapter 6): [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is **everyone's responsibility** and safeguarding procedures should always be followed as a priority. **Poor attendance can be an indicator of a wider safeguarding issue** and each case should be looked at individually to assess whether there are other concerns and additional indicators for that pupil. As stated in the 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance ([Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)), persistent absence from education for the whole or part of the day maybe a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues for that pupil. It is also important to **help prevent absent pupils from becoming a child missing in education (CME) in the future**. All partners should use the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance ([Pan-Dorset Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Manual \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)) when considering safeguarding concerns and should additionally refer to the BCP LSCB Neglect Practice Toolkit when considering **educational neglect**.

School Attendance Support Team

Every BCP school has a **linked Attendance Support Worker (ASW)** who works within BCP's **School Attendance Support Team**. Their work supports schools in the following ways (please note, this is a non-case holding role):

- Termly/annual in-person or virtual **Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs)** with each of their linked schools to **monitor the attendance of persistently and severely absent pupils**. This is in response to guidance from: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Chapter 4 – 'Expectations of Local Authorities').
- Termly '**Attendance Forums**' are delivered by the Senior Inclusion Officer (Julia Walton) via Teams for school attendance staff. The focus of these sessions is **providing local/national updates** and an opportunity to **share good practice from the local area**.
- Fortnightly **drop-in Q&A sessions via Teams** with the Senior Inclusion Officer are available for any school attendance staff to access as needed.
- **Half-termly newsletters** are sent to school attendance staff with local/national news and updates as well as any reminders about important dates or training.
- School attendance staff can link with their ASW between Targeting Support Meetings for **information and guidance** or request support from other Inclusion teams via: schoolinclusion@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Key information about this service can be found:

- Attendance Support Team (contensis.com)
- BCP's Code of Conduct, Legal Handbook and Fast Track to Attendance Handbook

Persistently absent pupils are defined as having attendance below 90%.

Severely absent pupils are defined as having attendance below 50%.

Any pupil below 90% attendance should be monitored and schools can use this document to guide their plans for these pupils.

Stage One – Universal support for all pupils: preventative approaches

It is important for schools, the LA, academy trusts, governing bodies and parents/carers **to be aware of individual responsibilities relating to attendance**, please refer to: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

	Approach / Intervention	Notes
School policy and practice	Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build positive relationships between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to and understand the barriers to attendance when pupils are absent. - Support pupils and parents/carers to address any in-school barriers. - Work with the LA and other local partners to support families with out of school barriers. - Intensify support where absence does not improve, or earlier support is not engaged with.
	Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make attendance central to the school’s vision and continuously work to improve attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognise interplay between attendance and wider improvement. - Have a dedicated Senior Attendance Champion who is part of the school’s senior leadership team. - Train all staff on the importance of attendance to ensure consistent messages from everyone at the school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource attendance support appropriately. - Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality of all pupils. - Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. - Recognise that pupils missing in education can be a vital safeguarding warning. - Create a positive environment where pupils will want to attend, learn and thrive. - Welcome in the morning at the gate / classroom door by school staff. Every child is welcome and part of the school community. - Developing a school culture which informs and supports development of resilience and the importance of a growth mindset. - Whole school assemblies to raise the importance of regular attendance in school. Discussions should focus on the positives of being in school every day e.g. learning opportunities, new experiences, friendships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils should be warmly welcomed back after absences by school staff. - A behaviour policy which shares a vision for the school culture and ethos, clearly detailing what behaviours are permitted and prohibited: Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff Feb 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear school attendance policy that is easily accessible on the school website for families: Working together to improve school attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk) (pages 11-12) - The policy should provide the name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion from the school’s senior leadership team. - The attendance policy should clearly detail the school’s own graduated response to monitoring attendance and be reviewed periodically. This includes daily attendance processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the attendance policy is followed and understood by staff, parents/carers, and pupils.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance policies should be personalised to each school’s individual setting, although may follow an academy trust format. - The policy can explain how good attendance will be incentivised, how persistently and severely absent pupils will be supported and what legal interventions may get utilised. - BCP School Attendance Support Team have an ‘attendance policy checklist’ available for schools to use when reviewing their attendance policies – please ask your linked ASW.
	<p>Accurately complete admissions and attendance registers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and accurately record the admission register in line with regulations. - As a minimum, schools will be expected to share with the LA: new pupil, deletion, attendance and sickness returns (page 21, <u>Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)</u> (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retain registers for 6 years from date of entry. - Only grant leaves of absence in specific circumstances. - Set clear day-to-day processes for following up absences. - Regularly update parents/carers on their child’s attendance and absence. - <u>Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)</u> (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Chapter 8 – ‘Contents of the attendance register’) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All applicable school staff should have training in completing registers in an accurate and timely manner. - Contact BCP School Attendance Support Team if guidance is needed about attendance codes for specific cases.
	<p>Clear expectations and procedures that are available to everyone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to the ‘Summary of responsibilities’ guidance to inform who does what part and when for attendance, including parents/carers: <u>Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)</u> (publishing.service.gov.uk) - Ensure parents/carers have been clearly communicated with about how they should report absences and by when. - Schools to inform parents/carers of their attendance expectations when they first join the school and reminders of these at the start of each academic year thereafter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasise to parents/carers that they are responsible for their children being in school every day the school is open, except when a statutory reason applies. - Information evenings, letters/texts/emails and infographics (BCP Council ones available) to be shared with parents/carers promoting the importance of regular school attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DfE <u>toolkit</u> for schools for communicating with families and <u>guidance</u> for parents/carers. - Have robust, daily processes to follow up absences. Unauthorised and unreported absences should be followed up in a timely manner and follow safeguarding processes if necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools should remind parents of NHS guidance: <u>Is my child too ill for school? - NHS</u> (www.nhs.uk)
	<p>Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A member of the senior leadership team should be the school’s dedicated Senior Attendance Champion with responsibility for understanding the school role in the <u>Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)</u> (publishing.service.gov.uk) - Alongside the Senior Attendance Champion, there may be other members of staff supporting with attendance processes e.g. office administrator staff, other senior leaders, pastoral and SEND colleagues.

