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ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL: POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

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1. INTRODUCTION

West Lothian Council is committed to working with all parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people receive an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Key to full engagement with education is the provision of motivating learning experiences and the removal of barriers to learning.

Non-attendance may be an indicator of issues or difficulties a child or young person is experiencing. The impact of non-attendance and non-engagement with learning significantly increases gaps in knowledge and understanding and the likelihood of young people leaving school without securing a positive destination. For some, life presents particular challenges which may impact negatively on attendance and engagement. Attendance at school therefore requires to be approached within the wider framework of inclusion and wellbeing, taking into account the holistic needs of the child/young person.

When assessment, planning and action are needed to support a child or young person's attendance, the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) National Practice Model is used to provide a framework for structuring and analysing the child or young person's needs in the same way as for any other additional support need. Using the National Practice Model in a consistent way allows practitioners to construct, implement and review plans for children and young people to ensure the appropriate supports are in place.

Given the centrality of attendance at school to other areas of strategic and operational activity within the council, it is necessary also to consider this aspect of educational provision in conjunction with policy and procedure in relation to Corporate Parenting responsibilities, Children Missing from Education, the development of Positive Relationships, Transition Planning and rights of families to Home Educate children and young people.

Child Protection is of paramount importance and non-attendance at school may indicate a child is at risk. In this situation Child Protection takes precedence over the Attendance Policy and The Edinburgh and Lothian's Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures must be followed. <http://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/6976/Child-Protection>

Education Authorities are under a duty in relation to pupils unable to attend a suitable educational establishment as a result of their prolonged ill-health. In such circumstances schools must make special arrangements for the pupil to receive appropriate education. Government guidance on the education of pupils absent from school through ill-health is provided through the following link <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/158331/0042883.pdf>

2. AIM

The aim of this policy and related procedures is to:

- improve overall attendance and punctuality of all pupils at school;
- ensure that engagement and attendance is a priority for pupils, parents/carers, staff and partner agencies to enable all pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors;
- ensure consistency in dealing with all issues of attendance and absence:
and

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- ensure the accurate recording of pupils' attendance and absence in accordance with Scottish Government guidance.

3. DEFINITION OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance is defined as participation in a programme of educational activities which includes:

- attendance at school;
- learning outwith the school provided by a college, off-site unit or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school;
- educational visits, day and residential visits to outdoor centres;
- interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events;
- debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school;
- study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable;
- activities in connection with psychological services, learning or behaviour support (including attendance at the Authority Attendance Group);
- receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services;
- work experience;
- participation in alternative educational programmes.

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Under Section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 parents/carers have a legal duty to secure an efficient education for any child of statutory school age for whom they are responsible. Most parents / carers seek to do this by enrolling the child in a Local Authority managed school.
- It is the Education Authority's legal duty to require the parent/carer to explain the reason for their child's absence from school (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 36).
- Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that a parent/carer will be guilty of an offence for failure to secure regular attendance by his or her child at a public school.
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 provides for where a parent has parental rights and responsibilities they should be included in all matters relating to attendance unless there are legal reasons to the contrary. Both parents/carers should be included in all correspondence and invited to all meetings.
- Section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, amended section 14 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 so that Education Authorities are under a duty in relation to pupils unable to attend a suitable educational establishment as a result of their prolonged ill-health. In such circumstances an education authority must make special arrangements for the pupil to receive education elsewhere than at an educational establishment.
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places duties on local authorities, and other agencies, to provide educational support where needed to enable any child or young person to benefit from education. A very wide range of factors may lead to children and young people having a need for additional support. Additional support may be required for a child or young person who is not a regular attendee and therefore poor attendance must be seen as an additional support need.
- The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 seeks to improve the way services work together to support children, young people and their families.

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5. A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Partnership with Parent/Carers and Pupils

There is a strong connection between attendance and achievement. All schools are required to promote good attendance to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their potential. This can be achieved by raising the profile of attendance and absence around the school and in school documents such as school handbooks, newsletters, websites and Glow blogs and by linking rewards systems with good attendance. It is good practice to highlight the benefits of good attendance to all concerned e.g. in assemblies, awarding certificates or prizes, reward programmes and annual/term-time events celebrating individual, group and whole class achievement. Study Support programmes and Breakfast Clubs can also be useful in encouraging attendance and, in some cases, have been targeted towards those with attendance difficulties.

Attendance can dip towards the end of school terms. An understanding of the benefit of attending school for the full term can be supported through the consistent delivery of relevant, challenging and motivational learning activities. Such educational activities require to be planned for, and implemented, throughout the term, including the school days immediately prior to holiday breaks.

Schools should aim to promote in parents/carers positive attitudes to attendance. This includes raising the awareness of parents to the effects on attainment and access to life chances if children do not attend school regularly, or are persistently late. In discussing attendance with parents it is important to maintain a practical focus that recognises the challenges of parenting and modern family life.

Parents should be encouraged to motivate their child to attend school. Some parents may have particular concerns about their child attending school. In these circumstances positive and early communication between school and home is crucial to resolve matters promptly without adverse impact on attendance. Having a named contact within the school for parents to discuss pastoral care issues is important.

A welcoming school ethos will create an environment which avoids lateness developing into absence for the full day. Lateness should be dealt with respectfully and consideration given to any family difficulties. When the school becomes aware of any difficulties it should do what it can to help in partnership with other services.

Promotion of positive attitudes to attendance includes raising the awareness of pupils and parents/carers to the effects on attainment and access to life chances if pupils do not attend school regularly, or are persistently late. Any developments around attendance and punctuality issues should include consultation and involvement with pupils themselves. Asking them what they think about attendance and what ideas they have to encourage positive attendance will give them a greater sense of ownership.

