

Attendance Policy

Somerset Virtual School believes that in order to reach their full potential, children and young people need to attend school/education provision regularly. The Virtual school works closely with schools, social workers carers and other agencies to support the attendance of all Somerset CLA.

The Education Act 1996 states that: The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise

Statutory guidance for local authorities DfE September 2014 states that:

- Young people are under '*a duty to continue and participate in education or training until their 18th birthday*'.
- Local authorities in England have '*a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training*'.

The Virtual School works to support attendance in a range of ways including

- Monitoring the attendance of children looked after and young people. *Welfare Call* has been commissioned to collect attendance data on a daily basis
- Using the attendance data gathered to identify problems and work with school, carers and social workers to explore these and seek solutions
- Exploring attendance at every PEP meeting where action plans can be agreed for CLA with low levels of attendance
- Working with young people, their social worker, foster carer/keyworker and education/training provider to facilitate reintegration, provide support whilst out of school or work through a child or young person's specific concerns to help them become 'school ready'.
- Using opportunities as they arise and training provided to remind parents/carers/keyworkers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children/young people attend school to receive their education or training;

It is acknowledged that there are many factors which can impact negatively on the attendance of CLA, not least:

- Increased mobility i.e. movement of/changes in care placements with potential impact on the ability to attend school
- Mental or physical health issues and associated appointments and absences
- Actual or perceived bullying
- School's response to behavioural or other challenge i.e. repeated use of Fixed Term Exclusion or reductions in timetable/provision
- Holidays in term time which school sometimes support for CLA where they would not for other pupils

Somerset Virtual School actively works with all those directly involved to minimise actions that affect any the ability of any CLA to full-time attend education every day. On the Somerset Virtual School website www.somersetvirtuelschool.co.uk a range of 'What to do if' documents can be found to

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support these areas of concern. They set out the roles and responsibilities of social workers and schools in relation to CLA. The Virtual School's Bullying Policy is also available on our website.

We do not support the authorisation of holidays in term time for Somerset CLA and ask that any request for term-time leave is raised with the Virtual School so it can be carefully considered in the light of all issues pertaining to the child or young person.

Every school with a Somerset CLA on roll has a link Advisory Teacher who can be contacted to share any attendance concerns. If any school or social worker is unsure who the Advisory Teacher is, the Virtual School should be emailed thevirtualschool@somerset.gov.uk and a link will be provided.

Attendance – Roles and responsibilities

Social Workers

- Encourage the school attendance of CLA, recognising the positive impact of good, regular attendance on academic progress
- Avoid making appointments for CLA during the school day in term time as far as possible
- Use attendance monitoring alerts to check out instances of unauthorised absence and identify any patterns of absence, liaising directly and as rapidly as possible with foster carers
- Liaise with the school and the Virtual School where there are attendance issues to address issues and plan to bring about an improvement
- Use attendance monitoring as an additional safeguard in preventing CME/CSE or the exploiting of other vulnerabilities in the CLA cohort

Foster Carers

- Encourage good attendance of CLA, recognising the positive impact of good, regular attendance on academic progress
- Avoid making appointments during the school day in term time as far as possible
- Make any holiday plans for school holiday time
- Communicate effectively with the school in line with their attendance policy in respect of any absence from school for a CLA.
- Liaise with the school and the Social Worker where there are attendance issues to address issues and plan to bring about an improvement

PEP Co-ordinators

- Use the PEPs and attendance data provided by Advisory Teachers to record the attendance data on the VS register
- Forward the Daily Email and Continuous Absence Reports from attendance monitoring organisations to the Advisory Teachers and Education Support Workers
- Report anomalies or inaccuracies in data to attendance monitoring organisations as requested by the Advisory Team

Area Pods

Individual roles and responsibilities to be agreed between the AT and ESWs within the pod and recorded at the area meetings

- Use the attendance monitoring organisations' reports and emails to monitor the attendance of all CLA allocated to the pod, following up any concerns or queries with the school and the social worker
- Maintain the VS register columns relating to attendance - weekly total for every pupil, annual total for every pupil, RAG rated in the 'Attendance Monitoring' column where Green = no attendance concern, Amber = Monitoring and raising at PEP to ensure improvement, Red = Actively involved in supporting improved attendance
- Ensure the PEP documents include plans for any CLA with attendance below 90% and, where appropriate consider how Pupil premium could be deployed to improve attendance

- For any pupil with [significant attendance issues](#), use the VS pro forma to log and file on Capita, sharing with the AT – Attendance Lead and the VH
- Challenge any ‘holiday in term-time’ request and follow up with all schools and social workers where a holiday in term time has been authorised, escalating these issues to the LEA if no improvement
- Work closely with CSC to support CLA going through the adoption process where time away from school can often be requested and is not always appropriate
- Challenge schools in relation to P/T or reduced timetables, using the VS pro forma to record arrangements, reviews and impact, escalating these issues to the LEA if no improvement
- Challenge schools where exclusion is being used repeatedly or without consideration of all issues for CLA, ensuring plans are recorded at termly PEP meetings and using the VS checklist to record reintegration plans and graduated response, escalating these issues to the LEA if no improvement
- Explore offering ESW support with clearly defined outcomes
- At the end of each academic year summarise the ‘story’ behind those pupils with attendance below 90% and where appropriate ensure an action plan is in place to reduce the likelihood of the next academic year seeing a repeat of the issues

Lead Education Advisor

- Where concerns raised by ATs are not being satisfactorily addressed by schools or CSC, the LEA will liaise with the AT to agree next steps to bring about improvement.
- Develop and deliver training for school staff, carers, social workers and other agencies that raise awareness of the importance of good attendance at school and ways in which all stakeholders can actively encourage and support this
- Ensure attendance is a standing item of VS monthly meetings where local or national policy developments can be shared and all team members held to account for their part in securing excellent attendance for all CLA
- Use the attendance information from the monthly area meetings to shape the development of VS policy and practice
- Be aware of key attendance issues and able to update the VH, providing data and context as needed.

Revised summer 2018

Significant Attendance Concern

Completed at the end of a term for all pupils with less than 80% attendance and for other pupils where attendance requires a multi-agency plan.

Name of pupil				
School				
Designated Teacher				
Social Worker				
Percentage attendance		Accurate? (Capita/Welfare Call)	Y	N
Reason for low percentage	Exclusions	P/T timetable	Medical	Other
Does issue predate CLA?				
Summary of issues				
Has VS been involved in addressing this issue this academic year?	Y	N	Has an ESW been involved this academic year?	Y N
Does the VS have any concerns regarding professionals/services involved in improving attendance?	CSC School other	If Y, what is different through ESW involvement?		
If Y, what action is planned/has been undertaken to address?				
Is there an attendance action plan in place?	Y – attach copy or provide summary N – reason			
Advisory teacher				Date:

Copy to VH

Copy to pupil file