

1. Introduction

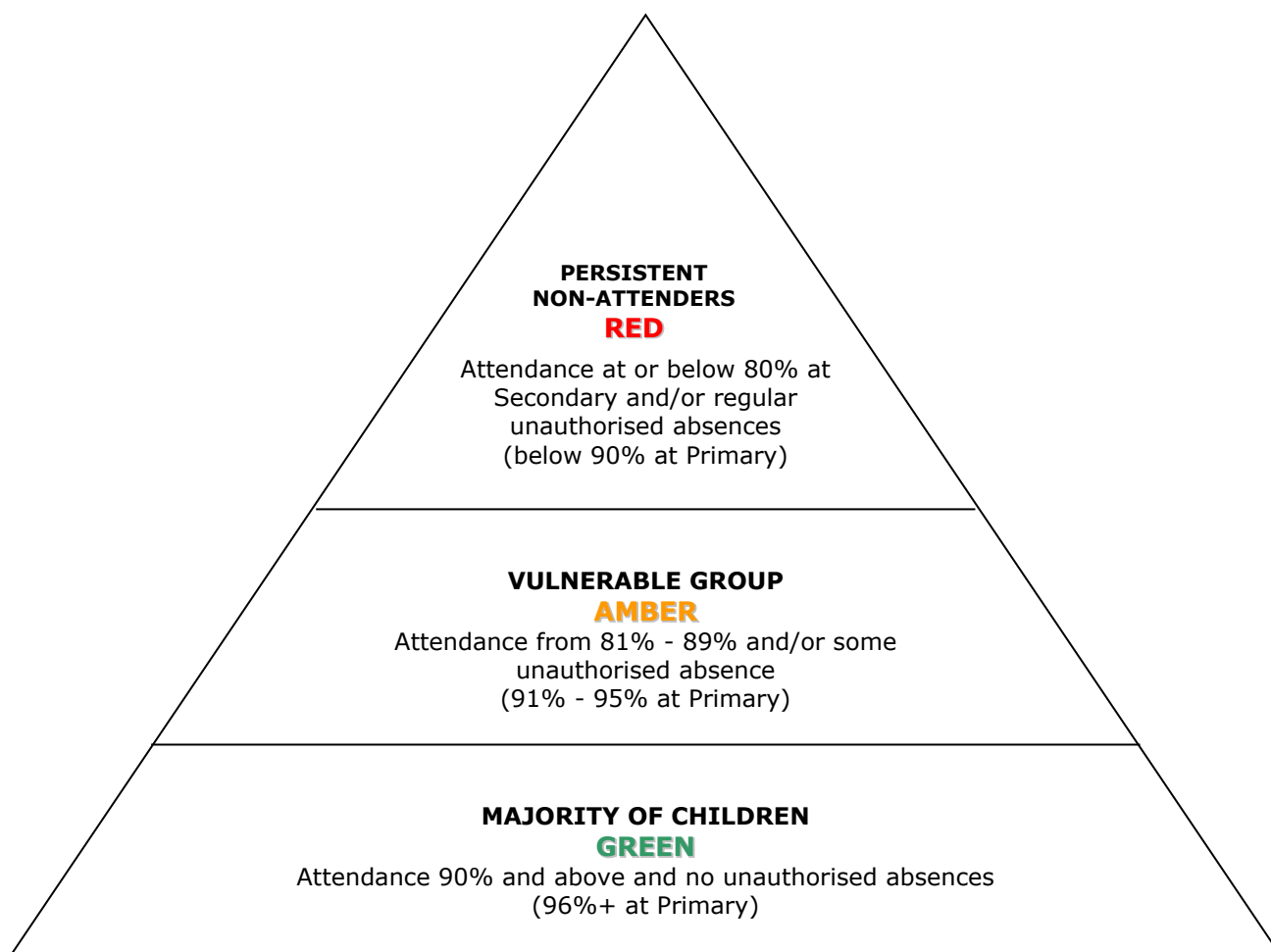
- 1.1 Attendance at school is central to social inclusion, to equal opportunities and to keeping children safe and has a major impact on a child's education, future and life chances. RBWM Children's Services recognises that participation in education is a key factor in a child reaching their full potential, and support services and schools work together to minimise absence from school.
- 1.2 The Government's priority in respect of school attendance is to reduce the current levels of absence and RBWM, through the Education Welfare Service, schools, and National Strategies Consultants, is continually focusing its efforts on maximising attendance levels.
- 1.3 There is overwhelming evidence that shows a strong correlation between absence from schools and poor academic achievement. (DCSF) (Misspent Youth)
- 1.4 Furthermore, children who are not in school are more easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour. 62% of school pupils who have been caught offending say that they are truants. In addition to this, there is a risk that those pupils that do not attend school may also become the victims of crime.
- 1.5 The issue of attendance, therefore, is a priority – not least because of the strong correlation between absence and poor attainment but also because it is integral to RBWM's drive to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- 1.6 Attendance is also a key element of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. It is through ensuring that every child has the opportunity to benefit from a good education that we will achieve much better outcomes for these young people – helping them in 'being healthy', helping them to 'stay safe', to 'enjoy and achieve', ensuring that they are 'making a positive contribution' and that they 'achieve economic well-being'.