Partnership with Other Services

As stated above, West Lothian Council is committed to working with its partner agencies to ensure that all children and young people receive an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential. It is recognised that non-attendance may be an indicator of a wide range of issues or difficulties a child or

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young person is experiencing. It is essential therefore that an early intervention multi-agency approach be considered when addressing attendance concerns.

The Attendance Improvement Management Services (AIMS) within The Children & Young People Team, Social Policy, was established specifically to support West Lothian Council's commitment to improving attendance at school. Every mainstream school has a designated AIMS worker. It is essential that good lines of communication are established and maintained between school and their designated AIMS worker. This is best facilitated through regular contact/scheduled meetings to ensure consistency in implementation of the council's Attendance Procedures. It is recognised that arrangements for such communication will be agreed at a local level. Given the catchment area for specialist schools is West Lothian wide, an AIMS Worker for any identified attendance concerns within special schools is organised directly with the AIMS Team Manager.

6. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Operational procedures for the management of attendance and absence are outlined in the following appendices to this policy document:

Appendix One – Operational Procedures for Absence From School

- A. Absence Management Procedures for Primary and Secondary Schools
 - (a) Safe Arrivals: Dealing With Unexplained Absence On First Day Of Absence
 - (b) Safe Arrivals: Dealing with Unexplained Absence Second Day Of Absence Onwards
 - (c) Five Stage Intervention Process
 - (d) Exceptional Circumstances
 - (e) Transition to Another School and Holiday Periods
 - (f) Taking A Child Out Of School During The Normal School Day/Early Departures

- B. Absence Management Procedures for Pre-School Provision
 - (a) Safe Arrivals: Dealing With Unexplained Absence for Nursery Classes, Nursery Schools and Early Years Centres
 - (b) Two Stage Intervention Process

- C. Recording and Coding Information
 - (a) Authorised Absence
 - (b) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances
 - (c) Unauthorised Absence
 - (d) Extended Leave With Parental Consent
 - (e) Exclusion From School
 - (f) Family Holidays During Term Time
 - (g) Unacceptable Reasons for Absence and Course of Action
 - (h) Absences Awaiting Confirmation
 - (i) Truancy and Absence Occurring During The School Day
 - (j) Attendance/Off Site Provision as Part of a Learning Programme

- D. Information For Use in Website/Leaflet/Handbook/Newsletter

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Appendix Two – Operational Procedure For Reducing Late Coming

Appendix Three – Operational Procedures for Authority Attendance Group (AAG)

- A. Background
- B. Membership of the AAG
- C. Personnel in Attendance
- D. Referral Process and Administration of AAG
- E. Conducting the Meeting
- F. Possible Disposals by the AAG
- G. Re-referral to the AAG

Appendix Four – Correspondence Templates

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APPENDIX ONE: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

A. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(a) SAFE ARRIVALS: DEALING WITH UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE ON FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE

The primary aim is to ascertain a reason for absence where one has not already been established. **On the first day** of absence an initial assessment must be carried out to determine the reason for non-attendance. The following procedure must be adhered to:

- schools are required to inform parents/carers of the need to contact the school as early as possible, and before **9.00 am** on the first day of absence, if their child is going to be absent from school;
- when a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parent/carer, the school shall attempt to contact the parent/carer, using the Group Call system, by **9.45 am** on the first day of absence;
- parents/carers will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers for use by the Group Call system. Parents/carers will be responsible for responding promptly to contact from the school;
- where a parent/carer/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school and acknowledges the notification from the school, the parent/carer/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the school; and
- in cases where the parent/carer/emergency contact does not respond to the notification of absence and therefore there is still no explanation of absence, the Head Teacher will conduct a risk assessment by **10.00 am** on the morning of the first day of absence.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child/young person. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child/young person is regarded as minimal.

On every occasion of first day absence without explanation, a risk grading requires to be undertaken. This applies even where the young person is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate. The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to vulnerability, influences and past behaviour:

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Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor?

Is the child/young person vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child/young person?

Does the child/young person suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child/young person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child/young person or by a close relative?

Is the child/young person on the Child Protection Register?

Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child/young person been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to any racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or cultural issue?

Has the child/young person been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?

Are there any known problems in school?

Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?

Is there a known reason for the child/young person to be not attending school?

Has the child/young person been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child/young person. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Manager will progress the matter;
- Call the Safe Arrival Duty Worker (telephone 01506 282947); or
- Call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child/young person following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

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(b) **SAFE ARRIVALS: DEALING WITH UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE SECOND DAY OF ABSENCE ONWARDS**

It is not appropriate procedure to contact the Safe Arrivals Duty Worker beyond the first day of absence. In the event of the outcome of the risk assessment on first day of absence being “to continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day”, for each continued day of absence the risk assessment procedure requires to be undertaken as follows:

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT DAYS OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child/young person. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child/young person is regarded as minimal.

A risk grading requires to be undertaken on every day of absence without explanation. This applies even where the young person is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate. The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to vulnerability, influences and past behaviour:

Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor?

Is the child/young person vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child/young person?

Does the child/young person suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child/young person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child/young person or by a close relative?

Is the child/young person on the Child Protection Register?

Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child/young person been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to any racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or cultural issue?

Has the child/young person been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?

Are there any known problems in school?

Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of

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risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?

Is there a known reason for the child/young person to be not attending school?

Has the child/young person been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the day;
- Call the local Duty Social Work Office; or
- Call Police Scotland.
To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

(c) **FIVE STAGE INTERVENTION PROCESS**

The five stage intervention approach, outlined below, provides a positive and supportive approach to improving attendance.

The rationale underpinning the following procedures is

- high quality pastoral care systems for early response to absence and signs of difficulty;
- effective approaches to assessment and planning for children and young people;
- multi-agency planning to ensure effective local child and family support. The council's Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS) is integral to achieving this;
- rigorous and timely implementation of attendance procedures; and
- appropriate measures for compulsory compliance by parents/carers or children/young people through Attendance Orders or referral to Children's Hearings.

