

Policy	Attendance		
Reviewer	Emily-Rose Kimber		
Reviewed Changes	January 2024 <i>Expectations of pupils when off sick</i>	Next review	January 2025
Relevant CYPES policies	Children missing from education School attendance		

VCP Policy

Overview

This document describes procedures and processes relating to school attendance, punctuality and welfare. It sets out the arrangements that must be implemented to enable pupils to fully benefit from the educational opportunities available and in addition to support families to fulfil their statutory obligations.

This policy has been updated to consider the changes in procedures and processes due to the development of an 'Operational Guidance for the Delivery of Education Welfare Services in Jersey 2017'.

The Education Welfare Team currently consists of 3 central based Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) 4 school based EWOs for the 11 – 16 schools. For the purpose of this Policy the central based EWOs and school based EWOs will be referred to as CB and SBEWOs. The Education MASH Researcher also based at The Bridge sits within the Education Welfare Team.

Scope

This policy provides a framework which underpins the role of VCP School and parents/carers. It also upholds the principle that children attend VCP School regularly, as stated in the Education (Jersey) Law 1999, article 12, para 1. To '*ensure that the child receives a full-time education appropriate to the child's age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs the child may have, either by regular attendance at school at which the child is a pupil or otherwise, in accordance with Article 13 of the Education (Jersey) Law 1999.*'

Responsibilities and distribution

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that all staff tasked with recording pupils' attendance are made fully aware of the legal requirement placed upon them in regard to these procedures. Furthermore, the Head Teacher of VCP School should encourage all staff to maximise pupil attendance and work proactively to that end.

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The Responsibility of CYPES

It is the responsibility of CYPES (Education Welfare Service) to work in partnership with schools, parents/ carers and pupils to provide support, advice and guidance.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) acts on behalf of the States of Jersey in enforcing a parents'/carers' legal duty to provide appropriate education. The main function of the EWS is to improve overall attendance and reduce persistent absence and punctuality concerns in all schools and alternative education providers. In addition, the EWS also undertake other 'core' duties such as transition support, supporting student's welfare and support for families requiring 'early help'. To address this, the EWS provides VCP School with a regular visiting service, delivered by a named EWO.

The main role of the EWS is to:

- Contribute to the Department's and VCP School's drive for school effectiveness;
- Work in partnership with VCP School, pupils, parents/carers and community to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance and;
- Link with services and agencies providing education, health and social care services for individuals with additional or specific needs.

This is achieved through:

- Promoting and supporting whole school attendance policies;
- Attendance and Punctuality target setting for VCP School (outlined in the Education Welfare Service's annual Attendance Strategy with effect from September 2016);
- Providing advice on evidence based good practice;
- Advice and support on initiatives and strategies to improve 'whole school' attendance;

- Contribution to the School's annual self-evaluation in the area of attendance and punctuality concerns;
- Work with parents/carers and pupils to promote, raise and maintain individual pupil attendance/punctuality and prevent absence from VCP;
- Compiling termly data checks and informing School of any trends or areas that require improvements as well as carrying out monitoring checks on School registers throughout the year;
- Targeted monitoring of the attendance of highly vulnerable learners - (LAC/EBNA/CP/at risk of CSE);
- Consultative support on matters of attendance and welfare. This would include phone and email advice;
- Direct support for families requiring early help with identified attendance, punctuality and/or welfare concerns;
- Undertaking individual work with pupils;
- Undertaking family centred work;
- Liaison between primary and secondary schools and other services during the year 6 to year 7 transition phases (refer to ED Transition Policy);
- The delivery of Child Protection Training (SPB Foundation Level);
- An 'oversight' of the statutory and legal components relating to non-attendance.
- This would include (for e.g.) warnings for non-attendance, initiating Parish Hall enquiries, legal processes and attending court;
- Recognising and working within the requirements of both the legislation and underlying principles relating to information sharing;
- Collating, interpreting and presenting data on issues relating to relevant aspects of the work of the EWS and use it to plan and manage the work of the service.

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the EWS and VCP underpins the EWS and School's responsibilities laid out in this Policy. The SLA defines expectations of stakeholders in promoting positive school attendance and punctuality.

The School's named EWO will attend termly Planning and Review Meetings (PARMs) and will in addition agree a schedule of consultation visits throughout the academic year. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss, negotiate and agree priorities for the term ahead on a rolling basis.

VCP School's Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the School to record and monitor attendance, punctuality and the general welfare of the pupils.

