

## School Attendance Policy

This policy complements the Scottish Borders Council Attendance Policy - <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/12918/attendance-policy>

At Peebles High School (PHS), we promote the importance of excellent attendance and timekeeping in keeping with our school vision – One Peebles: our community where we belong, grow and achieve. We want to ensure that young people are safe and improve outcomes for them. We know that the more young people attend, the more able they are to achieve, attain, fulfil their potential and improve their opportunities in the future. We also know that good school attendance is a protective factor for their emotional wellbeing.

Attendance is the responsibility of all of us. Our attendance policy is designed to give our whole school community (young people, parents/carers, staff and partners) a clear understanding of the importance of attendance, absence procedures and our expectations of excellent attendance of all our young people.

### The Importance of Attendance

At PHS, we aim for every young person to achieve an attendance level of at least 90%. This gives young people the best chance of success. The illustration below explains how every day in school counts and shows the impact that non-attendance has on a young person's learning and progress.

100% attendance	0 days missed
95% attendance	9 days of absence 1 week and 4 days of learning missed
90% attendance	19 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed
85% attendance	27 days of absence 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed (almost half a term)
80% attendance	36 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed (half a term)
75% attendance	45 days of absence 9 weeks and 1 day of learning missed (almost a whole term missed)

### Absence Procedures

It is parents/carers' legal responsibility to keep school informed of all absences. We have a duty of care, and if parents/carers do not communicate this, we will make contact to check the young person's whereabouts. If you receive a text to ask where your child is, please get in touch with the school asap.

## **Types of Absence**

Absence can be categorised as authorised and unauthorised.

### **Authorised Absence:**

**Medical** - when a young person cannot attend school because they are ill, this will be recorded as an authorised absence.

**Appointments** - medical and dental appointments are regarded as authorised absences. Where possible, all appointments should be arranged for outwith the school day.

**Emergencies** - there may be an occasion where it may be inappropriate for a young person to attend school. We will be sympathetic to the needs of families in such situations.

**Approved absence** - we appreciate that the wider achievements of young people are important and are keen to support requests for young people to participate in recognised events e.g. county or national sporting events. Parents/carers are asked to notify the school to discuss the amount of time away from school that is required.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Absences are recorded as unauthorised where unacceptable or no reasons have been provided by parents/carers. Unauthorised absence will be monitored by the school.

The following are reasons which are not acceptable absences and will be recorded as unauthorised:

- Holidays taken in term time
- Days out to theme parks, concerts, shows etc
- Parents'/Carers' work commitments or business trips
- Shopping trips
- Parental illness
- Care for family members
- Non-medical appointments e.g. hairdresser etc
- Absence without parental awareness

### **Holidays**

We cannot authorise holidays in term time. The only exception to this would be when parents/carers serve in the armed forces (Army, Navy, RAF).

### **Illness and Emergencies**

If your child is too ill to come to school or there has been a family emergency, you should inform the school on the first day of absence before 8.50am and every day that your child is absent thereafter. This can be done by:

Phone - 01721 720291

Text - 07860049596

Email - [peebleshs@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:peebleshs@scotborders.gov.uk)

Parents Portal App -

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://parentsportal.scot/&sa=U&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwi7hIbj1\\_GQAxUPV0EAHYR8GmAQFnoECDMQAQ&usq=AOvVaw13Xcy6ebzwoi4PROZMvueE](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://parentsportal.scot/&sa=U&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwi7hIbj1_GQAxUPV0EAHYR8GmAQFnoECDMQAQ&usq=AOvVaw13Xcy6ebzwoi4PROZMvueE)

### **Falling Ill During the School Day**

If your child feels unwell during the school day, it is important that they report this to a member of staff immediately. During lessons, they should tell their teacher. At any other time, they should report to their Pupil Support Assistant (Pastoral) or the main office. Your child will be seen by a First Aider and, if necessary, parents/carers will be contacted and arrangements made to allow the young person to get the appropriate care. **Young people must not walk out of school without informing anyone - safeguarding is paramount.** Such instances will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Where possible, all appointments should be arranged for outwith the school day. When it is necessary for a young person to leave school for an appointment, parents/carers should communicate this to school. We would prefer parents/carers to come to the school office to collect their child and bring them back to the office on their return. This is for safeguarding reasons.