2. The Law

- 2.1 All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements.
Details can be found on the following in **Appendix 1**:
 - Attendance Law
 - Elective Home Education
 - Taking children off roll
 - Register Codes
 - Holidays in term time
- 2.2 Further guidance can be viewed at www.DCSF.gov.uk/schoolattendance

3. Roles and Responsibilities of Parents

- 3.1 If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. Parents have a duty to communicate with the school and to co-operate with the school's Attendance Policy; collaborative working between the parents and the school is usually the key to resolving attendance problems, as illustrated by the following diagram.



	AGENCIES	STRATEGIES
Persistent Non-Attendees	Parents, School, Education Welfare Service, Multi-agency Support e.g. Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Traveller Education Service, Children in Public Care Education Group, Police School Liaison Officers, Safeguarding & Specialist Services, Special Educational Needs and Connexions (Intensive or Core).	Penalty Notices, Fast track to Attendance, Prosecution, Truancy Sweeps, Multi-agency support plans for individual pupils (CAF), Alternative curriculum provision e.g. not school.
Vulnerable Groups	Parents, "Light touch" school input from other services, e.g. Education Welfare Service, Educational Psychology Service, Connexions.	School/Education Welfare Service support, Parenting contracts, Individual Attendance Action Plans, Penalty Notices. EPS support for multi-family groups. RBWM guidance on Anxiety and School Attendance.
Majority of Children (90-95%)	Parents, School, Connexions (Core service).	Attendance Rewards, Celebration of attendance and attainment.

- Further details of parental roles and responsibilities **Appendix 2**

4. School Level Action to Improve School Attendance

- 4.1 It is often at the school level that the biggest direct influence can be brought to bear on raising levels of attendance. Absence from school undoubtedly has a detrimental effect on a pupil's progress and attainment. Therefore, schools need to monitor and support pupils to maintain regular school attendance. All schools, including independent schools, have a legal responsibility to inform the Local Authority of any pupil absent from school for more than ten consecutive days without permission.
- 4.2 In January 2008 Ofsted issued new guidance on inspecting attendance. Schools will be evaluated on their efforts to improve attendance within both the Personal Development and Care, Guidance and Support categories. The following checklist is recommended for use by schools as preparation for inspection:
- Is a senior member of staff responsible for attendance?
 - Do all staff have clear roles and responsibilities in promoting attendance?
 - Is there a clear escalation of interventions to address absence?
 - Are there effective administrative arrangements to encourage attendance?
 - Is there evidence of reconfigurations of the curriculum (for individuals and groups) to re-engage non-attendeers?
 - How effective are rewards and sanctions?
 - Are there prominent displays depicting the importance of attendance and 'attendance' competitions?
 - How far are the governors actively involved in monitoring attendance?
 - Does the school seek and make good use of effective practice from elsewhere?

More information is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/.../IIFD/Files/jan_revised/Inspecting%20attendance%20-%20guidance%20-%202027Jul07.doc

Appendix 3 gives more details of the following:

- Data collection and analysis
- Authorising absence
- Religious holidays
- Holidays and extended leave
- Attendance policy and procedure
- Attendance intervention
- Persistent absentees
- Absence from KS3 tests

5. Local Authority Level Action to Support School Attendance

- 5.1 The RBWM Area Children's Teams offer support to schools and parents and work collaboratively to promote attendance. Information can be found on the following in **Appendix 4**:
- The Attendance Strategy Manager
 - The Education Welfare Service
 - Connexions
 - The Behaviour and Attendance Strategy Consultant
 - EMA Service
 - Traveller Education Service
 - The Educational Psychology Service

- The Learning and Achievement Team

6 Vulnerable Groups

Certain pupils, however, are at risk, for example:

- Children with SEN
- Children in care
- Minority ethnic children
- Travellers
- Young carers
- Pregnant schoolgirls and Teenage Parents
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Children missing from education
- Children with Medical Needs

(Further details on the above can be found in **Appendix 5**)

- 6.1 Therefore, a co-ordinated multi-agency approach is needed. Non-attendance at school is sometimes only a symptom of a variety of complex problems and therefore all agencies who can impact upon children's and families' lives and who can contribute positively to their attendance at school are involved.
- 6.2 A range of agencies within RBWM each make distinct contributions to supporting attendance of the more vulnerable pupils and should be contacted when appropriate. Further information can be found in **Appendix 6**:
 - Education Welfare Service
 - Connexions
 - Youth Offending Team
 - Health Workers
 - Safeguarding and Specialist Services
 - Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
 - Traveller Education Service
 - Community and Youth Service
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- 6.3. Promoting school attendance, therefore, requires vigilance, rigour, empathy and a personalised and inclusive approach and involves an ongoing collaboration between parents, schools and support services. Improving attendance is the corner stone on which attainment and excellence are built.

Appendices

Appendix 1 THE LAW

Attendance Law

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or through other arrangements. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

LAs have a duty to satisfy themselves that children who are not in the school system are receiving a suitable education. If the LA believes that a child is not getting a suitable education, it has a duty under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 as amended to serve a notice or a School Attendance Order on a parent. The notice requires the parent to satisfy the LA that the child is receiving a suitable education whilst the order requires the parent to register the child at a named school.

