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9 Attendance Unit: 9.1PC	
Title	Using data with parents/carers to encourage regular attendance and punctuality
Level	Getting started
Audience	Parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop parents'/carers' understanding of attendance data and the impact of poor levels of attendance and punctuality on attainment
Possible use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour and attendance leader and pastoral staff to review existing strategies and their impact with parents New strategies to be identified and an implementation plan formed with parents Strategies implemented which give parents/carers an improved understanding of attendance data and its relation to attainment
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improvements in attendance and punctuality.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	Links with partners and other agencies
Links to other material in this section	<p>Pupils: Getting started</p> <p>9.1P Using data with pupils to encourage regular attendance and punctuality</p>
Reference to other resources	<p>Is your child missing out? (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002))</p> <p>School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p>Tackling Truancy Together (DfEE 0084/2001)</p> <p>This document contains case studies showing a range of initiatives carried out by School Attendance Services across the country</p> <p>Tools for Improving Attendance pack (ISBN 1860251765) and Overcoming Truancy pack (ISBN 1873562942) (Both published by The Chalkface Project)</p> <p>Suggestions for activities and worksheets to motivate those at risk of truancy</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance</p> <p>DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p> <p>www.parentcentre.gov.uk</p> <p>Information and advice for parents/carers about all aspects of their children's learning, including school attendance</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk</p> <p>UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p> <p>www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement</p> <p>Information and good practice to support schools in getting the most from parental/carer involvement in all aspects of school life</p> <p>www.chalkface.com</p> <p>The Chalkface Project.</p>

Using data with parents/carers to encourage regular attendance and punctuality

Introduction

The majority of school policies on attendance include reporting to parents/carers on attendance and punctuality once or twice a year. This is supported by a systematic approach to persistent latecomers and pupils whose attendance is becoming a concern and may include first day of absence contact with parents. More information on the critical success factors for implementing and maintaining effective first-day contact can be found on **Resource sheet 3**.

In addition to this, you may want to consider putting in place procedures for earlier communication with parents/carers when pupils:

- are late to school on a few occasions over a term;
- are late to lessons on an irregular basis;
- are absent on an irregular basis, for example on three or four separate occasions during a term.

Parents/carers are usually informed of successes or problems via the pupil report. However:

- they may not fully understand the attendance percentage rate. If a child has 95% attendance for the autumn term this sounds excellent, but in fact the child has been absent for almost a full week;
- parents/carers may focus exclusively on academic performance, which may distract them from attendance data;
- they may accept their child's plausible explanations for poor punctuality and attendance, for example:

'We all got marked in late because the supply teacher didn't know we had a meeting with the PE teacher';

'I didn't miss a day Mum. Nobody took our register. Everyone has the same on their reports. Don't worry about it';

'Satisfactory punctuality means the teachers are happy with the time I turn up to lessons. Good punctuality would mean that I get to lessons earlier than everyone else'.



Activity 1

- Discuss a range of example attendance percentages and what they mean for actual time missed from school.
- Use the example explanations from pupils (above) to stimulate discussion with parents/carers. Discuss sensitively any of the reasons their own children have given for poor punctuality or attendance.

Follow this activity by reminding parents/carers of the process involved in reporting the absence of their child.



Activity 2

Resource sheet 1 is a table of strategies that are used by schools to ensure that parents/carers are kept well informed and supported regarding attendance and punctuality. These schools feel that this communication and support has strengthened the partnership with parents and carers and, as a consequence, attendance and punctuality have improved.

To promote this partnership you could use this activity with a mixed group of staff and parents/carers including attendance officers, heads of year, form tutors and learning mentors.

Use the table on Resource sheet 1 to sort the strategies into three categories in relation to your own school:

- A: Well established
- B: Could possibly introduce
- C: Not considering at this stage

Discuss with parents/carers which strategies are clearest to them and would provide most help in the drive to improve attendance and punctuality.

Use **Resource sheets 2A** and **2B** to support an evaluation of category A strategies in terms of effectiveness and allow a feasibility study for strategies identified in category B, leading to an action plan. Consider how you will:

- encourage parents/carers to share their views and ideas;
- include parents/carers in the action planning process;
- include parents/carers in the review cycle.

Ensure parents/carers are involved in all discussions, with a focus on what will support them and their children the most.

Summary

By the end of this unit parents/carers will:

- have a greater understanding of what data the school collects and how it makes use of this data;
- know more about how the school is trying to improve attendance and punctuality;
- have had opportunities to express their preferences about possible future strategies to improve attendance.

Resource sheet 1

Strategies to inform and support parents/carers with attendance and punctuality data

	A	B	C																												
<p>Attendance on pupils' reports is recorded as a percentage, but also included is either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the number of days lost out of the possible total; and/or the total number of completed weeks out of the possible total. <p>For example, an annual attendance rate of 85% could be because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a pupil was ill for three weeks in the autumn term, two weeks in the spring term and one week in the summer term. 30 days were lost but 34 weeks were completed; a pupil was absent for approximately 30 days in the school year but only completed ten full weeks. 																															
<p>Good news postcards are sent home on a termly or half-termly basis congratulating pupils and parents/carers for regular high attendance or improvements in attendance/punctuality. Data are included.</p>																															
<p>Half-termly letters are sent home to express concern about lateness to school/lessons or attendance. The letter gives evidence in the form of data on past and present performance and emphasises the negative impact this is having on learning. Contact details are given for parents/carers and/or pupil to use to seek support.</p> <p>Schools that employ a dedicated attendance officer and/or have an electronic registration system are particularly successful in applying this strategy.</p>																															
<p>The half-termly newsletter includes a prompt for parents/carers to ask pupils about their current attendance rate.</p> <p>Regular updates are given to pupils about individual performance and targets.</p> <p>To support parents'/carers' interpretation of the attendance percentage a simple gauge can be included in the pupil planner or sent home. For example:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Approximate days absent since September</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Attendance rate</th><th>By end of autumn term</th><th>By end of spring term</th><th>By end of school year</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>100%</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr> <td>95%</td><td>4</td><td>7</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr> <td>90%</td><td>7</td><td>13</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr> <td>85%</td><td>11</td><td>9</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr> <td>80%</td><td>14</td><td>27</td><td>40</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Approximate days absent since September				Attendance rate	By end of autumn term	By end of spring term	By end of school year	100%	0	0	0	95%	4	7	10	90%	7	13	20	85%	11	9	30	80%	14	27	40			
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Resource sheet 1 page 2 of 2

	A	B	C
<p>There are spot checks on punctuality to lessons resulting in a good news postcard as described above or a letter expressing concerns related to potential time absent from education. For example:</p> <p><i>Gregory was ten minutes late to three of his lessons last week. We haven't established the reasons why but have stressed to Gregory the importance of good punctuality and given him the following data to consider: if he were to repeat this pattern of lateness for the remaining weeks in this term, five hours of lesson time would be lost.</i></p> <p><i>We would be grateful for your support in encouraging improved punctuality. Please contact us if you are aware of any concerns Gregory may have that we could support him with.</i></p>			

Resource sheet 2A

Review of strategies to inform and support parents/carers with attendance and punctuality data

Section A: Existing strategies (identified from the table on Resource sheet 1 or otherwise)

Description of strategy	What impact is it having? How do you know?	Next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining momentum. How?• Revitalising strategy. How?• Terminating strategy.

Resource sheet 2B

Feasibility study on new strategies

Description of strategy	Who would be responsible?	Resource implications (Include cost and time)	What would be the expected outcome? How will this be monitored? (Include description of system, personnel and time)

Extract of first-day call from *Tackling Truancy Together*

PHONE IN FIRST DAY ABSENCE

First day absence is a widely used practice in schools that has been demonstrated to have a successful impact on attendance. It is most effective when employed correctly and has raised attendance rates by between 2% and 5%. Unfortunately the procedure is often not applied correctly and consequently does not achieve such good results in those circumstances. The correct procedure is as follows:

1. A member of school staff is allocated the duty of first day absence officer. It is important that other duties do not conflict with this duty and that adequate time is allowed for the process. In order to speed the process up or in the case of a large school it may be appropriate to have more than one member of staff undertaking the role.

As soon as registration has finished a list is prepared of all children who have not arrived at school. The sheet also contains the name, address and telephone number of the parent (or appropriate person). Children who were absent the previous day are eliminated from the list as it only applies to the first day of absence.

