

Attendance Team and Inclusion Service: Checklist for schools

It is always concerning when a child does not attend school and the reasons are not clear. It has been agreed within Leicestershire that schools should notify the local authority if a pupil has been absent, without the permission of the school, for a continuous period of 10 days or more, or before if there are concerns around the safety or known risks to the child.

To support referrals of this nature we would like to ensure that the schools have completed the following checklist prior to sending the referral to the Attendance Team or Inclusion Service.

Unknown absence over 10 days - unable to make contact with the family

1. The school will need to make every effort to contact the parent/carer
 - Have you thoroughly exhausted every means of contacting the child remotely?
 - Emailed the family/young person and checked school email accounts
 - Phone calls – all numbers including extended family
 - Text to request contact
 - Is the child engaging/contactable through the school's portal/website and where possible and able check social media sites that you are aware the child might access?
 - Have you visited the child's address, and does it look as though the family are still living at the address?
 - Where other known siblings attend other schools, check to see if the other schools are having contact with the family.
 - Is there a social worker or SEN officer involved? Contact them directly to see if they have had any involvement with the child
 - Where other services (health etc) are known to be involved check with them to see if they have had contact with the family.

If all of the above has been tried, have you texted the family to say that 'contact is urgently required, and the school will need to escalate the concern to Social Services or if advised, the police if there is no response to the text'?

2. If you have safeguarding concerns, follow the school's safeguarding procedures and outline that all of the actions above have been completed
3. Where you are not able to locate their whereabouts following the above attempts and the school have exhausted every option to try to locate the child, then the child is a missing person and as such should be reported to social

care in the first instance to risk assess their vulnerability and advise of any further actions that will be taken.

4. School should complete a **CME referral to the Inclusion Team when the child's attendance cannot be confirmed after 10 days**. The safe and wellbeing checks will remain the responsibility of the school and you should continue to try to do this at regular intervals in case the child/family returns to the property.
5. The Inclusion Service will make contact with the school to gain any further advice and let you know what steps will be taken next. Unauthorised absence over 10 days: contact with the family has been made but the child is not attending Although the Inclusion Service will monitor attendance, the initial responsibility for attendance will be with the school.

The Inclusion Service can offer advice and support when the following steps have been taken: The Education Welfare Officer or alternative support that is employed by the school has to complete a visit to the child at the family home to ascertain why the child has not attended and to look at potential measures that can be put in place to support the child's return.

This may include:

Anxiety based influences

- Reassuring the child/family around the aspects they are concerned about considering safety planning with the child/family to enable safe peers/adults/places should the child become anxious during the school day.
- Allowing the child to visit when the school is quiet (before or after school so they can see what it looks and feels like)?
- Offer a transitional timetable to support the child's return and has this been discussed and agreed with the parents?
- Are there risks around safeguarding in the home? If so, are social care aware? Are their times during the day that the child can speak to the person they may be worried about?
- Has the child accessed any therapeutic support around the anxiety – through CAMHS, Wellbeing Service, other that has been commissioned directly by the school using the AWPU?

Has the school received medical evidence to confirm that the child is too ill to attend school? If yes refer to the Inclusion Service for Medical Needs advice/support.

- Have other services been involved where needed, such as Autism Outreach and have referrals been made?

- Has the school been providing education at home? Are they still providing education and if so, is the child engaging in this, if not then it could be more than just anxiety and needs to be looked at in the wider context of CME.

Non-anxiety based influences

- Is the child at home or are they elsewhere such as living with other family members etc where they are unable to attend school due to distance? If elsewhere, what are the barriers to them coming back home so that they can attend school and are the necessary services in place if required?
- How long does the family aim to be away?
- If the child is part of a travelling family, are the traveller education team involved and able to offer support? or has the family moved away to work and should be coded as T? If so, have the school provided work packs to be completed whilst they are travelling, or will the child be dual-registered?
- If it due to custody/LAC status how long is this likely to be for and can learning arrangements be put in place in the interim? i.e., dual registration/distance learning and are services involved where required such as virtual school?
- Has the school any concerns over the behaviours that the child has been displaying prior to their non-attendance where safeguarding/CSE/CCE risks may need to be considered? Are social care/wellbeing service involved? If yes, what are they doing to support and if no, do they need to be?
- Have you approached the Inclusion Forums for advice where behaviour support may be needed?
- Have you considered referring to the Early Help team to provide family with further support.