Schools can only delete pupils from the Attendance Register when the pupil is deleted from the Admissions Register, which is governed by the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006. If a pupil is to be taken off the register because the child is moving to another area or school, staff should first find out the name and address of the new school and when the pupil will start. After it has confirmed with the receiving school that the child has started and has transferred the pupil's record to the new school, the old school may delete the child from its Admissions Register. If there is any doubt about any child's move, seek advice from the EWS/Children Missing Education Officer.

LAs also have responsibility under sections 444(1), 444(1A) and 444(ZA) of the Education Act 1996 as amended for legal action to enforce attendance at school. This duty is exercised through RBWM's Education Welfare Service and its Education Welfare Officers (EWOs).

They also have the following legal powers to enforce attendance:

- School Attendance Orders (SAOs)
- Prosecution for irregular attendance
- Penalty Notices and Parenting Orders (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) for irregular attendance
- Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- Whilst it is not a legal measure, LAs can use Parenting Contracts in their efforts to improve a pupil's attendance.

Each school and local authority must set its own target to minimise overall absence. The requirements are set out in the:

Education (School Attendance Targets)(England) Regulations 2007
Education (Local Authority Performance Targets)(England) Regulations 2005 as amended by the Education (Local Authority Performance Targets)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007

In addition to this, schools, under the Race Relations Act of 2000, have the statutory responsibility of monitoring the attendance and exclusion rates of ethnic groups

Police Services and Local Authorities arrange truancy sweeps in their areas. The legal power to return a truant to school is given to police constables under Section 16 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 as amended. RBWM's Truancy Sweeps are conducted in accordance with DCSF guidance entitled "School Attendance and Exclusions Sweeps Effective Practice and Advice"

When a pupil moves from one school to another, the pupil's common transfer information must be sent to the "new" school within 15 school days. Further information is in the Education (Pupil Information)(England) Regulations 2005)

Additional information on legal measures available to manage school attendance is available in "Ensuring Children's Rights To Education" which is statutory guidance on legal measures available to ensure regular attendance (DCSF/00529-2007) and guidance and information on all of the above can be viewed, along with other advice, at:www.DCSF.gov.uk/schoolattendance.

Elective Home Education

Some parents elect to teach their children at home, either individually or in partnership with an organisation or religious group and thereby take responsibility for the educational attendance of their child from the LA. If the child has been on the roll of a mainstream school the decision to home educate is taken by the parent who must inform the school, in writing, of their decision. Where a child is on the roll of a special school the parent should discuss their decision with the school and the LA as they will assume responsibility for meeting the child's needs as given in the Statement of Educational Needs although the LA is still required to hold an Annual Review and amend the Statement if necessary. Once the school has been officially informed by the parent and/or the LA that the child is being educated at home, the pupil must be taken off the school roll. Advice regarding elective home education can be obtained by contacting the officer responsible for monitoring home education. Where the child has a Statement further information on the role of the LA can be obtained from Special Educational Services on 01628 796777.

Taking Children Off Roll

Guidance on taking children off roll is entitled "Keeping Pupil Registers" and within the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006.

The following extract from The Regulations, outlines the grounds on which a pupil can be deleted from the Admission Register.

"8 Deletions from Admission Register

(1) The following are prescribed as the grounds on which the name of a pupil of compulsory school age shall be deleted from the admission register—

(a) where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local education authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local education authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school;

(b) except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school, in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) or regulation 9, that he has been registered as a pupil at another school;

(c) where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion;

(d) in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written

notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school;

(e) except in the case of a boarder, that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered;

(f) in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence exceeding ten school days for the purpose of a holiday in accordance with regulation 7(3), that—

(i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted;

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

(iii) both the proprietor and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;

(g) that he is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he nor his parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;

(h) that he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and—

(i) at no time was his absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6(2);

(ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

(iii) both the proprietor of the school and the local education authority have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is;

(i) that he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period;

(j) that the pupil has died;

(k) that he will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and the relevant person has indicated that he will cease to attend the school;

(l) in the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, an Academy, a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school;

(m) that he has been permanently excluded from the school; or

(n) where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.

(2) In a case not covered by paragraph (1)(a), (j) or (m), the name of a child who has under arrangements made by a local education authority become a registered pupil at a special school shall not be removed from the admission register of that school without the consent of that authority, or if that authority refuse to give consent, without a direction of the Secretary of State."

In paragraph (h), before removing the child's name from roll a referral to the Education Welfare Service should be made. The Service will then check the circumstances and whereabouts of the child. This will also link with the Missing Child procedures.

Register Codes

There is published separate guidance entitled "Absence and Attendance Codes Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities on the use of the national absence and attendance schools which can be viewed at: www.DCSF.gov.uk/schoolattendance/otherinitiatives/absence.cfm. There is also an updated list of attendance codes, descriptions and meanings which was documented in August 2006.

Holidays in term Time

Term time holidays should be the exception, not the rule. All family holidays should be taken, as far as possible, during the school holiday periods. Penalty Notices of up to £100 have been introduced into RBWM through the Anti Social Behaviour Act (February 27th 2004) and could be enforced by the Local Authority if appropriate. Two weeks holiday in term time every year (with no other absences) means that your child can only ever achieve 95% attendance and will miss about two terms in a school career.

