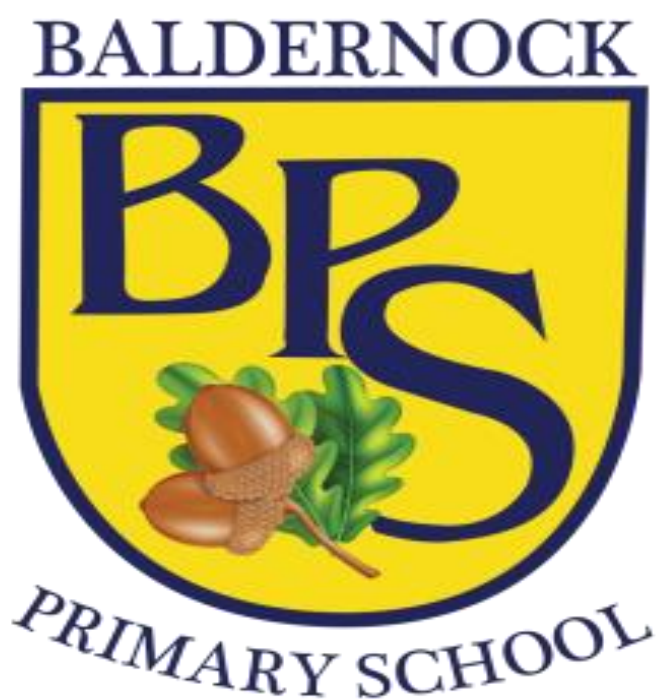


BALDERNOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Promoting Attendance Policy
including managing Un Notified Absence



August 2024

BALDERNOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL

OUR VISION AND VALUES

VISION

Working Together, Respecting Others, Pursuing Excellence

VALUES

- Environment
- Resilience
- Wellbeing
- Inclusion
- Community

Underpinning these values are the UNCRC articles 12 and 29

- 12 - I have the right to be listened to and to be taken seriously
- 29 - I have the right to an education

OUR MOTTO

Ready, Respectful, Safe

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Introduction

Baldernock Primary recognises that excellent attendance is a key element which contributes to educational success. This policy is focused on promoting attendance at all levels including enhanced intervention for those who find it difficult to attend school.

Context

Within Scotland, the absence rate (authorised and unauthorised) for all pupils was 92% in 2021/2022. Attendance falls to 89.4% for pupils with additional support needs (ASN) and 88.7% for those who live within the lowest 20% of SIMD areas.

The Scottish Government emphasises the need for schools to support attendance for all and create appropriate support for those who find attending school a challenge.

Attendance is defined as the “participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school” ([Included, Engaged and Involved: Part 1](#)).

Engaging in school and in learning is crucial to ensure that children and young people meet their full potential.

Attendance Percentage	Number of Days Missed over an Academic Year	Further Information
95%	9 Days	Attendance at or above this level gives a learner the best chance of success. Scottish National Average = 92% East Dunbartonshire Average = 94.3%
90%	19 Days	Attendance at this level leads to less chance of success. Data shows that learners missing this much school could drop a whole grade in secondary
80-85%	27-36 Days	Attendance at this level has serious implications for learning and progress.

There are key rights, duties and legal obligations in relation to attendance as outlined in [‘Included, Engaged and Involved \(Part 1\)’](#).

These are set out below:

- All children and young people have a right to education; and education authorities have a duty to provide education.
- All children and young people have the right to get the support they need to benefit fully from their education and fulfil their potential.
- All children and young people need to be included, engaged and involved in their learning. Children and young people should be given opportunities to fully engage and participate in the life of their school, in order to encourage good attendance.

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

- Schools should actively engage with families to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are removed.
- Schools and partners should work collaboratively to promote and support good attendance.
- The foundation for schools, learning establishments and education authorities is a focus on positive relationships and an inclusive ethos and culture that promotes good attendance. Attendance should not be considered in isolation.