At VCP we:

- Encourage, promote and maintain positive individual pupil attendance and punctuality;
- Implement strategies and initiatives to improve 'whole school' attendance;
- Ensure that registers are accurate and up to date;
- Regularly audit School registers to identify any pupils with attendance and / or punctuality concerns;
- Monitor and promote the welfare of every child; the head and deputy conduct half termly welfare checks that triangulate all welfare data.
- Ensure that all appropriate information and records are available to the EWO as part of a School request for EWS involvement.
- Will not provide any tasks for the pupils to complete whilst they are off school due to sickness

Parents are required by law to ensure that all children of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 16) receive a full time education either by registering a child at a school or be arranging an alternative to school in line with the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) policy. These responsibilities extend beyond ensuring regular attendance and punctuality, it requires parents to make certain that each child arrives at school on time, dressed in line with the school's dress code, with the correct equipment and prepared for learning.

Parents can support their child/ren by keeping requests for absence to a minimum. It should not be assumed that schools will agree to absence requests and unjustified absences from school should not be condoned. If a pupil is unable to attend school for whatever reason, parents are responsible for notifying the school on the first day of absence and to keep the school updated on subsequent days.

Parents should work in partnership with schools in all matters concerning their child/ren's education by actively supporting school policies on attendance, punctuality, behaviour and homework.

Parents should avoid taking their child/ren out of school during term time. Such absences can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is at the discretion of the Head teacher to grant leave, only in exceptional cases.

VCP School Attendance Procedures

Our Attendance Policy is reviewed annually.

- A high priority is given to attendance and punctuality. This is celebrated every term and communicated to Governors and parents where applicable.
- The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for attendance, punctuality and welfare but all staff know that they have their part to play in promoting these issues regularly in class;
- There is clear guidance for all staff on the process of registration, including the appropriate categorisation of absence. Registers must be taken immediately at 8.45am and 1pm, thus ensuring compliance with statutory requirements;
- Information is regularly communicated to parents/carers and pupils;
- Clear procedures are in place to identify and follow up all absences and lateness. The School Secretary updates attendance records based on messages left on the School answerphone before 8.45am every morning. The parents / carers of any pupil not in School without a justified reason are telephoned before 9.00am and the whereabouts of the child confirmed. VCP School recognise the importance of early intervention in contacting parents/carers;
- The School Secretary collates and utilises attendance data effectively. All 'Lates' are monitored and appropriate steps/interventions are put in place where there is a cause for concern. Our 'Half Termly Welfare Check' identifies children with attendance data that causes concern and this is triangulated against other welfare indicators. Letters may be sent, or parents invited in to discuss attendance in the first instance.
- VCP School is committed to supporting children with chronic/long term illness in accessing their learning needs.
- Vulnerable pupils are identified at transition meetings with Secondary Schools or at PARMs;
- A range of strategies are in place to deal with absenteeism, lateness;
- The provision of a clear hierarchy of sanctions;
- The use of attendance incentive strategies;
- Procedures are in place for identifying and reintegrating longer term absentees;

- Regular structured meetings between the schools and the EWO;
- Reasonable steps are taken by the school before requesting the involvement of the EWO;
- Regular communication with parents/carers to highlight the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term time;
- The use of parent/carer evenings and other opportunities to remind parents of the school policy on attendance;
- The involvement of Governors (where applicable).

Response to Absences, Lateness and Welfare Concerns

Absences and Punctuality

Independent research has shown that 'first day response is the single most effective initiative in improving rates of attendance' – in some schools by as much as 10%.

Early intervention can have positive effects on poor attendance and punctuality therefore, when concerns begin to emerge it is the responsibility of the school to raise these concerns with the parents/carers and students (age appropriate) in the first instance. Schools should make every effort to engage with parents/carers and in doing so, where appropriate, introduce an Attendance Plan. Review dates should be agreed with a view to improvements being made.

Where there are no significant improvements, the school have exhausted all their strategies and absence and/or punctuality continues to deteriorate, schools should engage with parents/carers to agree to the support of the Education Welfare Service. A Request for Involvement (RFI) form will then be completed. RFI forms must be completed by the school with an opportunity provided to parents/carers to also sign their agreement to the involvement of the EWS. Should a parent/carer not wish to sign the RFI form, the reason will be recorded on the form. A RFI form is the mechanism that confirms that a case will be opened to the EWS and that an EWO will actively become involved in some capacity. In addition it is the RFI form which provides the EWS with a mandate to keep records and information such as chronologies on pupils and families.