Appendix 2 PARENTAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The importance of collaboration over attendance between school and parent is evident in Home School Agreements, school prospectuses and school policies and procedures. The parent or carer is primarily responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and has a duty to communicate with the school. Parents should be aware of the school's Attendance Policy, should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence and should avoid taking holidays during term time. Where attendance problems occur, the key to successfully resolving these problems is through collaborative working between the child, the parent, the school and if need be, the LA. Collaborative measures include individual pupil Attendance Plans and Parenting Contracts. If however, there is evidence that the parent is colluding with the child and condoning absenteeism, other measures, such as Parenting Orders or Penalty Notices, may be used.

Appendix 3 SCHOOL LEVEL ACTION TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Data Collection and Analysis

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent.

The register must show whether any absence is authorised or unauthorised.

The information in school registers about the amount of absence that occurs in the school, a year group and a class or individually along with the reasons for the absence is particularly useful when working to reduce unnecessary absence. There is published separate guidance on the use of the national absence and attendance schools code which can be viewed at: www.DCSF.gov.uk/schoolattendance/otherinitiatives/absence.cfm.

This guidance shows the most common reasons for absence, the codes that must be used to record them and the statistical meaning of each code. The codes are mandatory from September 2006.

Schools may keep the registers manually or electronically but the electronic register must be printed each month. The governing body (which is legally responsible for the attendance register) must register with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Schools should use electronic registration systems, which will enable more effective and efficient monitoring of attendance on a daily basis, as well as allowing the identification of longer-term trends in absence that can be used to inform school policy and practice.

The preferred data system used by the LA is the attendance module of sims.net. Training is provided to schools on this module and the Strategy and Information team also offers support. However, some schools are successfully using other systems.

Because school attendance is closely correlated with pupil attainment, there is a statutory requirement to set absence targets for the whole school on an annual basis. The LA collates the absence targets and submits them to DCSF.

Pastoral or support staff should follow up individual pupils and analyse attendance data to identify trends for individual pupils, classes or year groups that can then enable the school to target its efforts.

Children who are the subject of Child Protection Plans should be monitored especially closely and there should be an immediate referral to Safeguarding and Specialist Service if a school has any concerns.

Authorising Absence

The decision whether to authorise absence is made by the school. In law, absence is authorised for the following reasons:

- Sickness.
- On a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.
- Because the school is not in walking distance of the pupil's home (which for a child of under 8 years of age is 2 miles; in the case of any other child is 3 miles) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA.

- However, absence can also be authorised where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, for example, authorising holidays, or have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence.
- All other absences must be treated as unauthorised

Religious Holidays

There may be situations when parents enquire about religious holidays. An understanding of other faiths will help schools use their discretion when considering the authorisation of religious holidays. For further advice, schools should contact EMA Service.

Holidays and Extended Leave

A significant contributor to the absence rates from schools is often the authorisation of that absence for extended leave and in particular for holiday absence.

This activity is not encouraged. It is within the Headteacher's power and discretion to grant and authorise up to two weeks holiday leave in any academic year. Please refer also to Appendix 1.

Schools, therefore, not parents, authorise absence. Schools must adhere to DCSF guidelines in authorising absence and should be consistent in applying the same rules in authorising absence.

School Attendance Policy and Procedure

All schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance, which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

Parents should be aware of the school attendance policy and should be encouraged to co-operate with the systems and procedures that the policy describes.

Schools should have systems and procedures for:

- Registering pupils.
- Categorising absence.
- Collating and analysing attendance data to identify trends and enable action to be taken.
- Determining in which exceptional circumstances leave of absence will be granted for holidays during term time.
- Monitoring attendance and punctuality for all lessons.
- Dealing with late arrivals.
- Dealing with unauthorised absence (i.e. when contact will be made with parents, how and when standard letter systems will be used, what measures will be taken to re-engage disaffected pupils, what rewards/incentives will be used to encourage attendance, what sanctions will be taken).
- Referring cases to the LA (i.e. when, how and by whom).
- Reintegrating pupils who have been absent (e.g. providing pastoral support, the role of the Learning Support Unit, using learning/peer mentoring)

A good Attendance Policy should clearly set out staff roles and responsibilities for dealing with attendance and should link to the school's behaviour and bullying policies. It should reflect RBWM's Local Authority's Attendance Strategy and should be endorsed by the school Governors. Parents and pupils should be consulted on the policy.

Attendance Intervention

Action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance before a referral is made to the LA.

School administrative staff or support staff should contact parents on any day a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation (i.e. First Day contact), including cases where the pupil skips lessons after registration. This makes it clear to pupils and parents that unauthorised absence is taken seriously. By contacting the parent the school also ensures that the parent is aware that the child is not in school enabling the parent to take steps, where necessary, to establish that the child is safe.

Schools can undertake a range of actions to overcome attendance problems. These will depend on the child and their circumstances and will involve working closely with the parents.

For example:

Meetings with parents to discuss strategies in school and at home that encourage regular school attendance and the production of an action plan for improving attendance.