These five stages dovetail with Education Services' Continuum of Support and, as such, a wellbeing concern will have been raised in relation to attendance prior to Stage 1.

Attendance falling below 90% triggers significant concern.

Summary Of Five Stage Intervention Approach

Stage 1

Following a wellbeing concern in relation to attendance at school, a letter to raise the awareness of the issue will be sent to parents/carers. In many cases this action will result in improved attendance at school.

Stage 2

Action to date has not resulted in improved attendance at school. A meeting will be held with parents/carers to discuss the issues and to investigate supports. The Assessment of Wellbeing approach will help focus on areas that may require support.

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In many cases this action will result in improved attendance. When increased attendance is not achieved, the school requires continuation of the Assessment of Wellbeing approach to determine next steps (including a decision on whether or not a request for service requires to be made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS)).

Stage 3

Action to date has not resulted in improved attendance. A request for service is made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS). Multi-agency collaborative planning is implemented to improve level of attendance. In many cases this action will result in improved attendance.

Stage 4

Action to date has not resulted in improved attendance. A child's planning meeting will be held to address wellbeing concerns and consider next steps. The planning meeting requires involvement of family members, the AIMS Team and all other relevant professionals.

Stage 5

Action to date has not resulted in improved attendance. A referral will be made to the AAG. The pupil will now be at level 3 of the Continuum of Support and Assessment of Wellbeing will be regularly reviewed. Child's planning meetings will continue to involve family members, the AIMS Team and all other professionals.

The five stages are further explained as follows.

Stage 1

Where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 90%, a letter should be sent to raise the awareness of the parent/carer to the level of absence and the impact it is having on the pupil's progress at school/nursery. ([Template letter A1](#)).

Exceptions to this would be where attendance has dropped below 90% only:

- as a result of the exceptional circumstances of an authorised parental holiday; or
- as a result of an exclusion; or
- where it is likely that a medical condition or domestic circumstance, known to the school, will regularly and repeatedly impact on a pupil's attendance or is sufficiently complex and significant to warrant discretion.

Stage 2

If in the next 4-week period, the pupil's attendance is still below 90% and there remains a concern about the level of attendance and/or the reason provided for the absence, a letter should be sent to parents/carers inviting them to attend a planning meeting with the school ([Template letter A2](#)).

This meeting should be supportive and should try to discover the reasons behind non-attendance. A plan should be agreed to improve attendance. A request for service may be made by the school to Community Child Health if/when medical issues are cited as reasons for repeated or prolonged absence without the school's prior knowledge of a medical condition serious enough to warrant such absence. The letter advises the parent/carer that a request for service will be made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS) if they do not inform the school that they cannot attend the meeting.

If the Head Teacher considers that circumstances warrant attendance from the AIMS worker at this meeting for advice/consultation, this should be discussed prior to meeting being organised. Parents/carers should be notified if AIMS team are to

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be represented at this meeting.

If the parents/carers fail to attend the scheduled Stage 2 meeting or they do attend the meeting but this has no positive impact on the level of attendance then, following an Assessment of Wellbeing, the school may deem it necessary to progress to Stage 3 and a formal request for service would be made to AIMS.

Stage 3

A request for service is made to AIMS. Using **Template letter A3 or Template Letter A4** as appropriate, parents/carers are informed of a request for service to AIMS. AIMS require to receive the completed Assessment of Wellbeing in order for the Team Manager to facilitate appropriate support. Once allocated, the AIMS worker contributes to a collaborative Assessment of Wellbeing and a plan of work is agreed between the family, school and AIMS worker. This is regularly reviewed and collaborative meetings are organised as and when appropriate. Agreement to request a service from other agencies/professionals may be appropriate at this time.

Stage 4

If, after a 4 week period of support from the allocated AIMS worker, the pupil's attendance is not showing signs of significant improvement using monthly SEEMIS data, then following consultation between AIMS Worker and school representative, **Template letter A5** should be sent to parents/carers inviting them to attend a further child's planning meeting with appropriate professionals. This meeting should be supportive and be solution focussed. An action plan should be agreed and produced to improve attendance.

It should be noted that the attendance of the child at a child's planning meeting is encouraged but not mandatory depending on the age of the child and how appropriate it would be for him/her to attend the meeting. If it is deemed unsuitable for the child to attend a child's planning meeting, the child's views should be sought prior to the meeting.

The letter also advises the parent/carer that a referral may be made to the Authority Attendance Group if they do not inform the school that they cannot attend the child's planning meeting.

Stage 5

If the parents/carers fail to attend the scheduled stage 4 meeting, or they do attend the meeting but this has no positive impact on the level of attendance then, following an Assessment of Wellbeing, the school may deem it necessary to refer to the AAG. **Template letter A6 or Template Letter A7 as appropriate** should be used to inform the parents/carers of this referral.

Appendix Three provides further details on the operation of the AAG.

NB: All letters issued by schools should be generated from SEEMIS templates thus allowing the issuing of the letter to be recorded on the Pupil's Profile.

(d) EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

It is expected that, where the level of absence or disengagement is highly concerning, the Headteacher, or his/her representative, will, in discussion with their Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS) worker, move through each of the above stages quicker than the prescribed timescale until a level of

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intervention is reached which has an appropriate impact on the attendance of the young person. The appropriate template letters should be used.

If attendance improved to over 90% and subsequently deteriorated again, it would be at the Headteacher's discretion not to return to Stage 1 but to resume at whatever stage of the process is deemed appropriate in liaison with the AIMS worker.

(e) **TRANSITION TO ANOTHER SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY PERIODS**

Transition to another school or holiday periods should not prevent moving to the next stage of the five staged intervention process. Schools should not default to Stage 1 after the summer holiday periods or moving school if attendance issues persist.

(f) **TAKING A CHILD OUT OF SCHOOL DURING THE NORMAL SCHOOL DAY / EARLY DEPARTURES**

Parents/carers will be encouraged to make non-school appointments, where possible, outwith the normal school day.