### **Leave of Absence**

If parents/carers wish to take their child/children out of school during term time, they should provide a request to the Headteacher in writing. The reasons for the leave of absence will be considered and this will determine if the absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

### **Lateness**

The school day begins at 8.50am and every young person should be in their first lesson for this time. Lateness causes issues with marking registers accurately, missing important communication and missing the starting activity of the lesson.

### **Supporting Attendance**

We have a duty of care to challenge poor attendance and support young people and their families to improve this.

### **Groupcall**

We will send text messages to parents/carers when a young person is absent and we have not been made aware of the reason for this absence. Messages will be sent during periods 1 and 6 (Mon-Thurs) and periods 1 and 3 (Friday). **Parents/carers**

should not wait for the Groupcall and use this as a prompt to remind them to contact school.

### **Pupil Support Assistants (Pastoral)**

Pastoral PSAs will track and monitor attendance of the young people in their House and will make direct contact with parents/carers when patterns of absence occur or attendance levels are low. PSAs will offer home visits to support young people and their families.

### **Principal Teachers of Pupil Support (Pastoral)**

Class teachers and Pastoral PSAs will liaise with the relevant Pastoral teacher to discuss concerns and next steps. The sanction for repeated lateness and truancy is an after-school detention.

### **House Team**

Attendance data is tracked and monitored by House teams (Head of House, Pastoral teacher and Pastoral PSA) and actions agreed and recorded (see Appendix 1). Where attendance levels are low and there are no valid reasons for this, the House team will use a range of targeted activities in order to support young people and their families. These can include:

- Attendance letters to a young person and their parent/carer (see Appendix 2)
- Use of the SBC Attendance Support Plan (See Appendix 3)
- Universal plus meeting and plan
- Meeting around the Child (MAC) and Child's Plan
- Connect groups
- Involvement of partner agencies such as health, social work, educational psychology and third sector
- Curriculum adaptations to improve engagement
- Build Up timetable
- Hosting arrangement with another school (in agreement with all parties)
- Referral to Cluster Attendance Panel (Appendix 4)
- Referral to the Reporter (Children's Hearing). This is usually when there are a range of other concerns which, together with non-attendance, form grounds for referral

### **Thank you for your support**

Tracking and monitoring the attendance of around 1300 young people is a considerable task and this is made very difficult when parents/carers do not inform the school of absences. The following up of unexplained absences takes a lot of administrative time which could and should be used to work directly with young people. Attendance is the

responsibility of us all and we thank parents/carers for their support in following our attendance policy and procedures.

## **Appendix 1 – Monitoring and Tracking Procedures for Schools (4 stages)**

### **Stage 1**

- Attendance <90% in 4-week period (without acceptable explanation/ notification)
- First contact made with home and Attendance Letter 1a/b (see appendix 2) posted or groupcall. Phone call may be made depending on which is most appropriate for context
- Key staff: Pastoral Support Assistant, Pastoral Teacher, SLT
- If attendance improves no further action – continue to monitor attendance. Issue letter 1c/d

### **Stage 2**

- Attendance continues to be <90% at 8 weeks
- Issue Attendance letter 2 a/b posted or groupcalled, inviting parent/carer to meet to discuss potential barriers and concerns
- Planning meeting held to identify support needs and plan to restore attendance
- Consider access to interventions from key partners as appropriate
- Recorded using Attendance Support Plan (see appendix 3)

### **Stage 3**

- Attendance not improved, still <90% after 12 weeks
- Attendance letter 3a/b issued
- Meeting to review and update Attendance Support Plan
- Referral for additional resources/partner interventions as required

### **Stage 4**

- No significant progress at 16 weeks
- Referral to Cluster Attendance Panel
- Outcome from panel may be recommendation for referral to the Children's Reporter, Attendance Order etc (see appendix 4)

### **Safeguarding**

Schools have a duty of care to young people and if there are child protection (CP) concerns, CP Procedures will be followed. If a young person is missing from school and there has been no contact from home, the Children and Families Duty Team will be contacted if there are safeguarding concerns.

## Appendix 2 – Absence letters (in 3 stages)

### Stage 1

#### Sample Letter 1a – Parent/Carer

Dear (insert Parent/Carer name)

Child/Young Person's Name

I am writing to advise that (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

Attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on a child or young person's learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support (insert child/young person's name) and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will contact you in the coming days to discuss this further with you.