Terminology

Typical Terminology used for pupil non-attendance at school



There are many terms to describe children who have difficulties attending school which often lead to significant absence. School attendance difficulties are varied both in their presentation and in the reasons for the difficulty. They do not just necessarily include being absent from school but can also include behaviours which lead to later absence.

School attendance difficulties can also include:

- verbal reluctance
- regular late coming
- regularly leaving class or the building
- showing separation anxiety

One of the most widely used terms is 'school refusal' which refers to problematic reluctance or refusal to attend school. 'Truancy' is seen as school absence without family permission or awareness. School exclusion is absence where it is the school or establishment that have made the decision for the child or young person to not attend. 'School withdrawal' is where families make this decision.

More recently there has been a move to the term 'emotionally based school avoidance' (EBSA). EBSA is conceptualised as an umbrella term, referring to children who have significant difficulty attending school because of emotional factors, which often results in extended school absences. This definition distinguishes EBSA from truancy. EBSA is the preferred term as 'school refuser' is perceived to position the problem as within the child, implying that they have control of the non-attendance, and this therefore de-emphasises environmental or contextual factors.

The term EBSA, or shortened to school avoidance, recognises the widest range of factors underpinning the difficulties children can have in attending and engaging with school.

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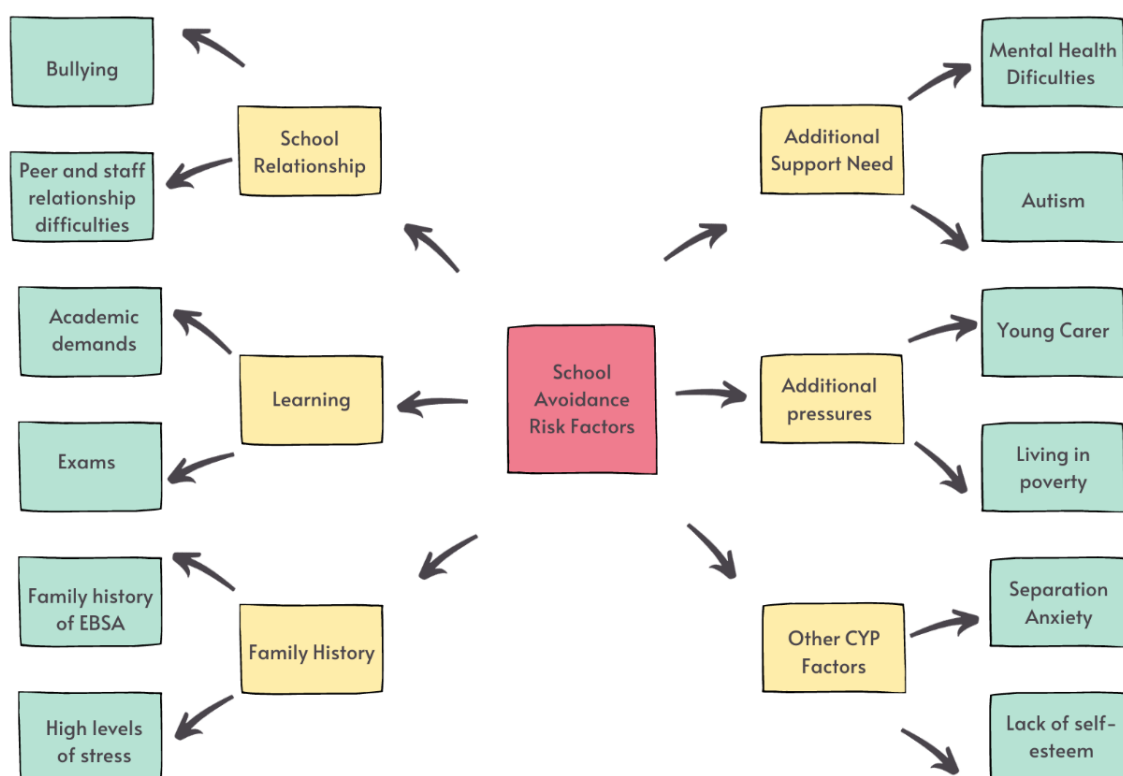
Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Impact of and Reasons for School Avoidance

Recent research suggests that rates of school avoidance could be around 4%, which equates to approximately one child per class being absent on any one day.