- Consideration of timetable and subject choice with regard to engaging the pupil.
- Use of Learning Mentors to build positive relationships with pupils and parents.
- Use of Peer Mentors to provide a social support network.
- Use of methods for discouraging absence (i.e. placing the pupil on report, letters home).
- Extra help with work missed.
- In-school counselling.
- Support for reintegration back into school.
- Use of the CAF.

Where a pupil is at risk of failure at school through long term disaffection the Headteacher should establish a pastoral support programme for the pupil.

Where intervention at the school level fails to bring about an improvement in school attendance, a referral to the Education Welfare Service must be made. Schools may also wish to implement the attendance strategies outlined within the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, such as Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders. Any such implementation must be done in accordance with RBWM's Code of Conduct and following notification to the LA. The school is responsible for resourcing any provision. If a school wishes to use a Parenting Contract, Parenting Order or Penalty Notice such measures must be included in the school's Attendance Policy and advice must be sought from the EWS before implementation of such strategies. Prosecutions for non-attendance can only be undertaken if the absence is unauthorised.

Key Stage 3 Test Absence

From May 2008 all schools with Key Stage 3 test absence rates of five per cent or above (of the school's cohort for two consecutive years) in either English, mathematics or science are to provide the DCSF with reasons for the test absence.

Currently all maintained schools have a statutory duty to record the fact of absence for students who did not sit Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests. The national test absence rate for Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests is stable at around one per cent whereas the absence rate for Key Stage 3 tests is around three to four per cent. Ministers are committed to reducing avoidable absence from Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests so as to ensure that there is an objective measure of progress for as many pupils as possible, in line with Every Child Matters.

The data gathered about reasons for Key Stage 3 test absence will inform local and national strategies to minimise avoidable absence from tests and help schools to develop more effective strategies for reducing test absence levels.

Persistent Absence (P.A.)

A persistent absentee is a pupil who misses at least a fifth of the available sessions in a school for any reason or combination of reasons (whether authorised or unauthorised). For example, it can be a pupil who has a chronic or recurring illness or a pupil who has missed 20% of the school because of a combination of authorised and unauthorised absence. In many schools persistent absence represents missing 64 sessions between September and May or 52 sessions between September and Easter.

Pupils with absence of more than 20% (attendance less than 80%):

Autumn 1	sessions missed 14+
Autumn 2	sessions missed 28+
Spring 1	sessions missed 40+
Spring 2	sessions missed 52+
Summer 1	sessions missed 64+

There are two sets of criteria that P.A. target schools meet:

- 1) Over 70 pupils are P.A. and
- 2) Over 9% of the school's pupils are P.A. (Based on 06/07 data)

A Persistent Absence 'target' school is one where the LA is expected to monitor and support closely. With absence returns being made by the school to the L.A. every half term and shared with the Regional Adviser for Behaviour & Attendance. In priority LAs, where there are six or more P.A. target schools, these returns have to be sent to the DCSF. RBWM does not currently have any P.A. target schools.

The National target for secondary persistent absence across the Local Authority is 5% and below by 2010/11.

Appendix 4 LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION TO SUPPORT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Attendance Strategy Manager

The Attendance Strategy Manager works with schools, Area Children's Teams to promote school attendance. The role of the Attendance Strategy Manager includes:

- Working in partnership with schools to ensure that all schools have an Attendance leader who will promote attendance and will be the vehicle for dissemination of good practice
- Ensuring that schools gain assistance to produce an attendance strategy that defines clear actions and outcomes to meet school attendance targets.
- Working closely with the School Improvement Partners attached to schools and, in particular, collaborating closely with the Behaviour and Attendance consultant.
- Managing the Education Welfare Service
- Taking a leading role to ensure the co-ordination of data collection for DCSF and termly return analysis of data that can be used to inform schools and Children's Services of future actions needed.
- Ensuring that, where Children's Services/LA have schools that are subject to specific attendance targets, profiles of each targeted school are compiled and updated, drawing out key operational strengths and weaknesses and reporting progress to Elected Members, Children's Services and key stakeholders.
- Establishing mechanisms to support the local and regional dissemination of good practice, providing examples to DCSF on effective practice and contributing to national dissemination through a variety of approaches.
- Ensuring the Area Children and Young People's Team provide advice to schools with regard to implementing action plans, developing and implementing procedures for regular data analysis which will assist the school to monitor, challenge and support the school to reach its targets.
- Leading on communications with the media, local community, parents, children and young people in relation to expectation and actions that Children's Services intend to take to promote school attendance. This should include providing information on successful and improving schools.

RBWM schools which may be identified by the DCSF as attendance target schools will be contacted by the Attendance Strategy Manager. A meeting will then be arranged with the Attendance Strategy Manager and, if appropriate, the EWO, the Behaviour and Attendance Consultant and the school's Attendance Lead. A support package, based on an Attendance Action Plan for the target school, will then be agreed and implemented. Termly review meetings will be held and attached Advisers will be informed of progress made.

Furthermore, it is recognised that non-attendance is also a behaviour and may be indicative of wider behavioural problems or other issues – for example, bullying. Consequently, the issues of attendance and behaviour are also approached in a cohesive way and the Attendance Strategy Manager, Area Team Manager, Behaviour and Attendance Consultant, Behaviour Support Team and the Pupil Referral Unit liaise and work collaboratively.