OR

We would like to invite you and [Insert child/young person's name] to a meeting with [insert staff member's name] on (insert date and time of meeting) to discuss this with you and identify appropriate solution to support (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion / meeting.

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

### **Sample letter 1b – Young Person over 12 years**

Dear (young person's name) I am writing to advise that your attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

We are concerned as attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on your learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support you and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will be contacting your parent/carer to share this concern and a discussion or meeting will follow which you will be invited to be part of. This will help us to identify solutions to support improvements in your attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion/meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

### **Sample letter 1c – Parent/Carer**

Dear (insert Parent/Carer name)

Child/Young Person's Name

Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving (child/young person's name) attendance, I write to advise that (child/young person's name) attendance is now XX% in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor (child/young person's name) attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Thank you for working with us to improve (child/young person's name) school attendance. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters arise in the future which might cause an impact on attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name



### Sample Letter 1d - Young Person over 12 years

Dear (young person's name)

Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving your attendance, I write to advise that your attendance is now XX% in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor your attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Well done on managing to improve your school attendance and thank you for working with us to support you. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters come up in the future which might cause an impact on your attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

## Stage 2

### Sample Letter 2a – Parent/Carer

Dear (insert Parent/Carer name)

Child/Young Person's Name

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our subsequent conversation / meeting, I am writing to you as we remain concerned about (insert child/young person's name)'s continued pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you (and insert child/young person's name) to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child/young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

## Sample Letter 2b – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (insert young person's name)

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our conversation/meeting, I am writing to you as we are concerned about your continued pattern of low/non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

### Stage 3

#### Sample Letter 3a – Parent/Carer

Dear (insert Parent/Carer name)

Child/Young Person's Name

I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about (insert child/young person's name)'s continuing pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past twelve week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance record.

I would ask that you (and your child) attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in (insert child/young person's name)'s attendance we may consider a referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel or Scottish Borders Council's Children and Families Social Work for advice and support. Compulsory measures such as an Attendance Order may be sought and/or a referral to the Children's Reporter may be considered in accordance with The Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36).

An appointment has been made for you (and your child) to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child/young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

### **Sample Letter 3b – Young Person over 12 years**

Dear (insert young person's name) I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about your continuing pattern of low/non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past twelve-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

I would ask that you and your parent attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in your attendance we may consider a referral to other agencies for their advice and support.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation

School Name

## Appendix 3

### SBC Attendance Support Plan

SBC Attendance Support Plan			
This plan belongs to Name of child/ young person			
My School			My class
People involved in my plan:	Parents/carers .....		
	School .....		
	Partners Agencies .....		
	Other .....		
Reason for my plan/ Barriers to attendance:	<input type="checkbox"/> Truancy <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health/Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained Absences <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/ill health <input type="checkbox"/> Refusal to Attend <input type="checkbox"/> Family Holidays <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
Background information to plan:	Current attendance rate ..... % <div></div>		
Start Date for My Plan:			
Agreed Targets (If Secondary, please attach copy of Build-Up Timetable)	1. ....		
	2. ....		
	3. ....		
My Plan will be reviewed on			
Main school contact name, designation, and email.			

## **Appendix 4 – Referral to Cluster Attendance Panel**

A referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel can be made to manage persistent absence.

Parents who have enrolled their child at a local authority school at any time, are then required to ensure their child attends, unless the Education Authority have consented to the withdrawal of their child from education. (i)

Education authorities require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance. (ii)

### **Calling a Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP)**

- The Education Authority notifies parents that a CAP is required and an explanation for non-attendance must be provided
- CAP meetings are not considered until all interventions at school and cluster level have been exhausted e.g. involvement of partners, MAC meetings, attendance support plans etc
- CAP meetings will still go ahead if parents/carers choose not to attend or respond

### **Possible Outcomes of CAP**

If a parent/carers fails to satisfy the CAP that there is a reasonable excuse for a young person's non-attendance at school, the CAP may:

- Proceed to prosecution through the Sheriff Court
- Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal
- Warn the parent and postpone a decision for a six-week period – the panel may make an Attendance Order under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (iii)
- Refer to the Children's Reporter
- Make non-statutory recommendations to the parent/carers and school to further support attendance

## **References**

- (i) Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 35 [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)
- (ii) Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 36 [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)
- (iii) Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 38 [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)