Parents/carers who have to take a child out of school for an appointment should, where possible, notify the school in advance. If a parent/carer wishes the child to be released into the care of another adult then the parent must notify the school that this is the case. The school must appropriately log all such notifications.

Where the child is being collected, the parent / authorised adult will be required to sign the child out, indicating when the child will return.

The same basic process applies to children who have to be taken out of school during the school day because they are unwell.

B. ABSENCE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION

(a) **Safe Arrivals: Dealing with Unexplained Absence for Nursery Classes, Nursery Schools and Early Years Centres**

The primary aim is to establish a reason for absence where one has not already been established. On the first day of absence an initial assessment must be carried out to determine the reason for non-attendance. The following procedure must be adhered to:

- Nursery Schools/Classes and Early Years Centres are required to inform parents/carers of the need to contact the school as early as possible, and within 30 minutes of the nursery session starting time on the first day of absence, if their child is going to be absent;
- when a pupil has been recorded as absent, and no prior notification has been given of the absence by the parents/carers, the school shall attempt to contact the parents/carers no later than 45 minutes into the session on the first day of absence;
- parents/carers will be responsible for providing and updating emergency contact information and for providing and updating contact telephone numbers. Parents/carers will be responsible for responding promptly to contacts from the

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- school;
- where a parent/carer/emergency contact is informed of the unexplained absence of a child from school and acknowledges the notification from the school, the parent/carer/emergency contact will be responsible for taking appropriate action in conjunction with the school;
- in cases where the parent/carer/emergency contact does not respond to the notification of absence and therefore there is still no explanation of an unexplained absence, the Head Teacher will conduct a risk assessment by one hour into the session on the first day of absence.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE

The following process should be adhered to in order to establish the category of risk for the child. There are 3 grades of risk:

High - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability or may be the victim of a serious crime

Medium - The risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves

Low - The apparent threat of danger to the child is regarded as minimal.

A risk grading requires to be undertaken on every occasion of first day absence without explanation. This applies even where the child is a frequent absentee. The risk grading should never be regarded as fixed and there must be regular reviews throughout the day to ensure that the initial risk grading is still appropriate.

The level of risk will be identified by answering the following questions in relation to the child's and/or the family's vulnerability, influences and past behaviour. It is recognised that the answers to the following questions may be more applicable to the parent/carer:

Vulnerability:

Is there an identified risk of suicide?

Is criminality suspected to be a factor?

Is the child vulnerable?

What are the effects of failure to take medication if it is unavailable to the child?

Does the child suffer from medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?

Can the child interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?

Is there a known dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substance either by the child or by a close relative?

Is the child on the Child Protection Register?

Do the current weather conditions present an additional risk?

Influences:

Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?

Has the child been witness to or subject to domestic abuse?

Is there an ongoing personal issue linked to racial, homophobic, sexual, the local community or any cultural issue?

Has the child been witness to, subject to or been involved in a recent violent and/or hate crime?

Are there any known problems in school?

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Past Behaviour (Behaviour which is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk):

Are the circumstances different from 'normal' or out of character?

Is there a known reason for the child to be not attending school?

Has the child been missing before? Where were they found and did they come to harm?

The answers to the above questions enables the Head Teacher to decide whether the absent pupil should be categorised as High, Medium or Low Risk within the timescale stated above.

This decision will inform the most appropriate course of action. The options of next steps are either to:

- continue to monitor the level of risk throughout the session;
- where a child is known to have an allocated worker from Social Policy, inform the appropriate Social Policy team of the absence. The Social Policy team will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child. In the event of the allocated worker being unavailable, their line manager or the Duty Manager will progress the matter;
- call the relevant Health Visitor for the area. The Health Visitor will then have the responsibility of contacting the family and establishing the whereabouts of the child. In cases of staff absence or holiday, if messages are left on answering machines or similar, it cannot be assumed that they have been received and efforts to deliver an urgent message must continue; or
- call Police Scotland. Police Scotland would expect to be notified at the earliest opportunity with regards to a missing child following on from the Safe Arrivals procedure as outlined above. Schools should in all cases, not hesitate to make immediate contact with the police if additional factors/information giving cause for suspicion or concern becomes available. To report a missing person, contact should be made to Police Scotland on 101. In an emergency, contact by means of the 999 system.

(b) Two Stage Intervention Process

If a child does not attend pre-school regularly or is absent for more than two weeks without agreement from the pre-school establishment, the place may be withdrawn.

Before a place is withdrawn, the professionals involved with the child/family should decide whether this is an appropriate action taking account of the impact on the child of removing the place.

West Lothian Council operates a two stage intervention approach to managing the absence of children in pre-school provision. These stages dovetail with Education Services' Continuum of Support and, as such, a wellbeing concern will have been raised in relation to attendance prior to Stage 1. Attendance falling below 90% triggers significant concern. The non-attendance of nursery children at pre-school provision should follow stages of intervention as follows:

Stage 1

Where a pupil's attendance has fallen below 90%, a letter should be sent to raise the awareness of the parent/carer to the level of absence and the impact it is having on the pupil's progress at school/nursery. **Template Letter A1** should be used for

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this purpose.

(Exceptions to this would be where attendance has dropped below 90% **only** as a result of the exceptional circumstances of an authorised parental holiday or as a result of an exclusion or where it is likely that a medical condition or domestic circumstance, known to the school, will regularly and repeatedly impact on a pupil's attendance or is sufficiently significant and complex to warrant discretion.)

Stage 2

If in the next 4-week period, the pupil's attendance is still below 90% and there remains a concern about the level of attendance and/or the reason provided for the absence, a letter should be sent to parents/carers inviting them to attend a meeting with the school key persons ([Template Letter A8](#)).