Attendance Panel Meetings

If there is no subsequent improvement in attendance and punctuality despite the input from the school and the EWS, in consultation with the Team Manager, warning letters with the intent to refer to Attendance Panel will be sent by the EWO. No further improvements will initiate an invitation from the Team Manager to parents/carers and student (age appropriate) to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting. Attendance Panels are required to address persistent concerns around school attendance and punctuality. Panel Meetings represent a platform for professionals to meet with parents/carers and student (age appropriate) to receive and review reports from the EWS, schools and other services, and as part of this, to consider and agree suitable next steps to achieve improvements in this area.

Parents/carers are invited to submit their own reports/information and in conjunction with the pupil (age-appropriate) are encouraged to contribute to any discussions.

Should the parents/carers fail to attend, the meeting will continue and a decision will be made in their absence. The decision to progress a case to a Panel Meeting is made by the Team Manager of the EWS and would typically include evidence of the following:

- Persistent and long term concerns in the area of attendance and/or punctuality;
- School-led intervention;

- Direct involvement from the school's EWO/school-based EWO as evidenced by relevant documents (e.g. Attendance Plans);
- Case oversight from the Team Manager of the EWS;
- Appropriate involvement of other agencies;
- Parental non-engagement/non or disguised compliance.

The Panel will consist of a Senior Manager of CYPES, the Team Manager of the EWS and a Senior Manager from Social Services, an EWO and a representative from school and/or other relevant service/s.

Possible outcomes of the Attendance Panel include:

- A review period for parents/carers and pupil to evidence significant improvements. This will sit within an Attendance Plan or TAC/F Plan and may include the involvement of further professionals;
- An Enquiry to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
- A referral to the Parish Hall with a view to prosecution;
- Application to the Court for an Education Supervision Order (refer to the Education (1999) Jersey Law).

Once the case has been referred to the Parish Hall, it is the responsibility of the Parish Connétable to contact the parents/carers and student (age appropriate) and invite them to attend a Parish Hall Enquiry. This may result in a deferred decision to allow for a review period, the parents/carers may be charged at Parish Hall level or required to attend Court under article 12 of the Education (1999) Jersey Law.

Welfare Concerns

In such cases where the welfare of the child is of a concern, schools should make every effort to engage with the parents/carers with a view to the situation improving. If this is not the case, schools should consider an 'Early Help' assessment. The outcomes of this assessment will determine the needs of the family, which will in turn dictate the need of internal/external and third sector services. The EWO may or may not be required to be part of the assessment and/or outcomes.

Emotionally Based Non Attendance (EBNA)

It is important to distinguish between non-school attendance, truancy and emotionally based non-school attendance, the latter being considered an emotional need. There could be a number of contributing factors to EBNA's. Schools should refer to the EBNA Assessment Tool to establish the route of the problem (refer to EBNA Policy). Once this process has been completed schools, along with parents/cares, should request the appropriate involvement of services such as Education Psychologists, in order that the appropriate support can be put in place to support the pupil.

Looked After Children (LAC)

Each school is responsible for supporting, monitoring and raising concerns in relation to attendance and/or punctuality and welfare for Looked after Children. The EWS are tasked with supporting schools by consistently raising LAC children during EWO/school consultation meetings. Attendance and punctuality data will be collated at the end of each academic year.

Attendance Procedures and Recording Attendance and Punctuality

The following procedures underpin the principles in this Policy and generate good practice in matters concerning attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Registers

Attendance registers are legal documents and particular attention should be paid to accuracy. Incomplete registers are not acceptable.

Registration

Staff and pupils should be aware that registration is a key part of the school day. **Attendance registers must be called twice daily**, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.

Pupils must be marked as:

- Present,
- Engaged in approved educational activity off site,
- Absent.

In the case of an emergency evacuation, school policies must contain processes to enable staff to account for all students on the premises. Head teachers are responsible for ensuring that all staff, including supply staff, have up-to-date knowledge of this process.

Absences should be authorised by way of written or verbal communication with the parent/carer. The appropriate code should be entered into the register and a reason for absence entered into the school's electronic data base. In the event of any absences school should make first day contact with parents/carers and make every effort to ascertain the reason for any absences/lateness, where parents/carers have not made contact.

Punctuality

Schools should actively discourage late arrivals due to the disruption this causes not only to the individual but also to the remainder of the class. Patterns of lateness can develop into non-school attendance if left unchallenged. Schools should be flexible where local conditions such as weather or local transport have an adverse effect on pupils arriving on time. Schools should have a consistent approach to lateness so as not to differentiate between classes/form groups and siblings.