If the parents are supportive of school and are trying everything to support the child to re-engage and the school has made every attempt to re-engage the child with school, but this has been unsuccessful, a referral to the Inclusion Service for additional support can be made by the school by submitting the referral for inclusionpupilservice@leics.gov.uk.

If the parents are not engaging with school and the school are of the view that they are not trying everything they can to re-engage their child in education. The school may want to consider making a referral to the Attendance Team.

The Attendance Team consider prosecution as the last resort and wherever possible, in accordance with government guidance, will support schools to provide the child and family with help and assistance in accessing their education.

The Attendance Team's aim is to ensure that the school have exhausted all avenues of support before considering a referral to the Attendance Team for possible Legal Intervention. The team can always be consulted in relation to a child prior to making a referral.

The Team would recommend consulting LCC's Code of Conduct and LCC's Protocol before referring so that you are familiar with the Evidential and Public Interest Test.

As well as consulting these documents the Team would advise every school to consider the following checklist before making a referral.

You can [download a checklist](#) as a separate document to be used as part of your processes.

A referral to the Attendance Team may be required if the school is of the view that the parent is the barrier to the child's attendance improving i.e.:

- **the parent is not engaging with school, i.e. not taking telephone calls, not attending meetings, not calling in with reasons for absence**
- **the parent is refusing to take up support offered by school or other agencies,**
- **the parent is refusing to take advice given by school.**
- **the parent is not being proactive in trying to re-engage their child with school**

Based on the measures school have undertaken the Attendance Team will assess the evidence provided to establish if parent/carer has failed in their duty to educate, and whether legal intervention is appropriate or not.

If the reasons why the child is not attending relates to the child, not the parent, it is likely the matter is more suitable for a referral to **the Inclusion Team**.

Clearly there will be scenarios when a referral will need to be made to the Inclusion service **AND** Attendance Team or Early Help **AND** Attendance Team.

Before referring to the Attendance Team consider as well:

- Have you offered parents the opportunity to attend a meeting with the school?
- If parents have not taken up the offer of a meeting or support, have they been warned, in writing, that a referral will be made to the Attendance Team at Leicestershire County Council for possible legal intervention/action including a fine?

When sending the referral via the link:

- Ensure that you upload warning letters sent to parents with any referral.
- Send all paperwork via the referral link.

Ensure the following is supplied via the referral link:

- Names and addresses of parents, including telephone numbers are up to date and correct.
- Up to date attendance registers.
- Copies of any correspondence sent to parents and responses, including emails.
- Copies of any action plans agreed with parent.
- Chronology of interventions carried out by school before referring.

- If referral for absence of leave in term time – (holiday penalty notice) ensure the period of absence has ended before referring and the period was for 5 days or more.
- Ensure you are referring for the parent/carer who took the child on holiday or absence of leave.
- Provide copies of parents request for leave, if any, and school's response if the request is refused.
- Provide copy of letter to the parent/carer confirming the matter will be referred to the LA if the leave is taken and the request has been refused.
- Provide copy of letter to the parent/carer if the parent did not make the request for leave but you have reason to believe the child was on holiday and you have warned them that, as a result, you will be referring to the LA for a penalty notice.

If your school is considering the legal prosecution route for attendance you should always bear in mind the law surrounding attendance and the Statutory Defences prior to progression and referral to the Team.

A school should also consider who is defined as the parent/carer in each case for the purposes of a prosecution or fine. It is vital that any written warnings about a referral to the Attendance Team for possible Legal Intervention are sent to the parent /carer fitting the definition as set out under s576 Education Act.