This meeting should be supportive and should be solution focussed. A plan should be agreed to improve attendance. A request for service may be made to Community Child Health by the school if/when medical issues are cited as reasons for repeated or prolonged absence without the school's prior knowledge of a medical condition serious enough to warrant such absence.

C. RECORDING AND CODING INFORMATION

All schools are required to keep an attendance register of every pupil (The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975). This information constitutes the certificate of attendance presented to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG) and subsequent court proceedings or the Reporter to the Children's Panel where it may be considered as evidence for compulsory measures of supervision or other action.

A pupil should normally be regarded as absent from school when he or she is not in attendance for a period greater than half of the morning or afternoon session.

Recording of absence should take place at least twice each day in primary school and period by period in secondary school to enable an accurate record of attendance to be kept. Codes for use when recording attendance/absence and lateness can be accessed direct from SEEMiS.

In line with Scottish Government guidance, for the purposes of national reporting, every absence is categorised as either authorised or unauthorised. Two additional categories have been established that fall outwith the normal categories of attendance and absence, these are:

- exclusion and
- extended leave with parental consent.

Schools should be able to evidence all meetings and interventions relating to attendance and late coming. Copies of all relevant notes, minutes, correspondence and referrals relating to time-keeping, truancies and non-attendance should be retained.

Further clarification is given below in relation to:

- (a) Authorised Absence
- (b) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances
- (c) Unauthorised Absence
- (d) Extended Leave With Parental Consent
- (e) Exclusion from school
- (f) Family Holidays During Term Time
- (g) Unacceptable Reasons for Absence and Course of Action
- (h) Absences Awaiting Confirmation

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- (i) Truancy and Absence occurring during the school day
- (j) Attendance/Off Site Provision as Part of a Learning Programme

(a) **Authorised Absence**

The category of authorised absence (the school is aware of the reason for the absence) includes absence deriving from reasons such as:

- sickness - where no special arrangements have been made or are necessary to receive education elsewhere
- medical and dental treatment
- bereavement
- short-term exceptional domestic circumstances
- religious observance
- authorised parental holiday
- arriving late after the mid point
- meetings prior to and in court
- attendance at or in connection with a Children's Hearing or Care Review
- weddings of immediate family
- participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families.

(b) **Exceptional Domestic Circumstances**

Absences relating to exceptional domestic circumstances can be both authorised and unauthorised absence.

Authorised absence under this heading covers short term (not exceeding 27 consecutive openings) situations such as:

- the period immediately after an accident or illness
- a period of serious or critical illness of a close relative
- a domestic situation which causes serious disruption to the family home eg. domestic abuse, police involvement or
- the pupil acting as a young carer.

Education authorities (under section 40 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000) must ensure pupils within their catchment areas do not miss out on their entitlement to an education. A solution must be found for the long-term educational needs of pupils with care responsibilities. (Information on carers and young carers' entitlement to assessment can be found in the Health and Social Care Act 2001). If a pupil is unable to attend school due to such responsibilities, there is an expectation that additional support services will be accessed to support the pupil, and their absence from education will not be long-term and therefore categorised as authorised absence. However, where additional services have been offered but not accessed and care responsibilities become long-term (exceeding 27 consecutive openings), the absence should be categorised as unauthorised absence.

(c) **Unauthorised Absence**

Schools must record absence as unauthorised when there is no satisfactory reason for absence provided. Such absence is likely to include:

- most family holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances;
- parent-condoned absence where the school does not agree there is a satisfactory reason for absence;
- truancy, with or without the knowledge of the parent;
- during disputes relating to the return of a pupil after an exclusion;

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- unreasonable excuse, where a parent refuses to send their child to school following a dispute with the school or where reason is given by the parent/child and the school do not accept it as sufficient justification
- longer-term exceptional domestic carer circumstances where support has been offered;
- long-term exceptional domestic circumstances where additional support services have not been accessed to support the pupil
- all other unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation is subsequently provided.

(d) **Extended Leave With Parental Consent**

Where unauthorised family holidays will be recorded as unauthorised absence, extended leave with parental consent should not be considered the same as a family holiday. Extended leave with parental consent will be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence and includes circumstances such as:

- extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school
- short-term parental placement abroad
- family weddings or funerals or other events and exceptional circumstances which may require children to travel (e.g. overseas) or participate in extended preparations, for cultural reasons
- leave in relation to children of travelling families.

NB: In some cultures, family weddings or funerals are major events which may require children/young people to travel (e.g. overseas) or participate in extended preparations. If this lasts for more than 4 weeks the school would normally have the right to remove the pupil from the roll in order not to be penalised in terms of its attendance record. However, in these circumstances, pupils may be considered as "Extended Leave With Parental Consent", which allows them to remain on the school register ready for their return but without the school being penalised.

This section requires to be read in conjunction with the council's policy on Children Missing in Education.

(e) **Exclusion From School**

Exclusions are imposed by the school or by the authority and therefore there is a requirement to record and report these separately from other types of absence. Recording of attendance and absence should cease when a pupil is removed from the register of the school.

(f) **Family Holidays During Term Time**

West Lothian Council is clear that, except in the most exceptional of circumstances, children/young people should not be withdrawn from school for family holidays. Such absence is disruptive both to the education of the child withdrawn from school, and to his/her peers on his/her return to class.

The majority of family holidays taken during term time should be categorised as an unauthorised absence. It is acceptable, however, under exceptional circumstances, for schools to authorise a family holiday of not more than two weeks' duration, during term time. Such circumstances may include:

- a family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events
- where evidence is provided by an employer that it cannot accommodate a

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child's parent/carer leave during school holidays.

A family holiday classified under the 'authorised absence' category will not include such reasons as:

- the availability of cheap holidays
- the availability of desired accommodation
- poor weather experienced during school holidays
- holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term
- parental difficulty obtaining leave except in the circumstances where satisfactory evidence is provided by an employer that it cannot accommodate a child's parent's leave during school holidays
- term dates not coinciding with those of other authorities.