<p>Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Senior Attendance Champion should coordinate with pastoral, teaching, and administrative staff to analyse the data and develop action plans for monitoring attendance. These should be monitored and reviewed to measure the impact. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attendance audits are conducted by Senior Attendance Champions to review current attendance processes and identify areas of development. Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full-year data. Benchmark against local, regional and national levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In line with the new Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) guidance, schools are expected to “monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This should go beyond headline percentages and should look at individual pupils, year groups and cohorts (including their punctuality) across the school... secondary schools may look at further patterns of attendance within a session to ensure pupils are attending all timetabled lessons” (pages 19-21). - Senior Attendance Champions should be supporting pupils who have absence in the 5-15% range, a group that has significantly increased post-pandemic. This is a priority because attendance barriers for these children are more likely to be in school and a focus here can help target preventative action and avoid non-attendance becoming more problematic. For example, the class teacher/tutor may be able to monitor and implement support. - Schools sharing daily attendance data can now access absence bandings report within their ‘Monitor your school attendance tool’: View your education data - This feature will allow schools to identify quickly the distribution of pupils across five percentage point absence bands and is filterable by key characteristics including free school meals and SEND. The new tools will also allow schools to compare their absence profile with more granular, historic national data table and benchmark against local and national trends. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools should also consider how their pupil premium funding can be linked to supporting attendance. - Schools should plan for the double transition from primary to secondary school and from Year 7 to Year 8, critical points where attendance tends to drop off. The drop into Year 7 is particularly marked in the national data for children eligible for free school meals; the Year 8 change for all pupils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide regular reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions.
<p>‘Attendance is everybody’s business’ approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class teachers/tutors and school support staff have the most consistent contact with pupils and parents/carers for their class. However, schools should recognise that a pupil’s ‘safe person’ in school may not always be their class teacher/tutor. - Office staff are likely to be the first point of contact for reporting absences and so all should be aware of attendance processes. - Collaborative working to monitor attendance e.g. staff meetings/briefings and this should also include any support staff who play a key role in building relationships with pupils and families. - Pastoral and inclusion staff to regularly update other colleagues if attendance is impacted by familial or other circumstances.
<p>Staff training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide additional staff training where need arises. All relevant staff should be sufficiently trained in the importance of recording timely and accurate registers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to SkillGate for BCP Council training opportunities. - Fortnightly drop-in sessions for school attendance staff to ask questions held by BCP School Attendance Support Team online via Teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance Forum sessions delivered termly by BCP School Attendance Support Team online via Teams. - DfE webinar recordings share updates to government guidance and good practice: Attendance - YouTube - BCP have an Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) pathway in development which will aid schools with early identification and provide strategies to support this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools may also consider booking onto EBSA training for colleagues and this can complement any trauma-informed approaches schools choose to adopt.
Positive reinforcement for attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use recognition and rewards to talk positively about attendance and celebrate when it is good or has improved. - Whilst celebrating 100% attendance is important, this should not be the only occasion pupils are praised for attendance as many pupils for various reasons will not achieve this. - Provide regular opportunities throughout the academic year for pupils to be rewarded for attendance, rather than just at the end of the academic year. For example, any pupil with [100%] / [improved] / [95%+] attendance during [date] and [date] will receive [reward]. - Positive reinforcement which focuses on increasing intrinsic motivation in pupils' attitudes to attendance. This should be tailored to the pupil's social and emotional needs and may require a discrete (rather than public) approach. - Parents/carers should also receive positive communications from school in relation to regular or improved attendance. - Parent/carer consultation meetings are an opportunity for teaching staff to positively reinforce the importance of regular attendance.
Unreported absences are given welfare phone calls/home visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All absences where prior notice has not been given should be followed up as soon as possible by the school to confirm why the child is absent and identify if there are any welfare or safeguarding concerns. - If appropriate, a home visit may be required to ensure a pupil's safety. This can also support communication and positive engagement with the parent/carer and pupil. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow school safeguarding and attendance monitoring processes. - Best practice recommends completing welfare visits ('safe and well' checks) at least every 10 school days to ensure the child is safeguarded when they have not been present in school. Alternatively, the pupil may be seen by school staff or other professionals in another capacity.
Appointment evidence requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requesting that parents/carers provide evidence of appointments for authorisation of absence e.g. dental, medical, or other appointments which are unavoidable in term time. - Use infographics (BCP School Attendance Support Team can provide on request) to reflect the importance of regular attendance, emphasising that routine medical appointments should be organised outside of school hours where possible.
Early identification of needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a school culture where concerns are raised early: learning needs (educational and social/emotional) can be addressed, preventing them from declining and affecting attendance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School staff to be having informal discussions with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity and then formalising this if necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow the school's SEND graduated response in the first instance.
Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BCP Educational Psychologist team can offer advice for EBSA support in schools: Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) / Education Psychology Service (eduknowledgehub.co.uk) - Alternatively, the Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST) may also provide support: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) – CAMHS Dorset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools to identify reasons for EBSA can include: School Refusal Assessment scale (School Avoidance 101: Assessment Scale & Parent Resources) and Landscape of the School (BCP School Attendance Team can share these tools and other similar templates)
Whole school approach to mental health / dedicated Senior Mental Health Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools to value and emphasise the importance of looking after mental health, as well as physical health (for pupils and staff). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - 5 Steps to Mental Health and Wellbeing Anna Freud - Senior mental health lead training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Friendship and social interactions support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assemblies, curriculum and emotional literacy interventions planned for to support pupils with managing and building friendships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools may use social stories to help pupils understand how to cope with a range of social situations. - Break and lunchtime support staff to be present with pupils and model appropriate social interactions and conflict resolution strategies. This may include providing a range of activities to facilitate cooperative/competitive games, dedicated quiet areas and creative opportunities.
Positive approach to Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff to understand SEND and the school to embed a positive approach that enables an accessible school environment. This may prevent attendance concerns arising for children with SEND. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow the school's SEND graduated response process. - Work with families to mitigate anxious feelings and communicate expectation of regular attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with families to develop specific support for pupils with SEND. - Establish strategies to remove barriers in-school for SEND pupils. - Ensure joined up pastoral support is in place for SEND pupils. - Make referrals to, and work with, external agencies as appropriate. - Consider whether a time-limited phased return would be appropriate. - Liaise with BCP SEND team as necessary: The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole SEND Local Offer - BCP Council - For pupils with an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP), liaise with the school's link worker: BCP Council EHCP Case Officers
Attendance contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent/carer and either the school (except for independent schools and non-maintained special schools) or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision.