2. The member of staff responsible then telephones home to enquire why the child is not at school. It is essential that the member of staff has the ability to challenge the parents/carers when it is appropriate to do so. For example, there should be no tolerance of excuses like "he's coming shopping with me today". Also minor ailments should be queried as to their severity, for example "he's got a cold" could be met with "there's a lot of it around at the moment, why don't you send him in, we'll keep an eye on him and if it gets worse we'll contact you". In the event that there is no proper reason to keep the child off the parent should be told so and be clear that the school will not authorize the absence.
3. Reasons for non-attendance are recorded for entry to the register later.
4. It is also recorded if the parent agrees to bring/send in their child. The child's presence is checked later in the day
5. Mistakes on the register are recorded and reported to the headteacher/SMT member in charge of attendance, for bringing to the attention of the staff member taking the register.
6. Late books are also checked.
7. Contact details which are incorrect are updated.
8. For those parents/carers that it was not possible to contact by telephone a letter is sent noting the child's absence and asking that the parent contact the school.
9. The list is saved so that the next day's list can be amended accordingly (see number 2 above).

Resource sheet 3 page 2 of 2

The procedure works for the following reasons.

- The member of staff has sufficient social skills to be quick witted and is able to challenge parents/carers in an assertive but non-aggressive way and know when it is appropriate to do so.
- Parents/carers are usually pleased that the school has taken an interest in their child and it makes them feel more confident about sending their child in when they are a little uncertain.
- Parents/carers who should be firmer with their children are immediately challenged and soon begin to understand what is and is not acceptable. In turn this helps them to challenge their own children more appropriately.
- Parents/carers who are not supportive soon get to know they will be challenged each and every time and will soon run out of plausible excuses. More importantly, this happens relentlessly on the first day of absence each time.
- Parents/carers become quickly familiar with the standards the school expects.

Success can be measured by increase in attendance rates, and the first day absence list getting shorter.

Common mistakes are:

- diluting the scheme by only targeting certain families or year groups;
- diluting the scheme by only carrying it out at certain times;
- asking the member of staff to undertake other duties which conflict such as collecting dinner money;
- giving the staff member the idea that the job is about authorizing absence;
- selecting staff that do not have the right social skills for the job;
- believing that the success of the scheme comes about through nagging parents/carers, it comes about through improving relationships with them and by being clear about what is important to the school.

Notes for LEAs

The scheme should be carried out by schools but sometimes it can be useful for a member of staff to train school's staff by demonstrating the process or by observing the practice.

As the process relies on the use of the telephone it could be carried out for a group of schools from a remote location (e.g. the LEA offices as a chargeable service for schools). This has been successfully carried out with good results at one LEA for groups of primary schools.

9 Attendance Unit: 9.2PC	
Title	Helping parents/carers to work in partnership with the school to solve attendance problems
Level	Developing good practice
Audience	Parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support a school's review of existing strategies for developing home-school partnerships To raise awareness of the importance of good communication links between parents/carers and schools
Possible use	<p>This unit can be used to aid discussion with a cross-section of staff/parents/carers where the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflect on the school's attendance policy; review current communication systems; identify effective practice that encourages parents/carers to work in partnership with schools to solve attendance problems.
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an increase in the number of parents/carers who use school support systems; improved attendance rate of identified pupils; parents/carers surveyed feeling part of a partnership with the school.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	Links with partners and other agencies
Links to other materials in this section	<p>Pupils: Developing good practice</p> <p>9.2P Getting help with attendance or punctuality problems</p>
Reference to other resources	<p><i>Is your child missing out?</i> (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002))</p> <p>School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p><i>Tackling Truancy Together</i> (DFEE 0084/2001)</p> <p>Truancy Buster Awards 2001: Case Studies (DfES, 2001)</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance</p> <p>DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p> <p>www.parentcentre.gov.uk</p> <p>Information and advice for parents/carers about all aspects of their children's learning, including school attendance</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk</p> <p>UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p>

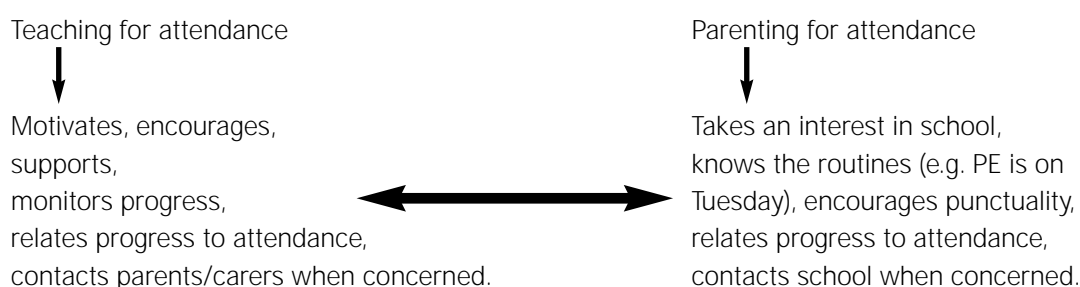
Helping parents/carers to work in partnership with the school to solve attendance problems

Introduction

Effective schools continually strive to strengthen their partnership with parents/carers because they realise the educational, social and emotional development of a child is significantly enhanced when school and family have shared aspirations.

Mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities is critical for a successful partnership. Parents/carers also need to be aware of and fully understand their statutory duties with regard to attendance (refer to the legislation section of the DfES school attendance website). Where both parties share joint responsibility, it is a powerful tool for embedding the partnership further.

Attendance is one of these areas, as illustrated by the diagram.



The pupil understands attendance for learning and wants to attend.

Opportunities to develop partnerships with parents/carers

Induction evening, when new pupils and their parents/carers are preparing for the pupils' entry to the school, is an important opportunity for developing partnerships. Parental/carer involvement in the school is actively encouraged and supportive advice is given on many issues including attendance. Many schools build on this start and find regular opportunities to encourage parents/carers in their responsibility for ensuring good attendance.

These opportunities might include:

- parents'/carers' evenings;
- social events;
- parent/carer workshops;
- sporting events;
- information events, for example, about drugs awareness, work experience, options;
- annual governors' meetings;
- presentations evenings;
- community activities on school sites.

Parents/carers, like any of us, thrive on feeling included and need acknowledgement that their contributions are valued. Some parents/carers have the capacity to make large contributions to the school in terms of time and energy, for example, with PTA membership. All parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually. Parents/carers feel better supported if their efforts to achieve this are acknowledged and, where possible, celebrated. Successful schools work hard to build positive relationships with parents/carers and, as a consequence, they are keen to work in partnership with the school to find solutions when problems with attendance arise.



Activity 1

Work with a mixed group of parents/carers and pastoral staff in school to identify ways in which parents/carers feel their input into supporting attendance and punctuality could be:

- encouraged;
- supported;
- celebrated.

This type of discussion could be part of a regular cycle of information evenings and induction or transition meetings. It could also be included as part of a parent/carer workshop on 'Supporting your child to be successful in school'.

Ask the group to consider how the school might better involve parents/carers who do not normally get involved or who may find it difficult to become involved.

Discuss the roles of a range of people (including the Education Welfare Service, learning mentors, teaching assistants, support staff and LSU staff) in developing and maintaining positive relationships between parents/carers and the school.



Activity 2

Communication links

Read through the strategies on **Resource sheet 1** for ideas that could be tried in school. Use the sheet in discussion with staff and parents/carers to:

- reflect on the school's attendance policy to identify communication strands between parents/carers and the school relating to attendance;
- decide which of these communication links promotes and strengthens the partnership and describe how they can be enhanced in any way;
- consider how these strategies engage harder to reach parents/carers or those who do not normally get involved. Reflect on any modifications or additional strategies that could be developed.

If concerns emerge with regard to a pupil's attendance or punctuality then immediate contact between parents/carers and school is critical. If poor attendance/punctuality is viewed by all parties as the symptom of an underlying problem then appropriate support can be offered by the parents/carers and the school. There may be clear evidence for bringing in outside support such as that of the Education Welfare Officer. The school policy should clearly indicate the triggers for involvement of outside support and the range of actions that might be taken at a given stage – it is crucial that this information is accessible to all parents/carers.

Parents/carers are willing to work with schools where a positive and trusting relationship has been established.