It should be noted, however, that whether authorised or unauthorised, a parental holiday will still be recorded as an absence.

(Templates Letter A9 and A10 should be used accordingly)

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils during such absences.

Information contained in appendix 1D below should be used by schools for customisation into school parental information leaflets, website, newsletters as appropriate.

(g) **Unacceptable Reasons for Absence and Course of Action**

Where a parent/carer gives an explanation for an absence, but this reason is considered to be not acceptable, the school should send a letter to the parent/carer stating that the absence has been recorded as unauthorised (Template Letter A11).

(h) **Absences Awaiting Confirmation**

Verification of the reason for absence is required for every pupil for every absence. Schools must account for every absence and reason for it. Where a pupil is absent, the letter 'T' (to be confirmed) must be entered in the register, unless one of the absence verification codes has already been entered indicating that advance notice has been given of the absence and the reason for it. This 'T' code should be amended when confirmation of the reason has been received. Where no explanation is received this code should be changed to 'U' to show this absence is unacceptable. Any unexplained absence must be dealt with as soon as possible.

A letter generated by SEEMiS should be issued to parents/carers. (Template letter A12).

(i) **Truancy and Absence Occurring During The School Day**

Truancy is the unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of pre meditated or spontaneous action on the part of the pupil, parent or both.

Truancy should be recorded as code 'U'. It should be normal practice to inform the parents/carers of the truancy as soon as the school become aware of the matter.

Parents/carers should be informed of truancy unless there is a genuine likelihood of abuse if the parents/carers are told. If this is the case, then action has to be taken under Child Protection Procedures.

In primary schools, the absence of a pupil during the school day will normally be picked up by the class teacher and reported to school management so that investigation can take place. Where an absence of this kind is discovered and

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confirmed, the recorded code should be changed from present, ie '-' to 'T', pending investigation. Parents/carers should also be alerted to the unexplained absence.

In secondary schools, a 'discrepancy' system is generally operated. At the beginning of each teaching period, the teacher matches the pupils in the teaching class against absentees, and immediately reports any discrepancy for investigation. Such systems pick up any pupils who have gone missing after being marked present at registration and also any who have arrived late and managed to bypass the late coming recording system. Where an unexplained absence of this kind is discovered and confirmed, the recorded code should be changed from present, ie "-" to "T", pending investigation or from "U" to "-" in tandem with late-coming procedures.

Each truancy investigation should be recorded in the Pupil's Pastoral Notes.

(j) **Attendance/Off Site Provision as Part of a Learning Programme**

Each school must ensure that it has in place robust procedures for maintaining accurate attendance information for pupils attending alternative or offsite provision as part of a learning programme. It is not sufficient to record OAT (other attendance out of school) and assume that the pupil has attended as arranged.

D. **INFORMATION FOR USE IN WEBSITE /LEAFLET /HANDBOOK /NEWSLETTER**

The following information should be considered by schools for customisation into school parental information leaflets, website, newsletters as appropriate.

"Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. They are also responsible for ensuring the safety of their children on their journeys to and from school.

Regular and punctual attendance is linked closely to achievement and attainment and school staff wish to work with parents/carers to ensure that children can reach their full potential. The school is required by law to maintain an accurate record of the attendance and absence of each pupil and parents are requested to assist in this process by keeping the school informed if their child is to be absent for any reason.

It is important to note that if a child does not arrive at school and there is no reasonable explanation provided for his/her absence then members of staff will be required to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of the individual child. In order to avoid causing unnecessary concern for parents/carers and staff, the importance of good communication between home and school cannot be over-emphasised.

Parents/carers are asked to assist school staff in the manner detailed below:

- *if your child is unable to attend school through illness please telephone the school between 8.30 and 9.30 am on the first day of his/her absence*
- *when you contact the school it would be helpful if an indication could be given as to the child's expected length of absence from school*

Planned Absence

Parents/carers are encouraged not to arrange family holidays during term time.

Except in cases of emergency, planned appointments for children to attend the dentist or doctor should be made outwith the school day

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Contact Details

Parents/carers are asked to ensure that telephone contact numbers (home, work and emergency contact(s)) are kept up-to-date and are numbers at which a response can be obtained in all normal circumstances.”

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APPENDIX TWO: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR REDUCING LATE COMING

Late-coming can significantly impact on attainment and achievement and can result in pupils missing out on the welcoming and informative start to a new working day. Poor timekeeping is disruptive to the individual pupil and to the learning of the class and may be an early warning of other difficulties.

Late-coming is defined as arriving in school after the start of the school day.

A pupil who arrives after the bell at the start of the school day but before the declared midpoint of a morning or of an afternoon should be recorded as 'J' irrespective of the reason for the late-coming.

A pupil arriving after the declared mid point is to be recorded using the code letter 'K'.

Each school should identify its declared midpoint by reference to a morning or afternoon interval or the beginning or end of a teaching period which occurs around the middle of the morning or afternoon.

Where a pupil's late-coming continues to be a concern despite contact with parents/carers, the school should consider the need for an Assessment of Wellbeing and subsequent action plan to meet the pupil's identified need. This process should be followed in line with the council's Continuum of Support.

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APPENDIX THREE: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR AUTHORITY ATTENDANCE GROUP (AAG)

A. Background

West Lothian Council recognises the need for all children and young people to engage fully in the education process and has developed an approach for promoting attendance through positive and supportive interventions based on the implementation of Education Services' Continuum of Support in collaboration with our multi-agency partners. This is a framework that promotes early intervention and a positive partnership with parents/carers through a staged intervention approach. As part of the Continuum of Support, schools have the opportunity to proceed with a referral to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG).

The AAG is set up under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to facilitate West Lothian Council's statutory duties in terms of pupils in schools.