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.- Parents/carers cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in their absence.- There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution.- Refer to pages 48-50 for more information: <u>Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">- BCP recommends 'Fast Track to Attendance' as a model (found here: <u>Attendance Support Team (eduknowledgehub.co.uk)</u>) but acknowledges that schools may have their own similar versions of this. It is a 10-week process with a mid-way review. |
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Notice to Improve

- A Notice to Improve will normally be issued by the school where the pupil is on roll. The LA can issue a Notice to Improve in cases where they are most appropriately placed to do so, including where a pupil is being provided Alternative Provision commissioned by the LA.
- If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent/carer or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents/carers a final chance to engage in support and improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.
- The improvement period should be between 3 and 6 school weeks (this can straddle school holidays, including the summer holidays if necessary).
- The criteria for improvement can be varied according to individual circumstances. The criteria that is used needs to be clearly stated in the Notice to Improve. Conventional criteria is no more than 10% unauthorised absence in the specified period.
- The responsibility to review the attendance at the end of the specified period lies with the issuer of the Notice to Improve. The parent/carer needs to be informed of the outcome, including whether a Penalty Notice is being issued. Where there is insufficient improvement, a Penalty Notice can be requested using the PN01 form and supplying the documents requested in the accompanying checklist.
- Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice before the improvement period has ended. The parent/carer should be informed before a Penalty Notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.
- A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).
- Where a Notice to Improve is used, it should be issued in line with processes set out in the BCP Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.
- Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to the BCP Legal Handbook.
- Refer to pages 58-59 for more information: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Penalty Notice

- Penalty Notices are issued to parents/carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.
- Penalty Notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence.
- A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent/carer or parents/carers who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).
- 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).
- Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct.
- Refer to the 'National Framework for Penalty Notices' (pages 56-61) for more information: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118222/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance.pdf)

Stage Two – Targeted support for pupils where there are attendance concerns: early intervention approaches

When there are concerns about a pupil’s attendance it is important to work with the **pupil and their family to understand and address the reasons for absence**, including **any in-school barriers to attendance**. Where out of school barriers are identified, **signpost and support access to any required services** in the first instance. **Working as a multi-agency team should see all partners prioritising attendance as part of the wider plan**. It is important for schools, the LA, academy trusts, governing bodies and parents/carers **to be aware of individual responsibilities relating to attendance**, please refer to:

	Approach / Intervention	Notes
School policy and practice	Targeted communication to parents/carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phone calls, texts, emails, letters, parent/carer meetings (virtual or in-person). - Ensuring that the parents/carers are aware of their child’s current level of attendance. - Parent/carer meetings provide the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the situation and what the pupil is experiencing, helping to identify the barriers to attendance. - DfE toolkit for schools for communicating with families and guidance for parents/carers. - BCP School Attendance Support Team can provide schools with letter templates on request.
	Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with local community groups and other schools in the area. - Make the necessary returns to the LA and work jointly with the school’s linked Attendance Support Worker and other partners when needed/of benefit to the pupil. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign up to share data electronically. - Inform a pupil’s social worker and/or youth justice service worker of unexplained absences.
	Late gates / procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Usually conducted by senior leader staff in schools to address concerns with lateness of pupils. - Having a clearly identified procedure for how late pupils enter school allows school staff to track patterns / pupils who are regularly late and have initial conversations with families about reasons for lateness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lateness processes should be clearly defined within school attendance policy.
	Medical / additional evidence requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) states “schools should not routinely request that parents/carers provide medical evidence to support illness absences” and it is “only where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.” (pages 86-87) - If schools are following Fast Track to Attendance (or similar) or have concerns about reasons given for absences, they may inform parents/carers that for them to decide about whether the absence was unavoidable or not, any additional evidence that can be provided will support school to make the decision. Where there is no additional evidence, it is likely that school will unauthorise.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examples of additional evidence may include a GP appointment confirmation text/email/card, appointment letter, prescription evidence, compliment slip from GP. - Schools should use what they know already of the pupil's absence history and consider school-based evidence e.g. if school staff observed them to be unwell at school or if there is an outbreak of an illness in the wider school community spreading then additional evidence from the parent/carer would not be necessary. - Requesting additional evidence for absences could also be considered if it supports the wider plan for the pupil and help all partners involved understand the barriers further. - Additional evidence may also help schools ascertain which attendance code is most appropriate (pages 24, 86): Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The DfE has published guidance on medical requests for mental health related absences: Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk) (page 10) - Schools can request support from the school nursing team within BCP: Dorset HealthCare :: Requesting school nursing support - Child Health and Disabilities (CHAD) team information: Child Health and Disabilities Team (CHAD) - BCP Council
In-school pastoral / attendance support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It may be necessary for the school's Senior Attendance Champion to work with the pastoral or SEND staff within school to identify barriers and support delivery of an action plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reasonable adjustments may include, but are not limited to: adjusted start and end times; alternative site entrances/exits; uniform modifications; minibus collection; free breakfast club; meet and greets from specific school staff; use of therapy animals; quiet learning spaces or sensory breaks when necessary; adaptations to timetables and curriculum if appropriate. These will be decided on an individual basis.
Home visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus should be on welfare, safeguarding and support to help the pupil attend school e.g. sharing social stories. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These ideally would be planned for in advance but may be unannounced if there are concerns as to the whereabouts of the pupil e.g. unreported absence by parent/carer and no response to attempts to contact from school staff. - These are an opportunity to support communication and positive engagement with the parent/carer.
Analyse data patterns for absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular attendance auditing by the Senior Attendance Champion will include reviewing data to identify patterns of non-attendance for pupils where attendance has fallen below 90%. - Consideration should be given to specific days of the week or subjects missed, start/end of week absences, reasons cited by parents/carers.
Team around the Family (TAF) or Team around the Child (TAC) meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used to bring together the family and relevant professionals from within the multiagency network to identify the barriers and agree next joint steps to begin problem-solving these. - The lead professional should coordinate this – usually this will be a school member of staff, unless there is another identified professional better placed. - Following a TAF/TAC meeting you may need to refer the pupil or members of their family to external agencies who can provide specialist support to help remove an identified barrier.
Attendance contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent/carer and either the school (except for independent schools and non-maintained special schools) or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate. - An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. - Parents/carers cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in their absence. - There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution. - Refer to pages 48-50 for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BCP recommends 'Fast Track to Attendance' as a model (found here: Attendance Support Team (eduknowledgehub.co.uk)) but acknowledges that schools may have their own similar versions of this. It is a 10-week process with a mid-way review.
<p>Friendships / social interactions support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools to consider different ways they can support pupils with creating and maintaining friendships. - Intervening when social interactions are difficult for some pupils and may become problematic on attendance. - This may be addressed through assemblies, curriculum, emotional literacy interventions, break and lunch support staff monitoring, restorative work, friendship 'buddies' or peer mentoring between older and younger pupils. - Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) network offer some free resources and links to accredited trainers in our local area: Useful Resources – ELSA Network
<p>Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BCP Educational Psychologist team can offer advice for EBSA support in schools: Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) / Education Psychology Service (eduknowledgehub.co.uk) - Alternatively, the Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST) may also provide support: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) – CAMHS Dorset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools to identify reasons for EBSA can include: School Refusal Assessment scale (School Avoidance 101: Assessment Scale & Parent Resources) and Landscape of the School (BCP School Attendance Support Team can share these tools and other similar templates) - Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) network offer some free resources and links to accredited trainers in our local area: Useful Resources – ELSA Network
<p>Behaviour support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools should implement a behaviour policy in line with guidance found here: Behaviour in schools guidance sept 22 (contensis.com) - If pupils become at risk of suspensions or exclusions, schools should refer to BCP guidance for reporting these: Exclusion and Alternative Provision Team (contensis.com) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - Behaviour in Schools - Advice for headteachers and school staff Feb 2024 (publishing.service.gov.uk)
<p>Individualised rewards and recognitions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The use of individualised rewards for identified children where it is felt it will support attendance. - Using rewards and recognition that motivate the pupil. Examples may include certificates, praise text/email/note to the family, positive behaviour/house points or something tailored to their specific interests.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition also works effectively when it is subtle or verbal, helping the pupil to feel part of and wanted by the school community. - The pupil’s own social and emotional needs and levels of comfort should be taken into consideration e.g. whether this is best done publicly or more discretely. - Provide regular opportunities throughout the academic year for pupils to be rewarded for attendance, rather than just at the end of the academic year. For example, any pupil with [100%] / [improved] / [95%+] attendance during [date] and [date] will receive [reward].
	Access to online learning / interventions outside of main teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to work through the school’s online learning system e.g. Google Classroom or similar. - DfE guidance should be consulted to ensure any online learning provided is appropriate: Providing remote education: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - Targeted interventions in small groups or 1:1 to support pupils in the interim so that missed learning doesn’t become an additional barrier to attendance and to support returning to full lessons. - Schools may provide quiet learning spaces outside of the classroom to enable pupils to access their learning but consideration should be given to how this is overseen and monitored by staff.
	Alternative curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility with the curriculum where possible to support engagement and positive education outcomes. - This may include practical learning, universal visual aids, using a range of recording methods, therapeutic curriculum, trauma informed curriculum and offering vocational subjects. - Consideration may be given to whether the pupil needs to attend certain subjects if they are becoming a barrier to attendance, but this will be on an individual basis and not applicable to all pupils.
SEND	Learning needs assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow the graduated SEND response in school to explore whether there are any possible learning needs for the pupil that may be creating a barrier to their attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with families to mitigate anxious feelings and communicate expectation of regular attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with families to develop specific support for pupils with SEND. - Establish strategies to remove barriers in-school for SEND pupils. - Ensure joined up pastoral support is in place for SEND pupils. - Make referrals to, and work with, external agencies as appropriate. - Consider whether a time-limited phased return would be appropriate. - Schools to adhere to the SEND code of practice: SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School SENCO to liaise with the Senior Attendance Champion as necessary. - Refer to the BCP SEND local offer of support: The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole SEND Local Offer - BCP Council - For pupils with an EHCP, a list of linked SEND case officers can be found here: BCP Council EHCP Case Officers
	Therapies – Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech and Language (SALT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children’s OT team information can be found here: Children's Occupational Therapy Team - BCP Council - Dorset SALT service (which covers BCP area) information can be found here: Dorset HealthCare :: Speech and language therapy service (Children & young people's)