Activity 3

Evidence gathering

Part 1

- Ask each of the staff listed below how many parents/carers have contacted them this year/term/week expressing concerns about their child's attendance:
form teachers, heads of year, pastoral manager, attendance manager, curriculum leaders, teaching assistants, other support staff.
- Does the figure correlate with expectation and confirm the current strength of parent-school communication links?
- Do these links require further development? If so, what might be the first steps?
- Could the school have identified concerns over attendance earlier?

Part 2

- Review the log on pupils whose parents/carers have been contacted by the school about concerns over emerging attendance problems.
- Could parents/carers have identified these concerns earlier?
- What more can be done to develop this partnership so that parents/carers contact the school as soon as concerns emerge?

If some of your parents/carers are unclear as to how the school can help, it might be useful to send home sample scenarios where the school and parents/carers have worked together to find solutions to problems (consider scenarios where the parent/carer initiated concern and where the school made first contact). The storyboard in this unit's supporting pupil section (Resource sheet 2c) might be helpful.



Activity 4

Resource sheets 2 and 3 might be used to stimulate discussion with parents/carers about some of the issues relating to attendance.

Consider the following questions with the group.

- How might this information be used as part of a campaign to improve attendance and punctuality?
- How might these resources be developed to engage parents/carers who do not normally get involved or who find it difficult to become involved?

Summary

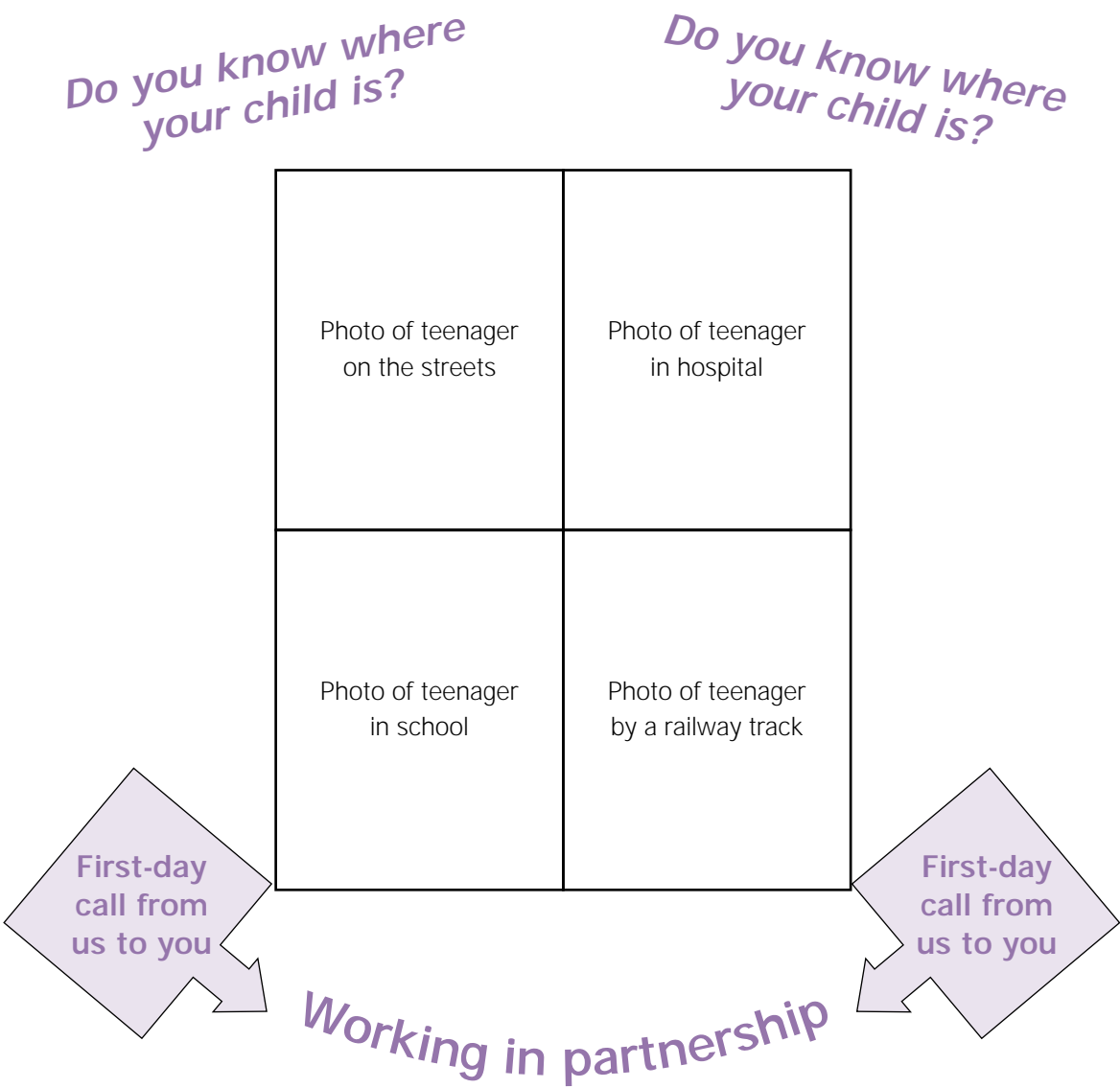
By the end of this unit parents/carers will:

- have a better understanding, and be supportive of, the school's approach to improving attendance;
- have influenced new approaches for increasing their involvement, building relationships and improving communication with the school;
- be clearer about what they can do to help improve their child's attendance.

Resource sheet 1

Typical parent/carer communication	In place ✓ /X	Does this promote and strengthen partnership? ✓ /X	Can this strategy be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced (I)? • Enhanced (E)? • How/when/by whom? What resources are needed?
Note from parent/carer authorising an absence			
Phone call from parent/carer authorising an absence			
Phone call from school asking for a reason for a pupil's absenteeism			
Parent's/carer's completion of a holiday form			
School contact with parent/carer expressing concern about a pupil's attendance			
Pupil reports noting attendance rate for the term/year			

Further communication links	In place ✓ /X	Does this promote and strengthen partnership? ✓ /X	Can this strategy be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced (I)? Enhanced (E)? How/when/by whom? What resources are needed?
<p>Praise and encouragement for efforts to improve punctuality or attendance via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good news postcard; letter; phone call. 			
<p>Maintain the high profile of attendance via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a newsletter updating trends and thanking parents/carers for their efforts; reminders of the support available where there are concerns. 			
<p>First-day call system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses concerns about care and safety; supported by a poster campaign (see example on Resource sheet 2). 			
<p>Parent/carer support for daily organisations activities, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and checklists provided by the school (see example on Resource sheet 3). 			



Children who
truant are more
likely to offend.

Do you know
where your child
is today?

Over one million
pupils truant
at least once
every year.

Is your child
one of them?

Home checklist: parents/carers – pupils – school working in partnership

The school day

School opens at 8:15am with the breakfast club

Registration: 8:45

Lesson 1: 9:05

Lesson 2:

School calendar

Autumn term: 4 Sep – 25 Oct

Half term:

Staff training days

School will be closed to pupils on:

Jake's timetable

	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4	Lesson 5	Lesson 6	Clus/activities	Homework
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								

Autumn term PE kit:

Spring term PE kit:

Summer term PE kit:

Other resources needed (e.g. calculator for maths):

To ensure Jake's safety please inform us on the first day of his absence.

Tel: 0121 345 678

If Jake is absent and we fail to receive your message then we agree to contact you and inform you of our concerns.

The pupil planner is a resourceful and powerful way for school, pupil and parents/carers to communicate and celebrate the progress Jake is making during the year.

It is also a key document for noting concerns.

Please sign on a weekly basis so that we know you have read the planner.

If you have any concerns please contact Ian Supportive: 0121 654321

Attendance rate

Please complete and monitor.

	First half	Second half
Autumn	%	%
Spring	%	%
Summer	%	%

Rewards

Record all the rewards received by Jake.

Well done Jake!