The overall duty of the AAG is to advise on the statutory responsibilities relating to attendance. This entails a meeting with parents/carers who are not carrying out the responsibilities assigned to them in terms of the legislation in relation to attendance at school.

The AAG is conducted in a formal manner, with the emphasis being on advice and encouragement to resolve the problem. The principal aim is to return the child to full-time education.

B. Membership of the AAG

The membership of the AAG is composed of:

- a Chairperson who is one of the Council's Heads of Service (Social Policy or Education Services). The Heads of Service may delegate this role to a senior officer within their service;
- two members drawn from a pool of senior officers from within Education Services and Social Policy.

Education Services carries out the administration involved in the operation of the AAG. The quorum of the AAG is two members.

C. Personnel in Attendance

The persons who should be present at a meeting of the AAG are not specified by law, but West Lothian Council specifies certain conditions and these are:

- the parent/carer named in the notice, although it is competent for business to proceed if a parent/carer does not respond to a notice requiring them to appear at a hearing;
- the pupil in question may also be present if the AAG feels that this is necessary (usually P4 and above);
- the Chairperson may sanction the attendance at a meeting of an appropriate person other than the members, officers, parents/carers and child, e.g. a relative, friend, Social worker, to support but not to replace the parents/carers;
- the referrer or a representative of the referrer.

D. Referral Process and Administration of AAG

Referral to the AAG is made by the Headteacher, after consultation with relevant staff and appropriate communication with parent/carers.

Documentation submitted for a referral to the AAG should be in line with the "Getting

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It Right For Every Child” (GIRFEC) framework, ie. Assessment of Wellbeing and child planning documentation.

The parent/carer will be served notice requiring him/her to appear, in accordance with the notice, before the AAG and explain the reason for the absence of the pupil from school. The notice will be given not less than 7 days and not more than 14 days before the hearing. The parent/carer has the option to submit written information rather than appearing at the meeting.

If the parent/carer fails to satisfy the AAG that he/she has a reasonable excuse in relation to the pupil’s failure to attend school, the AAG may make the appropriate determination as to the disposal of the case.

E. Conducting The Meeting

In conducting the meeting, the following should be observed:

- all meetings must be held in private;
- venues for the meeting should be carefully considered in order to effect a positive outcome;
- meetings will be fixed and called, agenda arranged, minutes prepared, reports obtained and subsequent action taken by the Depute Chief Executive or delegated officer;
- agendas will be maintained as confidential documents, available only to members of the AAG;
- reports on the proceedings will be restricted to a statistical account together with a general description of the disposal of the case considered;
- all papers given out must be returned at the end of the meeting;
- if the AAG decides to interview a pupil, it must do so in the presence of the parent/carer and with the parent’s/carer’s permission.

When the parent/carer has been invited into the meeting, he/she should be asked to confirm that he/she is the parent/carer or guardian of the pupil concerned. The date of birth of the child should be checked. The Chairperson should then endeavour to establish whether reasonable excuse for non-attendance exists. The other members of the AAG may, through the Chairperson, ask such questions as they feel are relevant to the proper disposal of the case. The Chairperson should allow the referrer to have the opportunity of putting questions to the parent/carer.

The parent/carer and the referrer should be asked to withdraw while the AAG reaches a conclusion on the disposal of the case.

The AAG’s determination will be intimated to the parent/carer at the meeting at the discretion of the AAG and will, in any event, be given in writing, following the meeting;

- should the disposal of the case involve a referral to either the Reporter for the Children’s Panel and/or Community Child Health, all paperwork related to the case will be forwarded to the Reporter for the Children’s Panel and/or Community Child Health as appropriate.

F. Possible Disposals by the AAG

The AAG can determine the following disposals:

- continue the case up to a maximum of 6 school weeks for a specified purpose which may be to monitor attendance or request additional information or reports;
- refer pupils for a statutory medical examination;
- make an attendance order;

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- refer to the Procurator Fiscal or take the case to the Sheriff Court for prosecution;
- refer the pupil to the Reporter for the Children's Panel;
- desert the case.

G. Re-referral to the AAG

If the attendance or punctuality of a pupil becomes unacceptable after having been deserted by the AAG, schools may decide it is appropriate to 'fast-track' the case back to the AAG. They would do this by picking up at Stage 4, in consultation with AIMS Worker, of the Five Stage Intervention Process.

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APPENDIX FOUR:

CORRESPONDENCE TEMPLATES

TEMPLATE LETTER A1 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of Parent/Carer)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment.

School staff have a responsibility to monitor and record absence, interacting proactively with pupils and their families to promote good attendance and time keeping. In line with council policy. I am required to draw your attention to **(PUPIL'S NAME)**'s attendance as it has recently fallen below 90%. Whilst you may have notified the school that **(PUPIL'S NAME)** would be absent, I have a responsibility to impress upon you the impact of absence on achievement and attainment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and supporting **(PUPIL'S NAME)**'s education. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Thank you for your support

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A2 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which your attention was drawn to **(PUPIL NAME)**'s level of attendance. I have to report to you that **(PUPIL NAME)**'s attendance remains a concern.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment. I would therefore invite you to a meeting to discuss **(PUPIL NAME)'S** absence and agree strategies to help support **(PUPIL NAME)** achieve an improved level of attendance.

This meeting will be held on **(INSERT DATE)** at **(INSERT TIME)** in **(INSERT VENUE)**. If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

In line with council policy, failure to inform the school that you cannot attend will result in a referral being made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS) who will help us explore possible next steps in improving levels of attendance.

The remit of AIMS within The Children & Young People Team, Social Policy, is to specifically support West Lothian Council in improving attendance at school.

I look forward to meeting with you and thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A3 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which I invited you to a meeting at the school with me to discuss the reasons for **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effects these are having on **his/her** education.