	Educational Psychologist Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For advice from the Educational Psychologist team in BCP: Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) / Education Psychology Service (eduknowledgehub.co.uk)
External support	BCP School Attendance Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BCP's School Attendance Support Team have an Attendance Support Worker (ASW) linked to every school across BCP: Attendance Support Team (contensis.com) - ASWs hold termly/annual in-person or virtual Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs) with each of their linked schools to monitor the attendance of persistently and severely absent pupils. This is in response to guidance from: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) (Chapter 4 – 'Expectations of Local Authorities') - Termly 'Attendance Forums' are delivered by the Senior Inclusion Officer via Teams for school attendance staff. The focus of these sessions is sharing local/national updates and sharing good practice from the local area. - Fortnightly drop-in Q&A sessions via Teams with the Senior Inclusion Officer are available for school attendance staff to access as needed. - Half-termly newsletters are sent to school attendance staff with local/national news and updates as well as any reminders about important dates or training. - School attendance staff can link with their ASW between Targeting Support Meetings for information and guidance or request support from other Inclusion teams via: schoolinclusion@bcpcouncil.gov.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For an overview of the team, please refer to: The School Attendance team 5 minute read .docx - This team do not case hold families and primarily work with Senior Attendance Champions in schools.
	Virtual School and College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BCP's Virtual School and College supports all children in care (CIC), previously looked after children (LAC) and pupils with a social worker with regards to their education: The Virtual School and College for BCP Council - Schools should be in regular communication with social workers and the Virtual School when attendance becomes a concern. Schools should be reporting any unexplained absences at the earliest opportunity. - Attendance should be a key part of any Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) plan with clearly specified targets and actions identified for key partners to support the family with.
	Family Information Directory / Family Hubs / Parenting support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Family Information Directory (FID) details a range of support services for children and families: Search Results (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) - Family Hubs are available to parents/carers of children aged 0-18 years (or 25 years for children with SEND) and offer a range of support e.g. child development targeted groups, information and guidance / signposting, parenting programmes and stay and play sessions: Welcome to your online family hub (bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

	Mental health support / assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST) are linked to some schools across BCP and can also include all schools within their newsletter and information sharing: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) – CAMHS Dorset - Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance and effective practice examples: Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAMHS referrals via GP or Gateway service: CAMHS Gateway – CAMHS Dorset - Urgent mental health support locally: Access Mental Health Dorset (dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk) - BCP Family Information Directory (FID) signposting to mental health services: Mental Health (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
	School Nursing Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools can contact the school nursing team for advice with a child's health needs: Dorset HealthCare :: Requesting school nursing support - Parents/carers can contact Parent Line for health care advice: Dorset HealthCare :: ParentLine confidential text messaging service