Education Welfare Service

Every school in RBWM has an attached Education Welfare Officer (EWO). All schools have a duty to inform the LA of unexplained absences longer than two weeks and of any child with irregular attendance. If a pupil's attendance falls below 80% in secondary school and 90% in primary schools, the school should refer the student onto the EWS Team. Any pupil defined as a Persistent Absentee must be referred and have an Individual Attendance Plan.

When a case meets the criteria for referral to the EWS, the EWO will make an assessment of the case and will work closely with the pupil and their family as well as the school to resolve

issues surrounding their poor school attendance. This may involve an initial school meeting, home visits and an agreement to facilitate an understanding between home and school. In almost all cases parents will always be given a warning at the beginning of any casework of their legal responsibilities.

The EWS will consider and attempt to resolve any possible factors that may be contributing to school attendance problems. Documentary evidence will be kept to provide that the EWO has undertaken casework to address possible reasons for non-attendance.

The EWS will engage other agencies where appropriate. It may be that the pupil would benefit from the use of the Common Assessment Framework and with parental agreement a child and family meeting with relevant professionals may assist the family and the pupil. (See CAF toolkit)

If casework or other intervention strategies, such as Parenting Contracts, have been unsuccessful in securing regular school attendance and/or the EWS considers that prosecution may bring about an improvement in the child's school attendance, then the LA may choose to prosecute parents under section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996. Some cases may be suitable for action under the Fast Track to Attendance Framework.

The EWS may draw up a Parenting Contract or may issue Penalty Notices. A **Parenting Contract** is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the LA or the Governing Body of a school. It is voluntary and a parent cannot be compelled to enter into the contract if they do not wish to do so. Equally, there is no obligation for the LA or Governing Body to offer a Parenting Contract in cases of non-attendance. Parenting Contracts may support the parenting role in cases of non-attendance at school or where there are issues in a pupil's behaviour that have led to fixed term or permanent exclusion.

If EWS intervention and the use of Parenting Contracts fail to bring about improved attendance, then the LA may issue **Penalty Notices**. Penalty Notices will be issued in cases of **unauthorised** absence or truancy. The EWS may receive requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools, Thames Valley Police and neighbouring LAs.

In addition to this, further strategies available to the EWS are **School Attendance Orders (SAO)** and **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)**. SAOs may be issued to direct the parent to send their child to a specified school and are used when a pupil is not on roll at any school. RBWM may also consider applying for an Education Supervision Order before prosecuting parents and may apply to the Court for an ESO as a means of attempting to ensure regular school attendance.

Truancy sweeps are an additional strategy to tackle non-attendance and truancy sweeps are carried out in partnership with the Police and may coincide with the national truancy sweeps, which usually take place in the Autumn and Spring terms. Schools also have a major role to play in truancy sweeps, as many of those children found by the sweeps will be returned to school. The EWS will notify schools of any scheduled sweeps and will advise the schools on having systems in place to handle these pupils and to take appropriate follow up action. Any school that feels a sweep in their neighbourhood may be productive should contact their EWO in the first instance.

In addition to this, the LA administers child employment permits and performance licences and application for these licences must be made to the EWS Team. Schools are given the opportunity to refuse the issue of permits and licences if it is felt that attendance is a concern.

The EWS will continue to act on referrals where it is suspected children may be illegally employed.

Children Missing Education

The DCSF defines Children Missing education as :

All children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

RBWM employ an EWO for Missing Children who tracks children without a school place and acts as clerk to the In Year Fair Access Panel.

Where a parent or professional notifies the LA that a child has no placement, details will be logged and progress tracked, with intervention and support offered as appropriate by the Missing Children EWO

EXCLUSION

Schools routinely download information of all exclusions to the LA. Where schools exclude pupils for a fixed term or permanently, the LA monitors and administers the process, which is set out by DCSF, offers advice on procedures and collates data for DCSF and for other professionals.

[DCSF Exclusions Guidance \(teachernet\)](#)

IN YEAR FAIR ACCESS PANEL

This Panel was established under the Admissions Forum's Arrangements for the Admission of Vulnerable and Challenging Children in order to identify and facilitate a suitable full-time educational placement with minimum disruption to the education of pupils permanently excluded from school. It meets regularly to make a recommendation on the appropriate placement for the pupil with an action plan for reintegration & resources.

Rapid Response

For those young people at imminent risk of permanent exclusion The Area Team Managers coordinate a regular multi agency panel to assist schools in diverting from the need to exclude by the use of a range of support & interventions.

For information please contact the relevant Area Team Manager

The Secondary Behaviour & Attendance Consultant

The Secondary Behaviour & Attendance Consultant works closely with the Attendance Strategy Manager and schools to promote the development, at both operational and strategic levels, of attendance policies, systems and effective monitoring procedures etc. The consultant supports schools in utilising tools from the National Strategy, such as attendance audits, CPD materials etc. Trends and patterns can then be identified, along with resultant staff training needs. The strategic support of the consultant and each school's Behaviour & Attendance Lead helps inform a school's action planning process and school improvement cycle.

The Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) Service

This team work boroughwide with schools to close the attainment gap for minority ethnic, pupils by promoting race equality and social inclusion, offering training, advice and guidance to build capacity in EAL, raising cultural awareness, sharing good practice in policy and practice and encouraging a culturally inclusive curriculum.

EMA are peripatetic having Outreach/Liaison Workers who work directly with communities to build and establish home/school links, access school places and remove the barriers to attendance and continuity of education. Work is both preventative and reactive.

Traveller Education Service

Traveller families residing in or resorting to RBWM may live in houses, on county council and private sites, on unauthorised developments or unauthorised encampments. Highly mobile occupational Traveller families may only stay for a very short amount of time. Their entitlement to education is the same as any child living in RBWM.

As a result of mobility, Traveller children may have interrupted patterns of attendance and will require good induction programmes to ensure a smooth inclusion into the life of the school. Strategies to develop home-school links are the key to this good practice and much of the work of the team concentrates on empowering parents and schools to work together to achieve better access, attendance, achievement and continuity of learning.

The teams work closely with the family, school and statutory agencies to ensure that entry into school and transition at each Key stage is as smooth as possible in order to remove any potential barriers to regular school attendance.

Whilst the majority of Traveller children access primary phase schooling there is an unacceptable trend both locally and nationally of non-engagement at Key Stage 3/4. Traveller pupils are identified as most at risk of underachievement and exclusion within the education system. This work remains a priority for the team.

The Educational Psychology Service

In RBWM, each LA mainstream school, Pupil Referral Unit, special school and nursery school has a named link Educational Psychologist (EP) who visits regularly to plan and carry out work at a range of levels. The work undertaken in these settings is agreed at a planning meeting between the EP and school staff. Requests for EP involvement for consultation or direct work with children and young people are currently made by schools, for school-aged children or through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership for pre-school children, or through the Local Authority for Statutory work with named individuals from RBWM within and belong the Royal Borough's schools.

The aims of the Educational Psychology Service are to remove or reduce barriers to learning and promote the psychological health and well-being of individuals, groups or organisations such as schools. The Educational Psychology Service's support to the Local Authority, schools and families is threefold; strategic support, school-based support and individual pupil support. In relation to attendance issues, this work is outlined as follows:

Strategic Support within the LA involves providing a psychological perspective to cross-borough initiatives and policies, for example contributing to SEN policy development, and the Anti-Bullying Strategy, working with other professionals to produce guidance for schools on supporting pupils who avoid school due to anxiety, developing and evaluating training, developing and evaluating provision to prevent disaffection (e.g. Nurture Groups).

School-Based Support is managed in a partnership between the link EP and the school. This work may include providing training to schools, helping schools in their own policy development, working with parents of 'hard-to-reach pupils (e.g. multi-family groups in the PRU or secondary schools) and consulting with staff on strategies that can be implemented in school to support pupils' attendance.

Individual Pupil Support is planned with the school. EPs may be asked to work with pupils and families who are excluded from school, or who are unable to attend school due to medical or emotional needs. EPs are involved in supporting the planned integration of pupils in schools, and liaise closely with other agencies and parents. EPs also have a statutory role with respect to children with SEN requiring assessment under the Education Act 1996.

The team of Educational Psychologists in RBWM work from two Area Team bases and can be contacted on 01628 796688.

The Learning and Achievement Team

The School Improvement Partners (SIPs) liaise with schools to set their annual attendance targets. The SIPs, Advisers and Consultants help monitor progress of the schools in achieving these targets. They liaise with their teams and agencies in supporting schools with attendance by studying attendance data analysis alongside other baseline data. If attendance is thought to be a factor which is affecting the standards of attainment and achievement in a school, then the issue of attendance may be included in a Local Authority review of that school.

The Youth Service

RBWM has a statutory duty to provide a youth service for those aged 13 to 19 and up to 25 with special needs. The Service aims to provide young people with a wide and diverse range of development opportunities, both at an individual and social level, and offer the necessary guidance, support and mentoring to achieve and progress, thus facilitating the transition to adulthood. The provision of such services is delivered through 9 building based Projects (3 located in Maidenhead and 6 in Windsor) and 4 Borough-wide specialist projects (Outdoor Education Project, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Detached Youth Project, Youth Participation/Youth Opportunity Fund, Special Projects and Connexions Intensive Personal Advisors). The Service also works in partnership with the local voluntary community, supporting 12 voluntary sector youth projects, including neighbourhood and village youth projects across the Borough. In addition, there are two Counselling Services; based in Maidenhead (No.22) and Windsor (Youth Talk). In general, the work is open access and available to all young people in the local area, however the Service recognises and delivers work to those young people that are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion. Youth work is provided on the premise that young people choose to use the youth provision and their reasons are varied. The programme of activities, includes drama, use of ICT Cyber Café, sport and outdoor water based activities, addressing issues relevant to young people, such as drugs, sexual health, bullying, peer pressure, being victims of crime, vandalism, transport, housing, employment, education or discrimination, to name but a few.

