



ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

An Information Leaflet for
Parents and Carers



Getting It Right for Every Child begins with good attendance at school. Pupils who fail to attend are less likely to reach their full potential to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Getting It Right for Every Child aims to ensure that all children and young people are fully supported by keeping their wellbeing at the heart of the approach. Every child and young person has a right to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included.



Children and young people should expect to get the help they need, when they need it!

Getting It Right for Every Child

This leaflet will tell you:

- What your child's school must do to monitor and record good attendance
- What you must do as a parent/carer to ensure good attendance so that your child gets the best out of their school experience.
- The importance of two way communication regarding planned or unplanned absence
- Who can support you and your child to ensure good attendance.

Being a parent or caring for a child is ...

the most rewarding job you will ever have. It is also the longest-lasting and at times, the most difficult there is. Many parents/carers look for help to support their children at times when this can get difficult - for a whole range of reasons. Attendance at school can be a particularly challenging issue.

Our school is there to support you and your child when needed.

A Parent/Carer is....

about the interaction between you and your child. Making the right decisions and doing the right things can be difficult. Sometimes it can seem impossible to do the right things as a parent/carer.

Partnership

A child at school spends most of his/her day with teachers and school staff. We know that how well your child does at school will depend on us working well together with you and your child. This includes offering support when you feel you might need help.

Getting It Right for Every Child

The vision for Scotland's children and young people is for them to reach their full potential and be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) aims to ensure all children and young people are fully supported by keeping their wellbeing at the heart of the approach. School attendance is key to GIRFEC, regular attendance is key to children making the progress they should. It is therefore the responsibility of Head Teachers to take action when attendance is or is likely to become an issue and it is the responsibility of Parents/Carers to ensure their child is in school.

The Named Person Service

As a result of the Children and Young people (Scotland) Act 2014 Named Person duties will be implemented from August 2016. The Local Authority provides the Named Person Service for all children from Day 1 at primary School to age 18.

The Named Person Service provides a single point of contact and is most often a Head Teacher (Primary) or a Guidance Teacher (Secondary) known to the child and parents/carers. This person is available to support children and families when a need arises. (Currently school staff work closely with parents/carers to offer the right support at the right time to children as and when a need arises and many families will have accessed this support.) The duties of the named Person include offering advice, information and support; helping the child or parent/carer to access support from other agencies through the multi-agency (GIRFEC) process thus building on existing practice.



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Our Offer

We don't have all the answers to school attendance problems but working together can be a big part of helping your child to do well.

What the School will do : What we need Parents/ Carers to do

Parents are asked to telephone/e.mail/text the school prior to morning registration whenever your child is absent. If your child has an appointment – dental or medical, for example – parents are asked to notify the school as far in advance as possible.

School will contact parents by text/e.mail/telephone if the child is not at registration first thing in the morning/after lunch and parents have not contacted the school.

Parents are asked to respond without delay. Schools need to know that parents/carers know that their child is safe.

School will continue to make contact through all known contact and emergency numbers for the next hour. In the event of no contact being made the Named Person will be informed and a decision has to be taken whether or not to log a Wellbeing Concern. Vulnerable children are likely to be declared missing. This will trigger a call to Social Work or Police to support us in our tracking of the missing child. **It is really important that parents and school know that your child is safe.** In the Academy attendance is monitored period by period. The same process will apply if a child is found to be missing from class at any time during the school day. In Nursery, even although attendance is optional, the same protocols will apply to all children who are enrolled.

Lateness

Persistent lateness can have the same adverse effect on the progress and wellbeing of children as poor attendance. Good timekeeping is a life skill and good habits need to be encouraged at school and at home. There are many reasons for children failing to get to school on time. Working with parents/ carers action needs to be taken before bad habits are established.

School will monitor late arrivals and contact parents/carers by letter when concerns arise – normally after 5 instances of lateness. A meeting will be arranged to discuss and address the issues.

Managing Absence

Senior Staff (Primary) and Guidance staff (Secondary) regularly monitor attendance and discuss this with pupils and parents as appropriate. They deal sensitively with a pupil's needs and concerns and try to address any needs identified at an early stage, involving parents and other sources of expertise as appropriate.

As a parent/carer you will be informed of concerns at an early stage and invited to a meeting to discuss how we can work together to support your child's attendance and to draw up a plan of support. You and your child will always be asked about what kind of support you think is needed.

Through the GIRFEC approach schools can provide additional help that is timely, appropriate and proportionate to ensure children are safe and to promote their wellbeing. Where the agreed actions in a single service plan is not helping the child to reach the desired outcomes, a request for assistance may be made to partner agencies such as Health, Community Learning and Development, Social Work, Housing, Police and others. Working with partners in this way is known as the GIRFEC Multi Agency Action Planning (MAAP) approach.

Some information on our partner agencies

Education and Children's Services : Social Work

Social Work is dedicated to working with children and families within their community. We recognise that families can have different issues and needs and these specific needs will be considered when you meet with the social work staff. The services offered are diverse and can include:

- Advice and support to children and families who are experiencing difficulties
- Working in partnership with children, their families, other agencies and professionals to get the best possible services for their children
- Working in partnership with families to promote the upbringing of children by their families
- Working closely with the Named Person
- Investigate and provide appropriate services to children who may be at risk of harm.

The type of support that social work can offer children and families is:

- Allocating a social worker who through regular contact will get to know the child and their family well and will be a source of advice and guidance on how to address any issues
- Direct work with children, either individually or in a group, aimed at addressing their individual needs
- Direct work with parents/carers, either individually or in a group, aimed at supporting them in their parenting role
- Attendance at, and contributing to, multi-agency meetings (MAAPs)
- Advocating on behalf of child and family
- Mobilising other resources on a child/family's behalf or linking them in to other agencies and services
- Provision of practical or financial support



Educational Psychology Services

- The main way in which an Educational Psychologist can become involved is through the 'consultation model', which is a collaborative process that involves those who know the situation best, including the child/young person, parents/carers and school staff.
- Aberdeenshire has a staged assessment process and Educational Psychologists can be involved at any stage.
- Educational Psychologists are involved in planning with and providing advice to schools and the education authority as well as other authority and non-authority agencies.
- They work with partner agencies to make sure that there are systems in place to identify concerns at an early stage and to intervene effectively.
- They can also work with individual children and young people; using approaches such as 'person centred planning' and 'solution focussed approaches'.
- More details can be found on Aberdeenshire Educational Psychology's page on Aberdeenshire Council's website <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/eps/information-for-parents-and-carers/>



Community Learning and Development

Through the GIRFEC process CLD can support the school to work with children who are poor or non-attenders. CLD may attend MAAP meetings to offer appropriate support as required. Through early intervention staff would engage with targeted pupils over a dedicated time. There are a number of programmes available.

Health

The School Nurse/Health Adviser would be notified as soon as possible (with parental consent as appropriate) about any pupils with prolonged or recurrent absence from school for health reasons.

The School Nurse/Health Adviser will then be in a position to liaise with the General Practitioner and all acute health service colleagues including those in mental health services.

Where appropriate, an appointment may be offered for the pupil and parent to meet with either the School Nurse/Health Adviser or the Community Paediatrician to look into reasons for poor or non-attendance and to discuss the management of any medical condition.

School phobia and psychological and psychiatric illness can coexist with physical symptoms and comprehensive management may be required to prevent long-term adverse consequences.

Police

If your child has not attended school as we expected and if you have not been in contact with us to let us know where your child is, then after taking all reasonable steps to reach your nominated emergency contacts by phone, text or e-mail, we must assume that your child is missing and contact the Police to report them as such.

The Police may then initiate a missing person enquiry. As you will appreciate, any delay in this process could have potentially serious consequences if you have not simply forgotten to inform us of their whereabouts.

Additional Information

School Address :

School Phone number :

Head Teacher :

Named person :

GIRFEC website : <http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/>

Contact Numbers

Local social work child and family team:

Police Scotland can be contacted on telephone number 101.