Notice to Improve

- A Notice to Improve will normally be issued by the school where the pupil is on roll. The LA can issue a Notice to Improve in cases where they are most appropriately placed to do so, including where a pupil is being provided Alternative Provision commissioned by the LA.
- If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent/carer or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents/carers a final chance to engage in support and improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.
- The improvement period should be between 3 and 6 school weeks (this can straddle school holidays, including the summer holidays if necessary).
- The criteria for improvement can be varied according to individual circumstances. The criteria that is used needs to be clearly stated in the Notice to Improve. Conventional criteria is no more than 10% unauthorised absence in the specified period.
- The responsibility to review the attendance at the end of the specified period lies with the issuer of the Notice to Improve. The parent/carer needs to be informed of the outcome, including whether a Penalty Notice is being issued. Where there is insufficient improvement, a Penalty Notice can be requested using the PN01 form and supplying the documents requested in the accompanying checklist.
- Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice before the improvement period has ended. The parent/carer should be informed before a Penalty Notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.
- A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).
- Where a Notice to Improve is used, it should be issued in line with processes set out in the BCP Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.
- Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to BCP’s Legal Handbook.
- Refer to pages 58-59 for more information: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Penalty Notice

- Penalty Notices are issued to parents/carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.
- Penalty Notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence.
- A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent/carer or parents/carers who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).
- 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).
- Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct.
- Refer to the 'National Framework for Penalty Notices' (pages 56-61) for more information: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118122/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance.pdf)

Stage Three – Intensive support for pupils where there are persistent or severe attendance concerns: targeted intensive support.

When there are concerns about a pupil’s attendance it is important **work with each identified pupil and their parents/carers to understand and address the reasons for absence**, including any **in-school barriers to attendance**. Where out of school barriers are identified, **signpost and support access to any required services** in the first instance. **Working as a multi-agency team should see all partners prioritising attendance as part of the wider plan**. It is important for schools, the LA, academy trusts, governing bodies and parents/carers **to be aware of individual responsibilities relating to attendance**, please refer to: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

Please also refer to Stages One and Two to ensure that every possible approach has been taken to support attendance before these actions are required.

	Approach / Intervention	Notes
School policy and practice	Medical / additional evidence requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) states “schools should not routinely request that parents/carers provide medical evidence to support illness absences” and it is “only where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.” (pages 86-87) - If schools are following Fast Track to Attendance (or similar) or have concerns about reasons given for absences, they may inform parents/carers that for them to decide about whether the absence was unavoidable or not, any additional evidence that can be provided will support school to make the decision. Where there is no additional evidence, it is likely that school will unauthorise. - Examples of additional evidence may include a GP appointment confirmation text/email/card, appointment letter, prescription evidence, compliment slip from GP. - Schools should use what they know already of the pupil’s absence history and consider school-based evidence e.g. if school staff observed them to be unwell at school or if there is an outbreak of an illness in the wider school community spreading then additional evidence from the parent/carer would not be necessary. - Requesting additional evidence for absences could also be considered if it supports the wider plan for the pupil and help all partners involved understand the barriers further. - Additional evidence may also help schools ascertain which attendance code is most appropriate (pages 24, 86): Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The DfE has published guidance on medical requests for mental health related absences: Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk) (page 10) - Schools can request support from the school nursing team within BCP: Dorset HealthCare :: Requesting school nursing support - Child Health and Disabilities (CHAD) team information: Child Health and Disabilities Team (CHAD) - BCP Council
	Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with local community groups and other schools in the area. - Make the necessary returns to the LA and work jointly with the school’s linked Attendance Support Worker and other partners when needed/of benefit to the pupil.