School avoidance is associated with many negative outcomes for children. It is a risk factor for self-harm, suicidal ideation, risky behaviours and substance use. It is also predictive of lower academic achievement, school dropout and future underemployment. School avoidance also has a wider impact, increasing stress for families/carers and education staff.

Examples of common risk factors



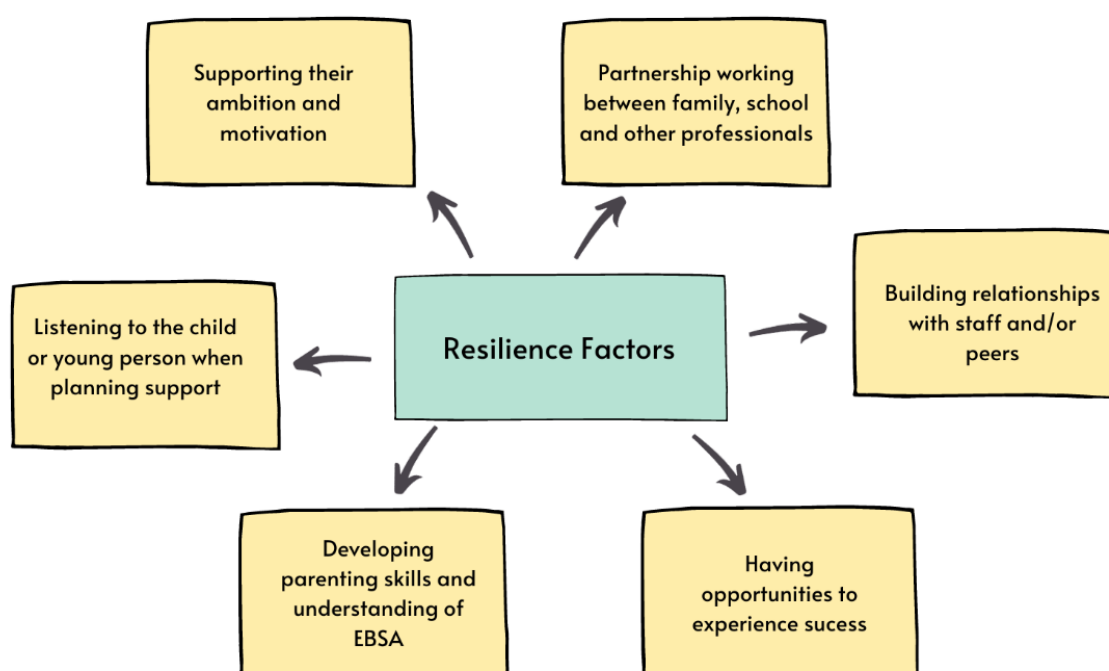
Higher rates of absence can be found in children with ASN. There is research which shows higher levels of school avoidance in children who are autistic, have mental health issues and those with social emotional behavioural needs. Anxiety is commonly associated with school avoidance, while depression is also common. This link may be due to a more activated stress response system and fear dysregulation, which leads to school avoidance. Approximately 75% of children and young people with Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD) display school avoidance. Separation Anxiety Disorder is an excessive fear or distress when separated from a specific attachment figure or home.

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Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

There is a gap in attendance rates between the 20% most deprived (92.4%) and 20% least deprived (96.4%). ‘Cost of the School Day’ is an important factor to consider although it is not the only risk factor associated with children and young people living in poverty. Bullying has also been shown to be correlated with school avoidance. Bullying is defined as repeated victimization through verbal, physical or cyber means or social exclusion. As with school avoidance, bullying has been linked to anxiety and depression. While there are many risk factors for EBSA, it is also important to consider areas of strength and resilience. This can help to promote attendance for a child and can be used to help develop strategies to support them.