Pupils who arrive

- Up to 30 minutes after the registration has closed should be marked as late – **(L)**
- More than 30 minutes after the registration has closed will be marked as a **(U)**. This will be counted as an unauthorised absence.

Pupils who arrive up to half an hour late as a result of a medical appointment can be marked as present. The school must have prior notification of such appointment and be recorded in the SIMS data base. Pupils arriving late must sign in at the school office, recording the reason and time of arrival. Schools are not obliged to accept reasons for absences or late arrivals to school.

Should any doubts remain after investigations have been made the absence could then be recorded as unauthorised and in the cases of late arrivals the appropriate code will be applied.

Alternative Educational Provisions

A pupil who is receiving part time/temporary education or training away from the school site but is retained on the register of the school should be marked as **(B)** in the register. This also applies to pupils on work experience who will be marked as **(W)** in the register. The supervising member of staff responsible for these students must check that the student is at the appropriate place of instruction prior to completing the register. Modified time tables and reintegration into school must be planned and agreed by all parties and the register completed appropriately.

Pupils who are receiving all of their education in a separate provision to that of an education setting must be marked as 'left' on the register.

In the case where a student is attending an alternative school setting for an agreed period of time, the receiving school should register that student and they should be registered as **(B)** (educated off site) by the school of origin. Should the student return or not return to the school of origin they should be marked as on roll or left.

Transfer

Where pupils transfer to another school, the receiving school must notify the relinquishing school that the pupil has been admitted on the first day in the new school. The relinquishing school can then mark the pupil as left.

Children Missing from Education

Please refer to CYPES Policy for Children Missing from Education.

Parents/carers Responsibilities

Parents/carers are required by law to ensure that all children of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 16) receive a full time education either by registering a child at a school or by arranging an alternative to school in line with the CYPES Policy.

These responsibilities extend beyond ensuring regular attendance and punctuality, it requires parents/carers to make certain that each child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed with the correct equipment and prepared for learning.

Parents/carers can support their child/ren by keeping requests for absence to a minimum. It should not be automatically assumed that schools will agree to absence requests. Nor should unjustified absences from school be condoned. If a student is unable to attend school for whatever reason, parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school on the first day of absence and to keep the school updated on subsequent days. Parents/carers should work in partnership with schools in all matters concerning their child/ren's education by actively supporting school policies on attendance, punctuality, behaviour and homework. Parents/carers should avoid taking their child/ren out of school during term time. Such absences can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is at the discretion of the Head teacher to grant leave, only in exceptional cases.

Leave during Term Time

CYPES does not, at any time, support leave during term time, however, in exceptional circumstances head teachers have the discretionary power to grant leave in accordance with this Policy.

Each case should be considered carefully taking into account:

- The age of the child;

- The time of year;
- The nature and purpose of the trip;
- Family circumstances;
- Attendance pattern of the pupil;
- Previous requests.

Head teachers can refer to the guidance for exceptional circumstances (Appendix 4 in CYPES policy – see link):

Whilst each case is unique, the guidance strives for consistency across all schools. To further support consistency, where siblings are concerned, primary and secondary schools should endeavour to liaise with each other prior to a decision being made. Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw their child/ren from school and must request permission in advance from the head teacher.

Furthermore, parents must make a strong case to justify taking pupils out of school during term time as the absence can seriously disrupt continuity of learning. It is expected that parents will support their child's education by arranging all leave to coincide with school holidays.

Where a pupil is absent for longer than the agreed time, s/he should be marked as taking unauthorised leave. The same applies to those parents/carers who remove their child/ren from school without permission.

Parents/carers who wish to take their child/ren out of school for longer than **four weeks** will have to re-apply for their school placement. It should not therefore be considered that a pupil has the automatic right to return to their departing school. Should the departing school be full upon the student's return to the island, CYPES will support parents/carers to enrol their child/ren in an alternative school setting.

Attendance Data

Attendance data will be collated centrally by the EWS at the end of each term. This information will be broken down into year groups, allowing the EWS to direct their services appropriately.

- This information will provide:
- The number of pupils attending schools;
- The number of authorised/unauthorised absences;
- The number of absent days broken down into year group;
- The average number of late arrivals (including after the close of registration);
- The number of authorised/unauthorised holidays;
- The number of Emotionally Based Non-Attendance (EBNA) pupils;
- Pupils with a diagnosed significant illness impacting on their attendance.

LAC Attendance Data will be collated at the end of each academic year.