<p>local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sign up to share data electronically. - Inform a pupil’s social worker and/or youth justice service worker of unexplained absences.
<p>Learning needs assessment / review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisit the review previously conducted to ascertain if learning needs are being met. Are there new needs identified through support that has already been put in place? - Follow the graduated SEND response in school to explore whether there are any possible learning needs for the pupil that may be creating a barrier to their attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apply for an EHCP if applicable. - Work with families to mitigate anxious feelings and communicate expectation of regular attendance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with families to develop specific support for pupils with SEND. - Establish strategies to remove barriers in-school for SEND pupils. - Ensure joined up pastoral support is in place for SEND pupils. - Make referrals to, and work with, external agencies as appropriate. - Consider whether a time-limited phased return would be appropriate. - Schools to adhere to the SEND code of practice: <u>SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School SENCO to liaise with the Senior Attendance Champion as necessary. - Refer to the BCP SEND local offer of support: <u>The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole SEND Local Offer - BCP Council</u> - For pupils with an EHCP, a list of linked SEND case officers can be found here: <u>BCP Council EHCP Case Officers</u>
<p>Communication with pupil and parents/carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication may be in the form of home visits, phone calls, virtual meetings, meeting in the community or school that is non-classroom based. - The purpose of these interactions are to ensure pupil is safeguarded, ascertain their wellbeing and continue to maintain relationships so that they feel connected to the school community. - School may also use this as an opportunity to do an intervention e.g. pastoral (social stories or similar) or academic (providing catch up learning).
<p>Team around the Family (TAF) or Team around the Child (TAC) meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used to bring together the family and relevant professionals from within the multiagency network to identify the barriers and agree next joint steps to begin problem-solving these. - The lead professional should coordinate this – usually this will be a school member of staff, unless there is another identified professional better placed. - Following a TAF/TAC meeting you may need to refer the pupil or members of their family to external agencies who can provide specialist support to help remove an identified barrier.
<p>Attendance contract</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent/carer and either the school (except for independent schools and non-maintained special schools) or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. - An attendance contract is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An attendance contract is not a punitive tool, it is intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution. - Parents/carers cannot be compelled to enter an attendance contract, and they cannot be agreed in their absence. - There is no obligation on the school or local authority to offer an attendance contract, and it may not be appropriate in every instance, but an attendance contract should always be explored before moving forward to an education supervision order or prosecution. - Refer to pages 48-50 for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BCP recommends 'Fast Track to Attendance' as a model (found here: Attendance Support Team (eduknowledgehub.co.uk)) but acknowledges that schools may have their own similar versions of this. It is a 10-week process with a mid-way review.
Part-time timetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part-time timetables should only be used in exceptional circumstances as laid out on pages 25-26: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) - More information can be found on pages 11-12: Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (publishing.service.gov.uk) - You should be clear on the reason why it is likely to be effective for this situation and how the pupil will be supported to get back to a full-time timetable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A part-time timetable must not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. - Part-time timetables must be reported to BCP via School Access Module (SAM) online system and updated when there is a change in the hours timetabled. - BCP School Attendance Support Team can provide a user guide for SAM if needed or alternatively, contact: synergy@bcpcouncil.gov.uk - Further information on part-time timetables can be found here: Exclusion and Alternative Provision Team (contensis.com)
Access to online learning / interventions outside of main teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to work through the school's online learning system e.g. Google Classroom or similar. - DfE guidance should be consulted to ensure any online learning provided is appropriate: Providing remote education: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) - Targeted interventions in small groups or 1:1 to support pupils in the interim so that missed learning doesn't become an additional barrier to attendance and to support returning to full lessons. - Schools may provide quiet learning spaces outside of the classroom to enable pupils to access their learning but consideration should be given to how this is overseen and monitored by staff.
Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BCP Educational Psychologist team can offer advice for EBSA support in schools: Educational Psychology Service (EPS) (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) / Education Psychology Service (eduknowledgehub.co.uk) - Alternatively, the Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST) may also provide support: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) – CAMHS Dorset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools to identify reasons for EBSA can include: School Refusal Assessment scale (School Avoidance 101: Assessment Scale & Parent Resources) and Landscape of the School (BCP School Attendance Support Team can share these tools and other similar templates)

External interventions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) network offer some free resources and links to accredited trainers in our local area: Useful Resources – ELSA Network
	Safeguarding referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unreported absences should be treated as a safeguarding concern and schools should follow their safeguarding and attendance policies accordingly. - Schools should update social workers for any pupils in social care where attendance concerns arise (along with the youth justice service / foster carers if appropriate). - BCP’s Children’s First Response Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the single point of contact for Children’s Social Care and Early Help in BCP. It provides the public and professionals with information, advice and support for children who are vulnerable and at risk and is made up of the MASH and Early Help Teams: Children’s First Response MASH - BCP Council - Schools can also contact the ‘Consultation line’ within Children’s First Response on 01202 123334 (or send an email with the same request). This is a no-names discussion about a situation and this team will provide advice and guidance for next steps. As this is anonymous, schools do not need to have parent/carer consent for a consultation and it will not be recorded. - MASH tours are available for school staff to book onto via SkillGate. They are run the first Friday of every month: BCP Council (skillgate.com)
	Early Help referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Help allows for support to be put in place at the right time to meet families’ needs prior to issues reaching crisis point. It draws upon families’ own skills and promotes self-reliance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Help services can be found here, including referrals: BCP Council Early Help Services - Family Hubs are located within the community and provide a wide range of services for families. - Schools can contact Family Hubs for information and guidance and to see what support might be available for families.
	Mental health support / assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST) are linked to some schools across BCP and can also include all schools within their newsletter and information sharing: Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHSTs) – CAMHS Dorset - Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance and effective practice examples: Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CAMHS referrals via GP or Gateway service: CAMHS Gateway – CAMHS Dorset - Urgent mental health support locally: Access Mental Health Dorset (dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk) - BCP Family Information Directory (FID) signposting to mental health services: Mental Health (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
School Nursing Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools can contact the school nursing team for advice with a child’s health needs: Dorset HealthCare :: Requesting school nursing support - Parents/carers can contact Parent Line for health care advice: Dorset HealthCare :: ParentLine confidential text messaging service 	