Resilience Factors



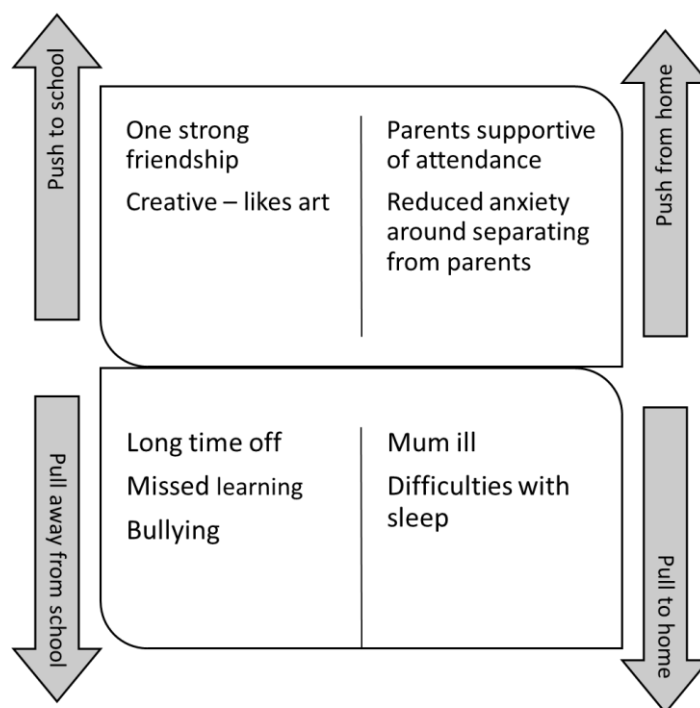
Ways of Thinking About School Attendance Difficulties

“School attendance issues cannot easily be separated from the relationships, behaviours and wellbeing of the pupils and wider school community and it is important that schools view the promotion of attendance in this context.” [Included, Involved and Engaged \(Part 1\)](#).

One way of thinking about school attendance difficulties is categorizing school avoidance by the reasons for it, rather than the expression of the behaviour or a diagnosis. It has been identified that factors which influenced school attendance could be grouped into ‘**push**’ and ‘**pull**’, by either negatively reinforcing or positively enforcing school avoidance, respectively.

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Studies have identified four main functions of school avoidance

Type	Function	Information
Negatively Reinforcing	Avoiding school related factors	School avoidance due to uncomfortable feelings linked to school factors. Often linked to transitions or the school environment. Can be linked to generalized anxiety and complaints about physical illness. More likely to be expressed through verbal reluctance and lateness.
	Avoiding social and academic situations	EBSA with function of avoiding social or evaluative situations within school. Can be to avoid interacting with peers or academic work. Associated with generalized anxiety as well as social anxiety.
Positively reinforcing	Attention needing	School avoidance acts to reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant other(s).
	Outside reinforcers	School avoidance to pursue reinforcers outside of school. Most linked to truancy.