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Ref: DFES 0516-2004 © Crown copyright 2004 The behaviour and attendance action plan toolkit Unit 9.2PC: Attendance Parents/carers

9 Attendance Unit: 9.3PC	
Title	Preparing my child for return to school after an extended absence
Level	Developing good practice
Audience	Parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider school structures and resources that can help pupils to be quickly and comfortably reintegrated into everyday school life after an extended absence
Possible use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behaviour and attendance leader with other relevant staff, including home visiting staff, can use this unit with parents/carers of pupils who have experienced an extended absence, or who are about to experience a planned absence Handouts can be used as prompts with pupils and parents/carers to explore some of the strategies they might like to try to get back into school routines and catch up on missed work
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased involvement of parents/carers of children who return to school after an extended absence; improved confidence and achievement in pupils returning to school following extended absence.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	<p>Leadership and management</p> <p>Classroom behaviour</p>
Links to other material in this section	
Reference to other resources	<p><i>Key Stage 3 Behaviour and attendance training materials</i>, Core day 2 (DfES 0055-2004)</p> <p><i>Is your child missing out?</i> (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002)) School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p><i>Tackling Truancy Together</i> (DfEE 0084/2001) This document contains case studies showing a range of initiatives carried out by School Attendance Services across the country</p> <p><i>Improving Attendance and Behaviour in Secondary Schools</i> (Ofsted, 2001)</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p>

Preparing my child for return to school after an extended absence

Introduction

Parents/carers are often concerned about how they might best support a child's return to school after an extended absence. Their child may be expressing feelings of anxiety and worry over a number of issues. Use the introductory paragraphs to establish the context for the parent/carer activities in this unit.

If your child is returning to school after an extended absence, perhaps ill health, trauma or truancy, they may have many worries and concerns. They will probably need support to think about their feelings about returning to school and how they might deal with them.

Often children find it helpful to talk with someone about how they are feeling and to plan their return to school, including how they might solve any problems that may arise. This enables reintegration to get off to a good start, ensures the transition to school is smooth and that your child is confident about how they will cope.



Activity 1

How does it feel?

This activity could be done by a group of parents/carers led by a skilled facilitator in a parent/carer workshop.

- A good starting point is to try to imagine yourself in your child's shoes. Imagine that you have been away from school for perhaps three or four weeks and it's now time to go back. What thoughts and feelings might be going through your mind as you go to bed the night before school?
- Alternatively, you might ask a group of parents/carers to imagine that they have been away from work for some time and many changes have taken place. It is the night before they are due to return.
- Ask parents/carers to think about their own child's personality and situation and to add to the list of thoughts and feelings.

You will almost certainly have described mixed emotions of anticipation, pleasure at seeing your friends again, apprehension about how you will cope in lessons that have moved on without you, and fear about the work you have missed.

These fears and anxieties could be reduced if:

- contact was maintained during the period of absence;
- planning occurred where the absence was expected;
- there was a plan for catching up with missed work;
- someone was listening to your worries or fears.



Activity 2

Use the scenarios on **Resource sheet 1** to explain to parents/carers some of the ways that school will help pupils catch up with missed work. Next, work with parents/carers to establish specific roles they could take in supporting their own child.



Activity 3

Work with a group of parents/carers to consider how you might use the information on **Resource sheet 2** to develop a guidance or advice leaflet for parents/carers of pupils who may have missed substantial amounts of coursework.



Activity 4

A period of absence may be predicted. Effective schools are aware of situations where pupils may be about to experience a long-term absence, for example an approved trip abroad, medical treatment, pregnancy.

Explain to parents/carers how you will work with them to prepare a support programme in these situations.



Activity 5

Some pupils may have unplanned absences from school which may extend to one or two terms. They may even be condoned by parents/carers. These pupils are at risk of disengagement.

Their reintegration into school is a delicate process which requires sensitive team work from all the support agencies, including, for example, Educational Social Workers, LSU staff, learning mentors, pastoral and special needs staff, together with parents/carers.

Case study – Aaron

Aaron is in Year 7. He had a poor attendance record in primary school, in part due to a number of fixed-term exclusions.

His father left home shortly after Aaron started secondary school. Aaron felt he needed to stay at home to help his mother look after the younger children. He has missed nearly two terms at school. His mother, who has been suffering from depression, has been contacted by the Education Social Worker and is now ready to send Aaron back to school.

- What concerns might Aaron have about returning to school?
- How might he communicate these?
- Who could be involved in supporting Aaron's return to school?
- What support could be put in place?
- How might his family be supported?

Consider how you might use this case study with parents/carers to discuss the issues raised and to explore possible solutions.



Activity 6

Talking with your child

Share with parents/carers the difficulties in encouraging older children to talk about school. Discuss how you manage to get your own child to share with you their thoughts and feelings about school. Are there particular times, occasions or approaches that work best for you?

Draw out different approaches, recognising that all children are different. You may wish to comment on:

- the value of having communal family time when such matters can be aired, for example over meals, at the weekend;
- asking if you can help with homework;
- occasionally looking through all their school books as a way of reviewing their progress, discussing what they are doing and praising their work;
- talking over pupil reports, options and parents'/carers' evenings;
- praising their efforts.

Summary

By the end of this unit parents/carers will:

- have a greater knowledge and understanding of the difficulties children face on returning from extended absence;
- know about some of the ways they can help their children catch up;
- know more about how the school helps to reintegrate their children.

Resource sheet 1

Scenarios

Catching up on missed work

Nita and Shakespeare

Returning from an illness, Nita knows from her friends that she has missed Acts 2 and 3 of the set Shakespeare play. It was hard enough before she fell ill, but now she worries that she won't understand anything and will fail the examination.

How can Nita catch up the missed Shakespeare material, bearing in mind that it is probably too hard for her to read without help?

Ross and the Vietnam War

While Ross was off, his class covered the whole of the Vietnam War and are now moving on to a new topic. Ross likes history and feels that he can help himself to catch up.

Suggest two or three different ways in which Ross can get himself up to speed on the Vietnam War without having to copy out pages of notes.

Lucy and the practical subjects

Lucy missed two weeks of school and sees how she can catch up the subjects in which there are notes. But she takes several practical subjects: food technology, drama, ceramics and PE.

Suggest one or two ways in which Lucy might compensate for having missed these practical lessons.

Krishna and a difficult subject

Krishna has gathered photocopies from his friends to help him catch up before he goes back, but he doesn't understand the work he's missed in physics. The topic is still being taught, so he worries that he won't understand the lessons when he goes back.

Suggest two or three ways in which Krishna might get help to understand the work before his first physics lesson next week.

Sharon's convalescence

Sharon is out of hospital, but the doctor has ordered a fortnight of convalescence. She is mentally alert though she tires easily. She spends most of the day on the sofa watching TV and dozing occasionally. But she is feeling better for longer every day.

What could Sharon do to get ready for school in this situation? Are there things that would fit in with her day?

Resource sheet 2

Advice on catching up on missing work

- 4 Photocopy notes taken by friends.
- 4 Work through the photocopies with your child and work out which ones they follow and which are difficult for them.
- 4 Invite a friend round to go over notes they don't understand.
- 4 Find the section of the textbook for a topic your child can't follow in the notes.
- 4 In some subjects, you can find TV programmes, videos or library books that cover the topic. Texts in English literature are a good example.
- 4 For practical subjects, you might be able to organise the work at home, for example, cooking particular dishes for food technology.
- 4 Alert the form tutor or the specific teacher if there is a topic that is unclear from the notes.

9 Attendance Unit: 9.4PC	
Title	Helping parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
Level	Getting started
Audience	Staff and parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review attendance information given to parents/carers To identify good practice To identify areas for development
Possible use	The behaviour and attendance leader and pastoral leaders, in conjunction with parents/carers and home visiting support staff, can use this unit to carry out the review and provide feedback on findings and next steps to all staff
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an increase in the number of parents/carers who want to discuss issues related to attendance and punctuality; improvement in attendance and punctuality in identified pupils.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	Links with partners and other agencies Pupil support
Links to other materials in this section	<p>Staff: Getting started</p> <p>9.4S Developing organisational structures that promote regular attendance and punctuality</p> <p>Pupils: Getting started</p> <p>9.4P Ensuring that pupils feel valued and are motivated to attend</p> <p>Parents/carers: Getting started</p> <p>9.1PC Using data with parents/carers to encourage regular attendance and punctuality</p>
Reference to other resources	<p>DfES leaflet <i>Is your child missing out?</i> (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002))</p> <p>School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p>Professor Charles Desforges with Aberto Abouchaar <i>The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review</i> (Report publication code RR433 26/6/2003)</p> <p><i>Tackling Truancy Together</i> (DfEE 0084/2001)</p> <p>Truancy Buster Awards 2001: Case Studies (DfES, 2001)</p> <p><i>Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices</i> (DfES 0234-2004)</p> <p>Regulations and guidance relating to parenting contracts in cases of exclusion from school or truanting, parenting orders in cases of exclusion from school and penalty notices for parents/carers in cases of truancy</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance</p> <p>DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p> <p>www.parentcentre.gov.uk</p> <p>Information and advice for parents/carers about all aspects of their children's learning, including school attendance</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk</p> <p>UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p>

Helping parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality

Introduction

Parents/carers have legal responsibilities with regard to ensuring that their child receives a full-time education. **Resource sheet 1** is taken from a DfES leaflet for parents/carers outlining these responsibilities. The majority of schools communicate this through their behaviour and attendance policies and set expectations for good attendance and punctuality through their school prospectus, information for parents/carers and home-school agreements. Provision of information is not enough, however. What makes a difference is when parents/carers believe that it is important for their child to attend school regularly and be punctual.