BCP School Inclusion Service 'pupil referral form'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools can complete a 'pupil referral form' for the BCP School Inclusion Service to triage. This gives schools an opportunity to summarise concerns, detail what support/interventions have been provided, provide an assessment of needs and an attendance / behaviour summary. It is also important that the pupil and family voices are captured. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please contact BCP School Inclusion Service for the referral form. - The triage process will decide which Inclusion team may be the most appropriate for the specific situation. This can include the Reintegration Officers (RIO) Team, Alternative Provision (AP) Team, School Attendance Support Team or possibly the Education Entitlement Board (EEB).
Elective Home Education (EHE) Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If a parent/carer has indicated that they are going to remove a pupil from school roll to be electively home educated, schools must notify the BCP EHE team: ehe@bcpcouncil.gov.uk - More information can be found: Educating your child at home (Elective Home Education) BCP (bcpcouncil.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If there are any safeguarding concerns, please follow school safeguarding processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elective home education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Children Missing Education (CME) Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If a statutory school age pupil becomes missing in education, schools should contact: cme@bcpcouncil.gov.uk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CME pupils should be reported by schools via: Sign In - Synergy (servelec-synergy.com) - More information can be found: Children Missing Education Team (eduknowledgehub.co.uk)
Alternative Provision (AP) Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil, then schools may need to consider whether providing Alternative Provision (AP) is appropriate. - Other forms of support may include mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1:1 tuition or out of hours learning. - When pupils with an EHCP require alternative provision, schools should contact their BCP SEND case officer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AP may be incorporated within a pupil's part-time timetable at school. - If attendance continues to be a concern within an AP placement, then legal proceedings may be initiated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local AP information can be found here: Exclusion and Alternative Provision Team (contensis.com) - National AP information can be found here: Alternative provision - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Legal intervention	Sufficient support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior to considering legal intervention, schools should be confident that they have offered sufficient support to families. - Refer to the flowchart taken from DfE summarising this at the end of this document Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sufficient support may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-engagement to support offered: A minimum of two attempts to engage with the family with the purpose of discussing the barriers and agreeing actions and support; with at least one of these being an opportunity to meet (can include a meeting by telephone or virtually) and that parents/carers have either declined to engage, failed to respond with no acceptable reason given or would not engage in a meaningful discussion to move the situation forward. • Engagement but no sustained improvement: School has worked with the family to undertake an assessment to fully understand reasons for absence (e.g. Early Help assessment such as PEHA screening wheel, school refusal assessment scale or an EBSA assessment/screening); at least one full cycle of ‘assess-plan-do-review’ (e.g. Fast Track to Attendance or similar); in-school support as outlined in ‘Stage 2’; involved other relevant agencies to develop a multiagency support plan. • Previous legal action: Where there has been previous legal action, including Penalty Notices (with the exception of unauthorised leave in term-time) school should have offered a follow up meeting.
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Notice to Improve

- A Notice to Improve will normally be issued by the school where the pupil is on roll. The LA can issue a Notice to Improve in cases where they are most appropriately placed to do so, including where a pupil is being provided Alternative Provision commissioned by the LA.
- If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent/carer or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents/carers a final chance to engage in support and improve attendance before a Penalty Notice is issued.
- The improvement period should be between 3 and 6 school weeks (this can straddle school holidays, including the summer holidays if necessary).
- The criteria for improvement can be varied according to individual circumstances. The criteria that is used needs to be clearly stated in the Notice to Improve. Conventional criteria is no more than 10% unauthorised absence in the specified period.
- The responsibility to review the attendance at the end of the specified period lies with the issuer of the Notice to Improve. The parent/carer needs to be informed of the outcome, including whether a Penalty Notice is being issued. Where there is insufficient improvement, a Penalty Notice can be requested using the PN01 form and supplying the documents requested in the accompanying checklist.
- Where it is clear that improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice before the improvement period has ended. The parent/carer should be informed before a Penalty Notice is issued if it is before the end of the improvement period.
- A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).
- Where a Notice to Improve is used, it should be issued in line with processes set out in the BCP Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.
- Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook.
- Refer to pages 58-59 for more information: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

	Penalty Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Penalty Notices are issued to parents/carers as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. - Penalty Notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. - A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent/carer or parents/carers who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence). - 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). - Letter templates are available from the BCP School Attendance Support Team. Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct. - Refer to the 'National Framework for Penalty Notices' (pages 56-61) for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
	Education Supervision Orders (ESO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where a voluntary early help plan, or formal attendance contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) can be a useful alternative to provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution. - In deciding whether to progress to an ESO, the school and LA should have exhausted voluntary support and be clear that making the order would be beneficial for the pupil and parent/carer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where safeguarding concerns exist, the lead practitioner should also discuss with the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services and agree an ESO would be a more suitable option than a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan. - In all cases, LAs must fully consider using an ESO before moving forward to prosecution. This should be discussed with your allocated Attendance Support Worker from the BCP School Attendance Support Team to assess suitability. - Refer to pages 51-52 for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct.

	Prosecution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speak to your linked Attendance Support Worker from the BCP School Attendance Support Team if you need guidance, alternatively this team also has dedicated legal officers who can advise. - If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. - Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only local authorities can prosecute parents. - Refer to pages 52-55 for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct.
	Parenting Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parenting orders are an ancillary order that can be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents'/carers' agreement is not required before an order is made. - They may be appropriate where the parent has not engaged in support to improve their child's attendance and where compulsion to do so would help change parental behaviour. - Refer to page 55 for more information: Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) (publishing.service.gov.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please also refer to BCP's Legal Handbook and Code of Conduct.

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention