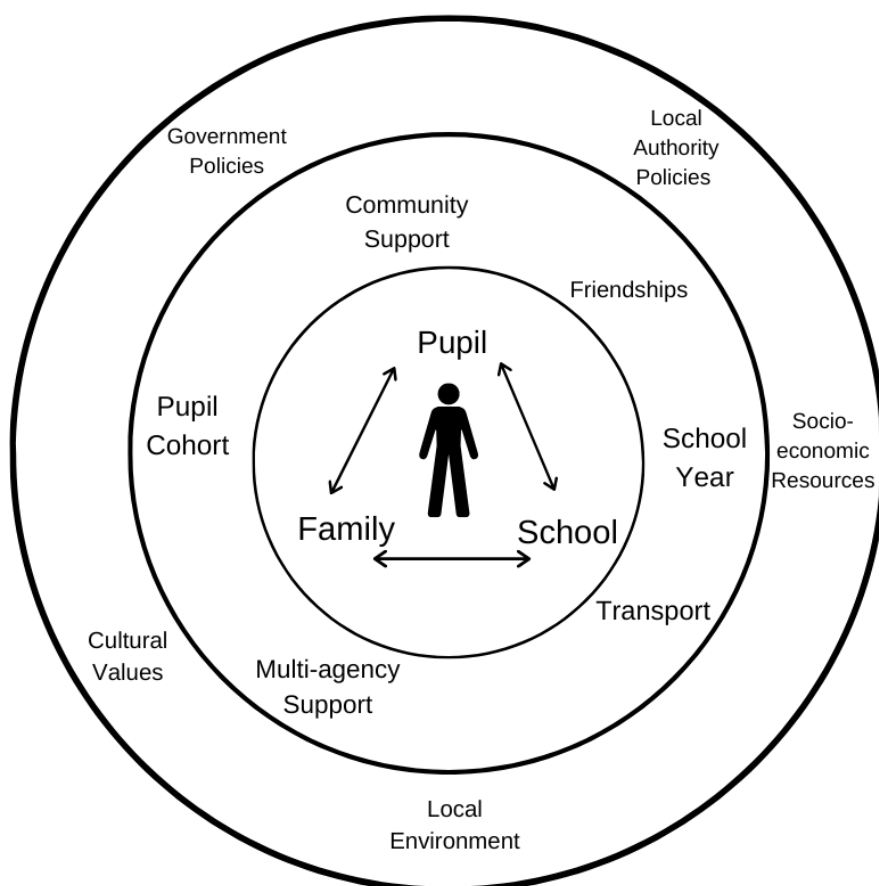
This can be a helpful way to think about the core of the difficulty and to help guide supports which may best help. Often these factors interact and occur simultaneously. It is also important to remember that while this model focuses on the reasons for the child or young person, wider factors impact upon this, often in reciprocal ways. These factors include more immediate contexts such as school and home, as well as wider, less direct contexts such as socio-cultural influences and government policies.

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This demonstrates the complexity of the factors surrounding attendance difficulties and why it can often be a challenge to improve. However, thinking about the wider context and bigger picture for a child or young person as well as the particular issues for that individual or their immediate context, can identify new areas of support.

Factors Surrounding Attendance Difficulties



Parent, Family or Carer Roles and Responsibilities

All children have the right to an education until the age of at least 16, and evidence indicates that education brings a wide range of benefits to children. Families have a considerable influence on the development of their children, and it is their legal responsibility to ensure that their child is educated.

Parents, Family Members and Carers have a duty of care to notify the school or centre when their child will be absent and the reasons for this. There are times children may not be able to attend school, for example if they are ill, their family is taking them to visit a country of origin for cultural reasons, or there has been a bereavement in the family. Where families have informed the school and there is an agreed valid reason this is called an 'authorised absence.'

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Occasionally children may need additional support to attend school regularly, for example if a child is very anxious or their family is experiencing changes or stress. All those who work with children in schools have a duty to make sure children feel safe, secure, listened to and supported. If the family has a concern about their child's school experience and ability to attend school, they are encouraged to contact the Head Teacher who will be able to discuss options to support their child and family. If they need support to do so, they can ask a family member or friend to help or contact one of the agencies in Resources for Families, Children and Young People ([Appendix 1](#)).

In most cases families and school staff working together can help ensure a child is able to improve their attendance and access education.

In rare cases where a child is not attending school regularly despite all education's efforts to work with families, further legal action may be taken, for example a referral to the children's reporter or an attendance order. This is to ensure families are meeting their legal duty and ensure their child's attendance. Families also have a range of further options if they feel they are not receiving enough support to help their child attend school. In these instances, it might be helpful for them to speak to one of the agencies listed in [Appendix 1](#).

Baldernock Primary's Approach to Promoting Attendance

School is one of several interacting factors that can affect children's attendance (along with individual characteristics, family factors and the wider context). We are committed to promoting children's rights as set out in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#). In line with the UNCRC, we are committed to ensuring that children are safe in school.

Children's attendance at school is supported by a consistent focus on building a positive and supportive ethos and culture based on nurturing relationships as outlined in our Promoting Positive Relationships Policy. The Nurture Strategy for Education (2021) provides support and guidance around developing whole school nurture. The nurture principles underpin effective practice in supporting attendance. We continue to support reducing the 'Cost of the School Day' to ensure there are no financial barriers to prevent pupils attending school.

In light of the links between bullying and school non-attendance, we have an Anti-Bullying Policy which supports the creation and maintenance of a safe environment for all children. There are a range of resources, for example, The Mental Health Strategy for Education and The Circle Framework available to support children who find it difficult to attend school regularly. We can receive input with plans to support attendance on an individual child or family basis or at whole school level, from the ASN Team and the Educational Psychology Service.

While some children may need individualised support, this is less likely to be effective if the whole context is not considered across the whole-establishment

Key principles for promoting whole-school attendance:

- A supportive, nurturing ethos built upon GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child) principles and positive relationships.
- An inclusive school community that promotes the value of good attendance
- Children, young people and family/carer views heard and form part of planning and interventions.

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Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

- Clear processes and procedures in place to monitor attendance and ensure the safety of children in light of unexplained absence.
- Early intervention with emerging non-attendance implementing appropriate supports and strategies.
- Self-evaluation to ensure promoting attendance is an ongoing part of improvement plans.

Early Intervention

Attendance difficulties will be addressed as early as possible. The longer patterns of non-attendance, lateness, or low engagement continues, the more challenging these are to improve. When addressing attendance difficulties, it is important to consider the wider family/home context. Lack of family engagement with the school can impact on a child's attendance, and their view of school.

The importance of accurately reporting reasons for absence *i.e.*, reporting school avoidance rather than illness will be highlighted to families. Attendance letters and Promoting Attendance Leaflets may provide initial information for families and begin the conversation around any potential attendance difficulties.

Monitoring and Recording Attendance

We follow East Dunbartonshire Council's Un-Notified Absence policy for managing situations where children fail to attend their school and no explanation for absence is received from their parents, family member or carers. We recognise that under such circumstances, children may be vulnerable to harm and that timely steps must be taken to ensure that an absent child is safe and well.

The following procedure has been designed to ensure an appropriate response to a child who is absent from their school and whose parents/carers have failed to meet the requirement to notify the school. It will be implemented across East Dunbartonshire Council

There are 3 stages to this procedure, namely:

- Stage 1 – this is undertaken by the school with support, where required, from Home Link Officers.
- Stage 2 – this involves a local search which is co-ordinated by the Chief Education Officer.
- Stage 3 – this involves a referral to the Children Missing from Education (CME Scotland) Service.

Accurate recording using the appropriate SEEMIS code is key to ensure children and young people's safety and wellbeing. It is also crucial for early intervention and identifying patterns of attendance difficulties.

Transitions

Transitions are a time of vulnerability for some children and may exacerbate school non-attendance. School connectedness and sense of belonging are supportive factors for children who are transitioning to or from school.

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Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Following nurture principles and Additional Support Needs (ASN) legislation, children with low attendance should be highlighted at points of transition. It is important to consider that transitions do not only impact upon children but their wider family and carers. Good transition practice involves building relationships, and for some this may need to involve enhanced transition. Children will be highlighted timeously if their attendance is below 90% or they have frequent lateness or unplanned time out of class, leading to approximately half to full day learning loss per week.

Attendance Support for Individual Children

Given the complex nature of attendance problems, for some children support may be followed alongside other Council or educational processes. For example, a child may have low attendance and be care experienced. In this case, the child may be discussed at a Pupil Support Group prior to this process due to their Looked After status. Attendance support sits alongside other Council processes and guidance such as Child Protection Procedures, GIRFEC Processes and Procedures.

It is helpful to consider the 5 key questions from the National Practice Model:

- What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?
- Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
- What can I do now to help this child or young person?
- What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
- What additional help – if any – may be needed from others?