Consider how you might adapt the information contained in Resource sheet 1 for inclusion in your newsletters, leaflets or other information for parents/carers.

Most parents/carers want their child to be successful and to recognise the importance of a 'good' education. They value opportunities to talk to staff about their child's progress and are willing to offer and accept advice on how best to support them. Effective schools make a conscious effort to maximise opportunities to highlight to parents/carers why regular attendance and punctuality are important.

Schools will have established arrangements for notifying parents/carers of a child's absence when no contact has already been received from the parent/carer. First-day contact approaches are effective in promptly highlighting any missing pupils, and also in raising parental/carer awareness of the importance of attendance, including communication with school at times of necessary absence.

Some schools have to consider carefully how to engage parents/carers who do not easily recognise or value the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. The factors affecting general levels of parental involvement are complex.

Differences between parents/carers in their level of involvement are associated with social class, poverty, health, and also with parental perception of their role and their levels of confidence in fulfilling it. Some parents/carers are put off by feeling put down by schools and teachers.

(The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review, Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003)

Effective ways of working can include the involvement of other parents/carers, support staff, mentors, teaching assistants and the ESW service to establish positive home-school links. This is particularly the case where parents/carers feel unsure or confused about how to help their child. The following testimony from a learning mentor demonstrates how staff can work in partnership with parents/carers in resolving complex cases:

I had an initial referral from the head of Year 10 regarding Daniel. He was a particularly quiet young person with very few friends in school. He had been the victim of taunts by other students who claimed he had "scabies", which was untrue and it transpired that he had another skin condition. Daniel still refused to attend school.

Daniel, his mum and myself were present at the initial home visit. I explained the seriousness of Daniel's non-attendance – he hadn't been in school for 7 weeks. Daniel's mum was at her wits' end, and didn't know what to do or who she could turn to. During my initial conversations with Daniel, his body language indicated that he was a depressed young man, with very low self-esteem.

The biggest hurdle was going to be the first morning back, and after encouraging words, we agreed to give it a go the following week. The following week Daniel did not turn up as agreed, so I visited immediately and repeated our agreement. I then told Daniel's mum that she would be wise to get an assessment of his psychological state through her local GP.

Something obviously stirred Daniel and he was back at school the following week, and has been averaging 80% attendance over the last term. While he is still very reserved, I have made a point of offering him support if he wants it.'

(www.dfes.gov.uk/standards/ExcellenceinCities)

Informing parents/carers



Activity 1

Look at **Resource sheet 2**. You could use this grid to review, with a mixed group of parents/carers and staff, the opportunities your school has to provide information for parents/carers on the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Example responses covering an academic year have been provided.

Following such a review, consider the following issues.

- Was the information provided about 'expectations' only? Or were reasons given to further develop parent/carer understanding of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality?
- Have all opportunities been maximised?
- Are you confident that all parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality?
- Might there be a group of parents/carers who need further information and support? If so, how might this be provided and by whom?
- Are there other ways to communicate with and engage 'harder to reach' parents/carers?
- Is the format of information provided to parents/carers accessible to all, for example, translated into different languages?
- Note any issues and areas for further development.

Many of the strategies listed on Resource sheet 1 will be part of normal school routine. The impact comes from ensuring the messages are regular, clear and consistent. However, having a focused campaign on an issue can create a momentum that reinforces and celebrates existing good practice.

Resource sheet 3 provides examples of posters and message cards that highlight the importance of good attendance and acknowledge the role of parents/carers. A simple 'thank you' can strengthen the relationship between school and home and influence parents/carers to regularly reinforce key messages with their children.

Schools have found some of the following additional strategies useful.

- Inviting parents/carers to a coffee morning/evening where the focus is on attendance and punctuality. During the discussion encourage parents/carers to share their ideas and successful strategies for maintaining good attendance and punctuality in their children.
- Involving parent governors and parent associations to channel suggestions back to the school on how to further promote regular attendance and punctuality.
- Involving pupils to ensure key messages are shared with parents/carers.

Schools may also need to make clear the legal obligations of parents/carers and of the sanctions available if their children do not attend school; in particular, the new measures introduced by recent legislation to widen the action schools and LEAs can take to reduce parentally condoned truancy (see *Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices* for further information, available on the DfES school attendance website).

Summary

By the end of this unit parents/carers will have:

- received some key information on attendance issues;
- discussed the best times to meet with staff on attendance issues;
- a greater appreciation that 'every day counts' in terms of pupil learning.

Resource sheet 1

This is an edited version of a leaflet produced by DfES, called *Is your child missing out?* (DfES ref PPY 181 (Rev 2002).

The leaflet is for anyone with a child aged between 5 and 16 who is registered at a school. It is also for anyone who has the day-to-day care of a child registered at school. It explains your responsibilities for making sure your child attends school regularly.

Why is it important for children not to miss school?

Most parents/carers want their children to get on well in life. Nowadays, it is more important than ever to have a good education behind you if you want opportunities in adult life.

Children only get one chance at school, and your child's chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending school regularly.

If children do not attend school regularly, they may not be able to keep up with school work. In a busy school day it is difficult for teachers to find the extra time to help a child catch up. And it's not only the academic work: missing out on the social side of school life – especially at primary school – can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships, a vital part of growing up.

Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help your child later on. Employers want to recruit people who are reliable. So children who have a poor school attendance record may have less chance of getting a good job.

Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher, and the other children in the class.

Some parents/carers may be trying but finding it hard to get their children to attend school. Research has shown that some young people who regularly miss school for no good reason may be drawn into anti-social behaviour or crime.

What does the law say?

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a suitable, full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide a suitable education.

Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure he or she attends regularly. If your child fails to attend regularly – even if they miss school without you knowing – the Local Education Authority (LEA) may take legal action against you (see overleaf).

The LEA is responsible for making sure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibilities. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their registered children attend school regularly.

What about authorised absences?

Of course there may be times when your child has to miss school because he or she is ill. This is to be expected and for the odd day off sick you should follow the school's procedures for notifying illness. Children may also have to attend a medical or dental appointment in school time. However, you should try to make routine appointments such as dental check-ups during the school holidays or after school hours. Any absence must be requested as far in advance as possible. Absences can only be authorised by the school.

If you think you might need to take your child out of school, discuss the reasons with the school as soon as possible. Reasons such as family bereavement or taking part in a religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include shopping and birthdays.

Resource sheet 1 page 2 of 3

What about holidays in term time?

You should not expect your child's school to agree to an absence for a holiday during term time, particularly if it is for more than ten days. Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time – both educationally and for other school activities. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on.

The law says that schools have the discretion to grant up to ten days' authorised absence in a school year. Each application is considered individually by the school, taking into account factors like the timing of the holiday and the child's attendance record. You should negotiate absence with the school as early as possible. Schools will only consider any additional absence during term time in exceptional circumstances. There may be educational reasons for a trip, such as a private exchange. In these circumstances schools are more likely to agree an absence. If you need to take your child out of school during term time:

- you must contact your child's school immediately;
- only ask for time off during exam or test periods in exceptional circumstances;
- always consult the school before booking travel for holidays in term time, as permission may not be granted.

What happens if my child does not attend school regularly?

Your child's school is responsible by law for reporting poor attendance to the LEA. Most LEAs employ Education Welfare Officers (also called Education Social Workers) to monitor school attendance and to help parents/carers meet their responsibility.

If your child is not attending school regularly, an Education Welfare Officer may visit or write to you. Education Welfare Officers work with parents/carers to address their child's attendance difficulties. In some areas other workers such as Learning Mentors or Connexions Personal Advisers based in the school may also be working with children on their attendance.

Education Welfare Officers, or school staff, may suggest you enter into a parenting contract to help address your child's attendance at school. This will be a voluntary contract between school and parents/carers that will detail the support required from all involved to improve your child's attendance.

As a parent, you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge.

A decision may be made by the LEA, headteacher, or a Police Officer, to issue a penalty notice (a fine) to the parents/carers of a pupil having repeated cases of unauthorised absence. This action will be subject to a published LEA code for issuing notices. The penalties are set at £50 if paid within 28 days or £100 if paid within 42 days. Non-payment will normally lead to court prosecution.

The decision to prosecute a parent is taken by the LEA, in most cases after extensive work with the child and their family, and following discussion with the headteacher.

Parents/carers can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly. Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a parenting class. The LEA may apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) instead of or as well as prosecuting parents/carers. This would be heard in the Family Proceedings Court. An ESO is made in respect of a child and makes the LEA responsible for advising, supporting and giving directions to a child and his or her parents/carers in order to make sure that the child attends school regularly. There are sanctions against parents/carers who fail to cooperate. Magistrates may also direct the LEA to consider applying for an ESO following a prosecution.

At what age can children leave school?

By law, compulsory education for all children in England ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches 16. Your child cannot leave school until that date. Even if they have received their National Insurance card before then, it is still against the law for them to leave school and begin full-time work.

What can I do to help?

- If you suspect that your child may be missing school or is unhappy at school, you should contact the school or the LEA Education Welfare Service as soon as possible so that you can work with them to resolve any difficulties.
- Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of missing school, but be on the alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance, such as bullying or problems with school work and discuss these with the school.
- If your child is ill or absent for any other reason, contact the school on the first day of absence.
- Make sure your child arrives at school on time for both the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Take an interest in your child's education. Ask them about their day, and praise and encourage their achievements at school.

Resource sheet 2

Opportunities to brief parents/carers on the importance of regular attendance and punctuality

Opportunities	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Content outline	Notes
Induction evening	√					<i>Expectation and key reasons for good attendance Big push on working in partnership and the support we can offer</i>	
Induction support document	√					<i>Expectation and support if there are problems</i>	<i>Include a piece on effect of poor attendance</i>
<i>Home-school agreement</i>	√					<i>Agreeing responsibility</i>	<i>Possibly renew the agreement on an annual basis</i>
Letter home because of improvement in attendance/punctuality	√	√	√	√	√	<i>Congratulations to pupil and parent/carer for the improvement, stresses the importance of building on this</i>	<i>Will include the impact of improved attendance on attainment and punctuality on being 'ready to learn'</i>
Parents' evenings	√	√	√	√	√	<i>Staff stress the importance of attendance and punctuality in relation to progress in their subject. Staff acknowledge and thank parents/carers for their efforts to maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality</i>	<i>This is intended for all parents/carers and not solely for parents/carers of pupils with poor attendance/punctuality Check the consistency of the message. Is it given to all parents/carers?</i>
Annual reports							
Awards evening							

Resource sheet 3

If your child is not in school where are they?

Is there always a valid reason for your child's absence from school?

If your child misses one day they are already behind with their schoolwork.

**Don't let your child miss out
Every day counts**

Missing the odd day can become a habit which would not be accepted in the workforce.

Your child only has one chance at school. Help them make the most of it.

The law says you must send your child to school for five days a week.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance please contact the school.

We are here to support. Every day your child is absent impacts on their education and opportunities in adult life.

**Calling all
parents/carers**

**We need your
support**

**Good
punctuality
enhances
learning and
performance**

Late to school
Late to school
Late to lessons
Late to lessons
Late to work
Late to work

**STOP THIS HABIT NOW
BEFORE IT SERIOUSLY DAMAGES
YOUR OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE**

Resource sheet 1 page 2 of 2

Postcard style

Side one

<div> <div>xxx school</div> <div>says</div> <div>Thank You!</div> </div>	<div>Mr & Mrs Brownhills</div> <div>44 Attendance Drive</div>
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Side two

	<div>XXXX school would like to say thank you for ensuring that your child attends school regularly and is punctual.</div> <div>These are important years and as you know every day counts when it comes to education for life.</div> <div>Please remember if you have any concerns contact us immediately.</div> <div>We are here to support you.</div>
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Resource sheet 1

Small folding card

	<i>Good news!</i>
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<p>Well Done!</p> <p>Attendance has now risen to 89%</p> <p>Number of lates to schools = 0</p> <p>Number of lates to lessons = 1</p>	<p>Thank you for all the effort you have put in to support an improvement in Jason's attendance and punctuality.</p> <p>Staff are already commenting on the improvement in his academic performance.</p> <p>Jason will be receiving a certificate to acknowledge this achievement.</p> <p>We look forward to continued work together to support Jason in achieving his second agreed target of 91% attendance.</p>
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9 Attendance Unit: 9.5PC	
Title	How will I know if my child is attending regularly?
Level	Getting started
Audience	Parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore ways of helping parents/carers to know when their child is regularly attending school To consider possible school structures and resources that can alert parents/carers when their child is missing from school
Possible use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The behaviour and attendance leader with other relevant staff can use this unit with parents/carers of pupils who have truanted in the past To inform parents/carers about the importance of regular attendance
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased interest of parents/carers in how often their child is in school; improved confidence and achievement by pupils who are in school more often than previously; improved attendance of identified group of pupils.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	Leadership and management Classroom behaviour Out-of-class behaviour Bullying
Links to other material in this section	Parents/carers: Getting started 9.4PC Helping parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
Reference to other resources	<p><i>Behaviour and attendance training materials: Core day 1</i> (DfES 0392-2003)</p> <p><i>Behaviour and attendance training materials: Core day 2</i> (DfES 0055-2004)</p> <p><i>Advice on whole-school behaviour and attendance policy</i> (DfES, 2003) Annex C – Guidance on behaviour and attendance: attendance</p> <p><i>Is your child missing out?</i> (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002)) School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p> <p>www.parentcentre.gov.uk Information and advice for parents/carers about all aspects of their children's learning, including school attendance</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p> <p>www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement Information and good practice to support schools in getting the most from parental/carers involvement in all aspects of school life</p>

How will I know if my child is attending regularly?

Introduction

Most schools notify parents/carers quickly if there is an absence that is not authorised, so parents/carers assume, if they hear nothing, that their child is attending as they should. Schools that are most successful in managing attendance issues have well developed systems for recording, monitoring and following up unauthorised absence.

These schools have also developed positive partnerships with parents/carers, thus encouraging diligence in sending in absence notes. To support parents/carers with this it is useful to make the absence note system as simple and easy as possible. The prospect of writing a formal letter over breakfast will deter many parents/carers. Leaving space in the bottom section of the homework diary for them to add a note is probably the easiest method. All systems are open to abuse, forgeries and friends who make the phone call so staff need to pursue checks if they have a suspicion that the system is being abused.

The activities in this unit assume that parents/carers are concerned about their child's attendance and do not condone absence. However, some schools have to consider carefully how they might engage a significant minority of parents/carers who do not support the school in their efforts to improve attendance. They will need to develop more individualised approaches to enlist their support.

Differences between parents/carers in their level of involvement are associated with social class, poverty, health, and also with parental perception of their role and their levels of confidence in fulfilling it. Some parents/carers are put off by feeling put down by schools and teachers.

(The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: a literature review, Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003)

Case study

The following extract is based on a real case, and demonstrates some of the steps schools can take in supporting vulnerable pupils.

Andrew was in Year 7. His attendance at school was extremely poor, being below 20% in most months. The head of year and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) had been involved in his case since primary school.

Andrew's parents/carers were apparently supportive of the school's efforts to improve his attendance but were also highly anxious and very protective of their child. The learning mentor worked with his mother and the EWO to draw up an action plan that included:

- *informing subject teachers and asking them to 'check in' with him during each lesson;*
- *providing 'sanctuary' at lunchtimes;*
- *extra help with English and maths;*
- *weekly one-to-one work to build self-esteem and set boundaries;*

- *working with his mother on separation anxiety and the necessity of setting boundaries.*

Andrew's mother was also reminded of the legal position and warned that, while the school did not wish to prosecute, it might be in his best interests if his attendance didn't improve.

Consider the issues raised in this case study in relation to your school context and in particular in the planning of any parent/carers workshop.

Planning a parent/carers workshop

- Consider the aims of the workshop and how you will include everyone.
- Consider how you will identify the intended audience and publicise the workshop, perhaps via parent governors, newsletters, posters and through discussion with pupils.
- Skilled facilitators ensure parents/carers feel comfortable and confident. Consider who are the most appropriate staff to run the workshop.
- Remember that successful facilitators ensure parents/carers are clear about the purpose of the workshop activity and the benefits it might bring.



Activity 1

How will I know?

This activity could be part of a parent/carers workshop or included at an induction event.

Ask parents/carers to suggest how they might know whether their child is attending regularly. Look for the following answers.

Pupils who attend regularly:

- come home talking about what they've done that day both in and out of lessons;
- have homework to do;
- have entries in their homework diary;
- leave and arrive home at regular times;
- behave as usual;
- pack their bags with the usual books and folders.

Now ask for some of the warning signs of non-attendance, and look for the following answers.

Pupils who truant often:

- pack light bags;
- have no homework;
- have no entries in their homework diaries;
- turn up at home at unusual times;
- do the same things at home but exaggerate normal behaviour to get it noticed – they try too hard;
- need more money to buy lunch;
- don't talk about what they've done that day.



Activity 2

Warning signs

This activity will provide a useful starting point for a discussion with concerned parents/carers. Using **Resource sheet 1**, ask parents/carers to consider the warning signs that might alert them to signs of truancy and relate these signs to their own child.

It is important to encourage parents/carers to conclude the discussion by focusing on possible solutions.



Activity 3

Work through the ideas on **Resource sheet 2** with the parents/carers, taking care to explain particular points in detail as questions arise.

Ask parents/carers to consider:

- which of the suggestions might be most helpful for their own child;
- adding other ideas they have found useful.



Activity 4

You could work with a small group of parents/carers to develop the ideas on **Resource sheet 2** as guidance for parents/carers to be issued at induction or parents'/carers' evenings, other workshops or general information events.

Summary

By the end of this unit parents/carers will:

- be more aware of many of the warning signs of truancy;
- have discussed a range of strategies that they can employ to secure good attendance by their child.

Resource sheet 1

Discuss what you would do next in each case.

Joe

'The first I knew about Joe's absence was when the school rang me with a automatic call to say that he wasn't there. I had no idea why he would stay off school or where he was.'

Michael

'I knew someone had been home because there were crumbs all over the table and there were crisp packets in the bin. We'd had trouble with Michael the year before, so I knew right away.'

Aja

'I came home early once when Aja was in Year 9 because I had a doctor's appointment and found Aja in the kitchen with friends. It turned out that they were skiving from two lessons they didn't like and were dropping next year.'

Dan

'After Christmas, Dan came home at about three o'clock every Thursday. He said he had community service which had finished early. Then Mr Hodge called and said, "Where's Dan?" And I said, "He's finished his service early" and it was then I found out he was skipping PE.'

Julie

I was shocked when I got Julie's report and saw that she'd been absent in the autumn term for 35% of days. She goes to school every day, no problem. So I phoned the school to say they'd got it wrong, but they hadn't. It all adds up.

Two weeks' family holiday (it's cheaper in term time)	10 days
Birthday off (a special treat)	1 day
Last three days of Christmas term (surely they're winding down anyway)	3 days
Flu (she can't help being ill)	5 days
Uncle Tom over from America (it's only once every two years)	2 days
Cold (all her friends had it too)	3 days
Christmas shopping day (when else can you go when it's so busy?)	1 day
Accidentally overslept (we all do it sometimes)	1 day
Missed bus (I can't expect her to walk all that way)	5 days
Babysitting Carleen when I was ill (I couldn't look after her)	2 days'

Resource sheet 1 page 2 of 2

Tariq

'I was looking in Tariq's homework diary on Tuesday night and I noticed that he had done no homework so far this week. When I asked him, he just said none was set. When I looked at the week before, I saw that all his homework was revision. It turned out that he skipped the tests.'

Resource sheet 2

Securing good attendance

Talk regularly to your child about school and how they feel about it. They are more likely to attend if they feel supported and their anxieties are listened to.

Be particularly watchful and supportive in the run-up to tests.

Check the homework diary regularly for gaps as well as completed activities.

Always call and send in a note if you keep your child off school. Teachers notice when parents/carers respond more slowly than usual.

Know the school's routine for alerting parents/carers to absence. For example, some schools use an automatic telephone alert.

The school never lets pupils out of school during the usual hours without telling parents/carers.

Always follow it up if your child comes home early.

Keep your own note of days absent. Check the attendance figures quoted on the school report and that they add up.

If you have suspicions, the school will check the register for you. The school office staff usually do this and will be discreet.

If you do realise you have a problem with your child's attendance, it's best to be sure before you talk to them. So, if you can, check with the school.

When you talk to your child about a confirmed absence, keep calm but say that you know an absence has occurred and listen to the explanation. There is always an explanation. It may not impress you, but it counted enough with your child to make them play truant.

Pursue the reason for the non-attendance as well as the non-attendance itself.

Only grant days at home for genuine illness.

Help your child to catch up with missed work so that they realise that they can't miss work even if they miss school.

Praise good attendance, for example going in promptly even when the first lesson is their worst lesson, or when there's something else they might have liked to do.

9 Attendance Unit: 9.6PC	
Title	Supporting parents/carers to help their child with coursework
Level	Ready for more
Audience	Parents/carers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide guidance for parents/carers in supporting their child with managing the workload To review systems for helping parents/carers support their child
Possible use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This unit can be used as the basis for a discussion in school about how the school helps parents/carers support their children and the impact of current approaches It can be used with parents/carers to develop their knowledge of coursework, the role it plays across the curriculum, and to offer practical advice and guidance on ways of supporting pupils. This can be part of a parent association meeting or, on an informal basis, through the normal channels of contact.
Impact can be measured by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an increase in the quantity and quality of coursework completed by the stated deadline; a drop in truancy due to incomplete coursework.
Links to other action plan toolkit sections	Links with partners and other agencies
Links to other materials in this section	<p>Staff: Ready for more</p> <p>9.6S Supporting pupils to catch up with coursework</p> <p>Pupils: Ready for more</p> <p>9.6P Getting additional help with coursework</p>
Reference to other resources	<p><i>Is your child missing out?</i> (DfES ref: PPY 181 (Rev 2002))</p> <p>School attendance information for parents/carers</p> <p><i>Tackling Truancy Together</i> (DfEE 0084/2001)</p> <p>Truancy Buster Awards 2001: Case Studies (DfES, 2001)</p> <p>www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolattendance</p> <p>DfES improving attendance website – provides information, case studies and opportunities for the sharing of good practice on school attendance</p> <p>www.parentcentre.gov.uk</p> <p>Information and advice for parents/carers about all aspects of their children's learning, including school attendance</p> <p>www.parentlineplus.org.uk</p> <p>UK registered charity offering support to anyone parenting a child. Advice on a range of issues, including school attendance</p> <p>www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement</p> <p>Information and good practice to support schools in getting the most from parental/carers involvement in all aspects of school life</p>

Supporting parents/carers to help their child with coursework

Introduction

Parents/carers play a significant role in supporting pupils in managing the demands of coursework by:

- knowing their child's strengths and weaknesses and being able to listen, encourage and advise;
- setting up appropriate study conditions and supporting an achievable project time plan;
- making use of a coursework planner provided by the school to support their child in creating a work plan so that the work is made manageable and deadlines are met.

The relationship between schools and parents/carers is vitally important in supporting parents/carers to help their child with coursework (see Unit 9.2PC). Where schools have built these positive relationships and supported parents/carers to develop an understanding of the different demands and expectations set by each subject, parents/carers demonstrate greater confidence in and commitment to helping their child with coursework.

Some schools face the challenge of engaging and supporting parents/carers who may be unable (or unwilling) to provide the kind of support described here. These schools try to encourage engagement and provide support in a range of ways.

For example:

- having learning mentors, teaching assistants, support staff and attendance officers who work hard to develop personal relationships with individual parents/carers, including making home visits;
- establishing parent/carer workshops and support groups to provide information, skills and advice;
- creating opportunities for parents/carers and pupils to learn together;
- involving outside agency support and counselling services where appropriate.

The following case studies demonstrate some of the practical steps schools and LEAs are taking to support parents/carers across a whole spectrum of needs and some of the issues they are facing.

Some LEAs used BIP funding to buy in home-school liaison workers working through a charitable trust. Their exact role depended on the needs of the school but included issues relating to attendance, e.g. working with parents/carers, making home visits, encouraging parents/carers to become involved with school activities or behaviour, e.g. working with vulnerable pupils, perhaps in lunch time clubs, during group work or individual sessions. They sometimes played a role in the transition between primary and secondary schools and in some cases acted as key workers to a number of pupils. They liaised with a wide range of other professionals and agencies as the need arose. They were line managed within the school, but received training and supervision through the trust. School staff were very positive about the role that they played. The support they provided for pupils improved behaviour and reduced levels of staff stress. Because of the flexible nature of their remit, there were sometimes difficulties in defining the exact nature of their role.

(Extract from London University's Institute of Education's visit reports to BIP LEAs. _

Nottingham AMBER Project

AMBER, which stands for Adult Minorities Breaking Educational Restrictions, helps families gain a better understanding of the education system and provides vocational guidance for the parents/carers themselves.

The project, launched in 1995, began by working mainly with Asian and African-Caribbean parents/carers but has since been expanded to include other groups in the City and County of Nottingham who have been at a disadvantage when it comes to participating in school life.

AMBER aims:

- to empower and encourage parents/carers to become involved in their children's education;
- to provide the opportunity for school-based adult learning;
- to train parent/carer support workers to facilitate these aims.

How does AMBER work?

- Parents/carers participate informally through fundraising and general school support activities, social events, etc. and more formally through in-class help, governorship and parent consultations.
- A worker is placed in a school for ten hours per week.
- Each worker undertakes five hours of unpaid training.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school and are given support and knowledge to work at home with their children.
- Schools are encouraged to think about the ways in which parents/carers can be welcomed, encouraged and valued as partners and co-educators.

Measures of success

- Helping to establish community rooms/facilities in schools.
- Increasing parental/carer take-up of parent governor vacancies through individual support.
- Parents/carers feel valued, feel that there is someone there to listen to them and act on the issues they raise, someone who is just there for them. This helps to build a strong link between them and the school.
- Increased effectiveness of communication with minority ethnic parents/carers through bilingual workers where appropriate.
- Enhanced community networks and dissemination of information about local events and initiatives.
- Individual support for parents/carers wishing to re-enter the worlds of education or employment tailored to their needs and skills.
- Support for school staff in communicating with parents/carers and early interventions regarding absences, etc.

(www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement)



Activity 1

Reflect on your own resources and arrangements for supporting pupils using the list below as a prompt.

Support for the pupils	Provided by
Curriculum support, for example, one-to-one study support	Voluntary agencies
Practical support, for example, access to ICT	Mentoring services
Personal support, for example, mentoring	School staff
	Community volunteers
	Business partnerships

Further advice about how you can access support for pupils in your area could be obtained from your LEA, the key stage behaviour and attendance consultant, the Education and Social Welfare Service or the LEA Psychology Service.



Activity 2

Use this scenario with a mixed group of parents/carers, staff and possibly pupil representatives to explore the issues raised and consider possible solutions. You may want to develop your own scenarios or ask parents/carers to suggest situations they would like to discuss. Use **Resource sheet 1** to identify areas for discussion and record possible solutions.

Read the following scenario.

Jodie's father was informed via two separate telephone conversations on a Tuesday morning that his daughter:

- missed the GNVQ business studies deadline;
- owed one English essay that had been seen in draft form and annotated last month.

The staff involved set final deadlines for two weeks ago. The work was now very overdue and time was running out.

Jodie explained to her father that she had lost the annotated draft of the English essay and completed half the GNVQ work.

Having no access to a computer at home made Jodie fall further behind. She had the opportunity to use the ICT suite during lunchtimes but used this time to redo some of her art coursework.

Jodie had truanted on a number of occasions to avoid the pressure she felt. This time had been used to complete the outstanding history essays. She forged the absence notes from her father.



Activity 3

Part 1

Resource sheet 2 lists frequently asked questions from parents/carers and examples of activities schools provide in response.

Use the table as a tool to support the identification of existing good practice in your school and to highlight further actions to support parents/carers.

Part 2

Invite a group of parents/carers to discuss their needs and identify what the school could do to help. This can be via a parents' evening, parents association or letter home to a random sample of parents/carers.

Resource sheet 3 is an example of a coursework planner that a school could use with parents/carers as well as pupils in order to provide them with a guide to the pressure points for workload.

Effective schools ensure that:

- pupils and parents/carers are fully informed about coursework and the expectations for each academic year;
- support systems are known, accessed and utilised when pupils face difficulties which could impact on coursework and, as a consequence, attendance;
- the Key Stage 3 curriculum prepares all parents/carers for Key Stage 4.

Summary

By the end of this unit parents/carers will:

- be more aware of the demands that coursework makes and the skills pupils need to undertake it;
- understand how the school currently supports pupils with their coursework;
- feel more able to support their child to complete coursework on time and to the right standard.

Resource sheet 1

Issue	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could this situation have been prevented? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What additional support for Jodie could her father provide? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What support could the school now provide to help Jodie? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could the school help Jodie's father to support his daughter? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which support agencies could be involved to help Jodie and her father and what might they provide? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What might the school need to do if Jodie's father is reluctant (or unable) to support her? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	

Resource sheet 2

Parent's/carers's questions	Activity to promote parental/carers support	What are we currently doing well? What else could we do?
What is coursework?	Induction evening, to promote an article in newsletter about understanding coursework. Year 10 coursework skills parents' evening.	
Does coursework differ from subject to subject?	Exemplar pieces of work displayed in reception area. A4 booklet sent home in Year 8 or 9. The booklet highlights similarities and differences in coursework, for example timescales, types of research, end products.	
When will coursework be set?	Key pieces of work are identified in each area of the curriculum and mapped across Key Stage 3. Duration and skill development are identified. The information is shared with parents/carers. This ensures that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all skills are taught and reinforced via knowledge transfer from one subject to another; work demands are manageable for staff and pupils; parents/carers understand expectations and can support appropriately. In Key Stage 4, pupils and parents/carers are issued with a personal coursework timetable (see Resource sheet 3).	

Parent's/carer's questions	Activity to promote parental/carer support	What are we currently doing well? What else could we do?
<p>How important is coursework?</p>	<p>Recording and reporting coursework skill development is an integral part of the school assessment process. It develops skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make decisions; • organise; • analyse; • evaluate. <p>These skills are promoted throughout the school as lifelong learning tools. Coursework is a critical part of GCSE/ GNVQ courses. The importance of supporting pupils to produce work that reflects their ability is highlighted at parents' evenings and through support literature.</p>	
<p>How can I help?</p>	<p>Parents/carers are issued with a coursework planner for Key Stages 3 and 4. Support guidance is included. You should help your child formulate a work plan to ensure that the tasks are manageable and deadlines can be met.</p> <p>Parents/carers are reminded when key pieces of coursework are about to begin.</p> <p>Coursework information is included in the pupil planner.</p> <p>Reference is made to 'how my parents/carers can help me'.</p>	

Resource sheet 3

Coursework commitments for

	Year 10			Year 11		
Subject	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Spring	Summer
English	Five pieces of work. One piece assigned to each term. Background reading and draft essays are a critical part of the process. Notification of each deadline will be sent at the beginning of each term					
Mathematics	2 weeks (Oct)			2 weeks (Oct)	2 weeks (Jan)	
Science				2 x 4 weeks (Sep and Nov)		
French			3 weeks (June/July)			
D&T				In class and H/W for 2 terms		
Art	In class and H/W for 4 terms					
History			3 weeks (June)	3 weeks (Oct)	3 weeks (Jan)	

Please contact the school if you are concerned that these coursework commitments may not be met.

We want to work in partnership to ensure that fulfils their potential.

Details about each subject requirement are in the coursework guide. Expectations about work to be completed outside normal lessons are included. This work can be completed at home or during lunchtime/after-school coursework clubs.