Connexions

The Connexions Service in RBWM is funded through RBWM Community and Youth Service. There are two strands to the service; an Intensive Support service (within Community and Youth Service) providing support to a small cohort of young people facing multiple barriers to accessing education, employment or training opportunities and a Core service (delivered by Connexions Berkshire) delivering universal services, including 1:1 interventions, group works and generic information to all young people from year 8 in school up to the age of 20 in community settings. Connexions Berkshire also makes specialist provision for young people in the following "vulnerable" groups; teenage parents, those experiencing mental health issues, young people with LDD, BME young people (focusing on unaccompanied asylum seekers) and those from traveller communities.

Further information can be obtained from Denise Gilholme, Social Inclusion Manager, Community and Youth Service (Connexions Intensive Support) or Kath Dunn/ Charmian Shute, Connexions Managers, Connexions Berkshire Tel: 07747 476753/ 07747 476782 (Connexions Core Service).

Appendix 5 Vulnerable Groups

Children with Special Educational Needs

Those with Special Educational Needs may be at risk of non-attendance, especially where needs have not been identified or properly met. Where this may be considered a factor, the school SENCO should be the first point of contact.

Children in the care of Local Authorities

Looked after children span the full ability range, but as a group their educational outcomes are often poor. Nationally, of those who had been looked after for twelve months or more on 30 September 2004, only 9% gained five GCSE A*-C (compared with 54% of all children) and over 40% failed to achieve one GCSE or equivalent (compared with only 4% of the general population). One factor behind this underachievement is high rates of absence and exclusion from school.

Under Section 52 of the Children Act of 2004, the LA, as corporate parent, has a specific duty to promote the educational achievement of all children they look after, wherever they live. Within the LA, Senior EWO co-ordinates the support for Looked After Children and works with all partners, principally Social Care and schools, to promote the educational achievements of Looked After Children. Good attendance is critical to educational success and the LA monitors the attendance of all RBWM's Looked After Children and completes the Government return on attendance, identifying any child in care who has 25 days or more absence (authorised or unauthorised). For individual students, strategies are recorded in the Personal Education Plan.

Minority Ethnic Children

Some Minority Ethnic Children have been identified as having particular issues related to engagement with education. Many pupils within this large group do exceptionally well in school however there is national concern about a disproportionate number who are at risk of disaffection. Further advice on attendance issues can be sought from the EMA team.

The issue of extended holidays although no longer an issue for the majority of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is still a cause for concern for some schools. Further advice on this can be given by EMA, the EWS or the document below

Travellers

Travellers have a unique culture within our society and because of this they are sometimes disproportionately represented among children who are not able to attend regularly or who may be over-vulnerable to exclusion.

Young Carers

Young Carers of a sick or disabled relative at home may be late or absent from school because of their responsibilities. In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school should set a time limit for the absence and set some schoolwork so that the pupil does not fall far behind while at home. Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on the LA to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and this is done through liaison with Safeguarding and Specialist Services and the Young Carers Association.

Pregnant Schoolgirls and Teenage Parents

Pregnant Schoolgirls and Teenage Parents face more barriers to learning and have a higher risk of educational failure than their peers. Almost 40% of teenage mothers leave school at the minimum age with no qualifications leaving them disadvantaged in the labour market throughout their adult life. Schools should work with LA services to provide appropriate support for the pupil during pregnancy and after the baby is born. This should be directed to keeping the pupil in education wherever possible, and to return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth, with appropriate childcare support. No more than 18 calendar weeks authorised absence period is allowed to cover the period immediately before and after the birth of the child. This education can be at school, a Further Education College or in a suitable unit and must meet the particular needs of the pupil. The LA will not impose one policy for all but will consult the pupil, their parent or carers and their school to secure a package which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and individual needs. This package may include attendance at the local Pupil Referral Unit, which will help the school and the pupil with a personalised learning package. Schools, the EWS and Social Care will also work together to ensure inclusion.

Pregnant girls who receive education out of school during their pregnancy should remain on the school roll during this time to enable them to return to the school after the birth if they choose to do so. This education out of school is treated in the school's attendance register in the same way as other approved educational activities.

Pregnancy is never a reason for exclusion and health and safety should not be used as a reason to prevent a pregnant pupil attending school.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers also need support to ensure that they are safeguarded and that they have a positive educational experience. Further advice and information can be sought from EMA.

Children Missing from Education

Children Missing from Education are a particular concern, as it is not just the child's educational attainment that is at risk, but also potentially his/her safety and welfare. The LA is working closely with DCSF and other local partners to ensure that systematic arrangements and information protocols are in place to identify children missing from education, so that suitable provision can be made for them (as stated in [Every Child Matters: Change for Children, December 2004](#)). As part of this work the LA has a Missing Children Officer who tracks missing pupils. The EWS coordinates the support work and brokers support through the most appropriate agencies for missing children, focusing on returning pupils to education. If there are any concerns that there may be a child missing from education, contact should be made with the Missing children officer. When a pupil moves from one school to another, the pupil's common transfer information must be sent to the "new" school within 15 school days. Further information is in the [Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2000](#) and the [Education \(Pupil Information\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2002](#).

Children with Medical Needs

Children with Medical Needs also require support and these needs are met through the Specialist Inclusion Services. Protocol outlined within the DCSF publication 'Open Access to Education' found at www.DCSF.gov.uk/sickchildren and LA Guidelines are followed.