In accordance with council policy, as you were unable to attend this meeting, a request for service will now be made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS). The remit of the AIMS within The Children & Young People Team, Social Policy, is to specifically support West Lothian Council in improving attendance at school.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A4 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our meeting on <<INSERT DATE>> in relation to **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effect on **his/her** education.

Unfortunately **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of absence remains a concern and I write to inform you that, in accordance with council policy, a request for service will now be made to the Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS). The remit of AIMS within The Children & Young People Team, Social Policy, is to specifically support West Lothian Council in improving attendance at school.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A5 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our previous communications regarding **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of attendance and can confirm that there has been no significant improvement.

In accordance with council policy, I am now obliged to move to the next stage of the Attendance at School Policy. This stage involves a child's planning meeting with you, school representatives and your allocated Attendance Improvement Management Service (AIMS) worker.

(Note to HT: Please reference any other agencies/professionals that will be invited to them meeting.)

This meeting will be held on **(INSERT DATE)** at **(INSERT TIME)** in **(INSERT VENUE)**. If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

In line with council policy, failure to inform the school that you cannot attend will result in a referral being made to Authority Attendance Group (AAG). The AAG is set up under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to facilitate West Lothian Council's statutory duties in terms of pupils in schools.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A6 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to our meeting on <<INSERT DATE>> in relation to **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effect on **his/her** education.

Unfortunately **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s level of absence remains a concern and I write to inform you that, in accordance with council policy, a referral will now be made to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG). This is a statutory body which has provision to make the following decisions:

- To continue the case for up to a maximum of 6 weeks for a specified purpose which may be to monitor attendance or request additional information or reports.
- To desert the case.
- To refer **(CHILD'S NAME)** for medical examination.
- To make an Attendance Order.
- To refer to the Reporter to the Children's Panel
- To refer to the Procurator Fiscal so that prosecution may be considered.

I now, therefore, remind you of your parental obligations under the Education (Scotland) Act which states:

“Every parent or carer of a child of school-age has a duty to ensure that the child receives education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability.”

This duty is fulfilled by the parent or carer by ensuring that the child attends school regularly. The Education Authority has a legal responsibility to enforce school attendance and can prosecute parents or carers whose children fail to attend school.

You will be contacted in due course informing you of the time/date/venue of the AAG hearing. Meantime, it is imperative that **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s attendance at school improves.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A7 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which I invited you to a meeting at the school with me to discuss the reasons for **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absences and the effects these are having on **his/her** education.

In accordance with council policy, as you were unable to attend this meeting, a referral will now be made to the Authority Attendance Group (AAG). This is a statutory body which has provision to make the following decisions:

- To continue the case for up to a maximum of 6 weeks for a specified purpose which may be to monitor attendance or request additional information or reports.
- To desert the case.
- To refer **(CHILD'S NAME)** for medical examination.
- To make an Attendance Order.
- To refer to the Reporter to the Children's Panel
- To refer to the Procurator Fiscal so that prosecution may be considered.

I now, therefore, remind you of your parental obligations under the Education (Scotland) Act which states:

“Every parent or carer of a child of school-age has a duty to ensure that the child receives education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability.”

This duty is fulfilled by the parent or carer by ensuring that the child attends school regularly. The Education Authority has a legal responsibility to enforce school attendance and can prosecute parents or carers whose children fail to attend school.

You will be contacted in due course informing you of the time/date/venue of the AAG hearing. Meantime, it is imperative that **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s attendance at school improves.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A8 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I refer to my previous letter in which your attention was drawn to **(PUPIL NAME)**'s level of attendance. I have to report to you that **(PUPIL NAME)**'s attendance remains a concern.

West Lothian Council is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children/young people and its partner agencies to ensure that all pupils benefit from an education that maximises the opportunity to achieve their full potential at school, in further education or employment. I would therefore invite you to a meeting to discuss **(PUPIL NAME)'S** absence and agree strategies to help support **(PUPIL NAME)** achieve an improved level of attendance.

This meeting will be held on **(INSERT DATE)** at **(INSERT TIME)** in **(INSERT VENUE)**. If you are unable to attend, please call the school to reschedule.

I look forward to meeting with you and thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A9 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** to go on holiday during term time.

I write to confirm that, in accordance with council policy, permission for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** is not granted. As a result, any absences on these days will be recorded as unauthorised.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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TEMPLATE LETTER A10 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Thank you for your application for leave of absence for **(CHILD'S NAME)** to go on holiday during term time.

Under the circumstances, I am willing to authorise absence. However, please be aware that **(CHILD'S NAME)** will still be marked absent for this period and this will impact on his/her overall attendance figure.

It should be noted that for family holidays there is no requirement for schools to provide class work or homework to be undertaken by pupils.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

Appendix 1

TEMPLATE LETTER A11 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)

(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

I have to inform you that the reason supplied for **(CHILD'S NAME)'s** recent absence from school is unacceptable and I am required to record this absence as unauthorised.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you wish to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

Appendix 1

TEMPLATE LETTER A12 – TO BE ISSUED ON SCHOOL HEADED PAPER

(Name and Address of parent/carer)
(Date)

Dear (Name of Parent/Carer)

(NAME OF PUPIL) (CLASS OF PUPIL) (DATE OF BIRTH): ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

It is the responsibility of parents/carers, if a pupil is absent, to inform the school by telephone of the reason or to supply a written note of explanation when the pupil returns to school.

(CHILD'S NAME) has unexplained absences for the date(s) <<insert date(s)>>

Please complete the reply slip below and return it to the school as soon as possible. In this way, **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s record of attendance can be updated accordingly. Alternatively, if you find it easier, please contact me on the telephone number above.

Should you fail to respond, in line with council policy, **(CHILD'S NAME)**'s absence will be recorded as "Truancy or Unexplained" and further investigation will take place.

Thank you for your support

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

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.....

(CHILD'S NAME) was absent on _____ for the following reason:

Signed: _____

Parent/Carer of **(CHILD'S NAME)**

Date: _____