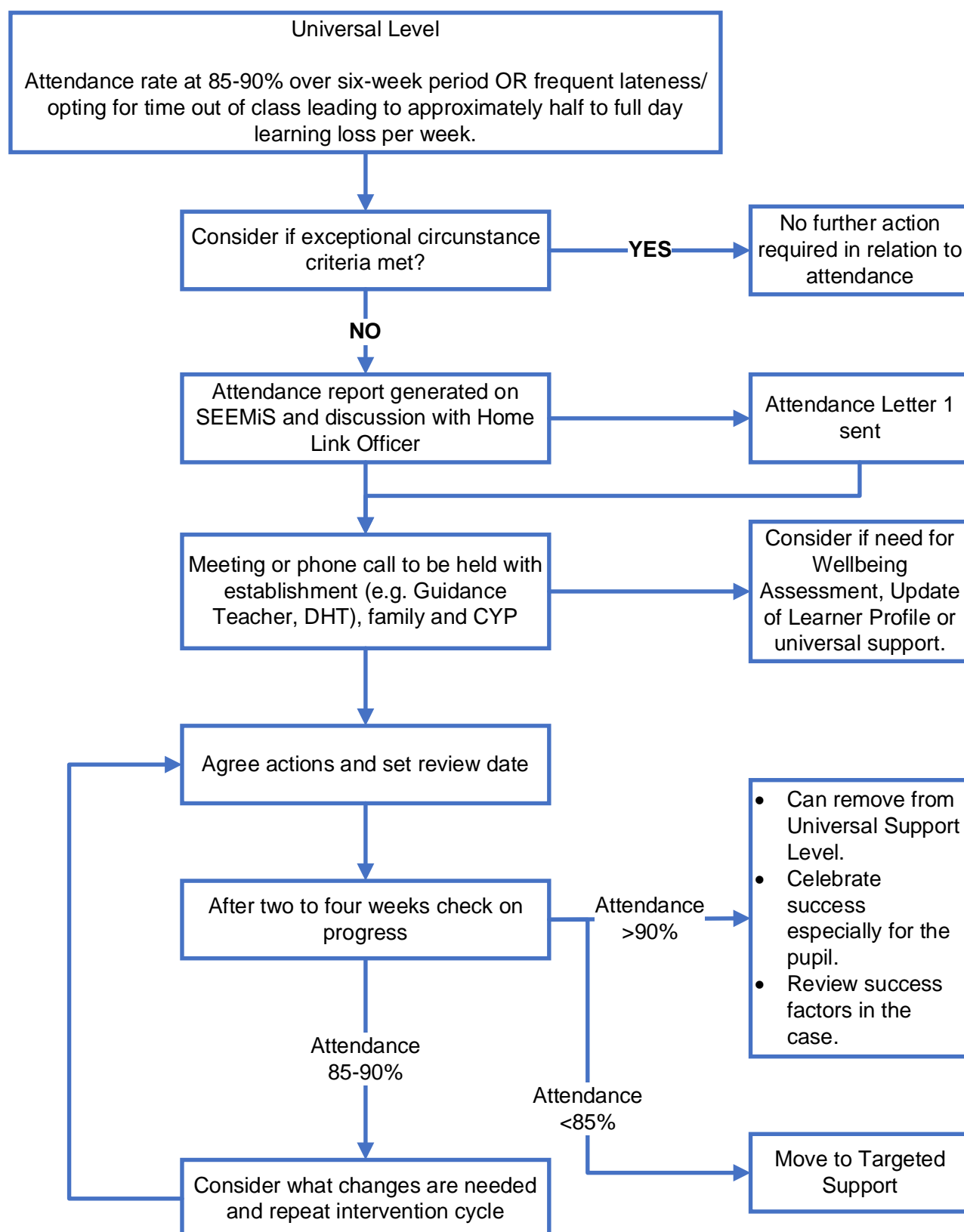
Self-evaluation and Professional Learning

At Baldernock Primary we have a robust programme of self-evaluation and professional learning for all staff. By engaging with these on a regular basis, we will continue to develop our whole school approach to promoting attendance ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils.

The following diagrams show the procedures followed at Universal Level, Targeted Support and Targeted Intervention stages to promote and improve attendance.

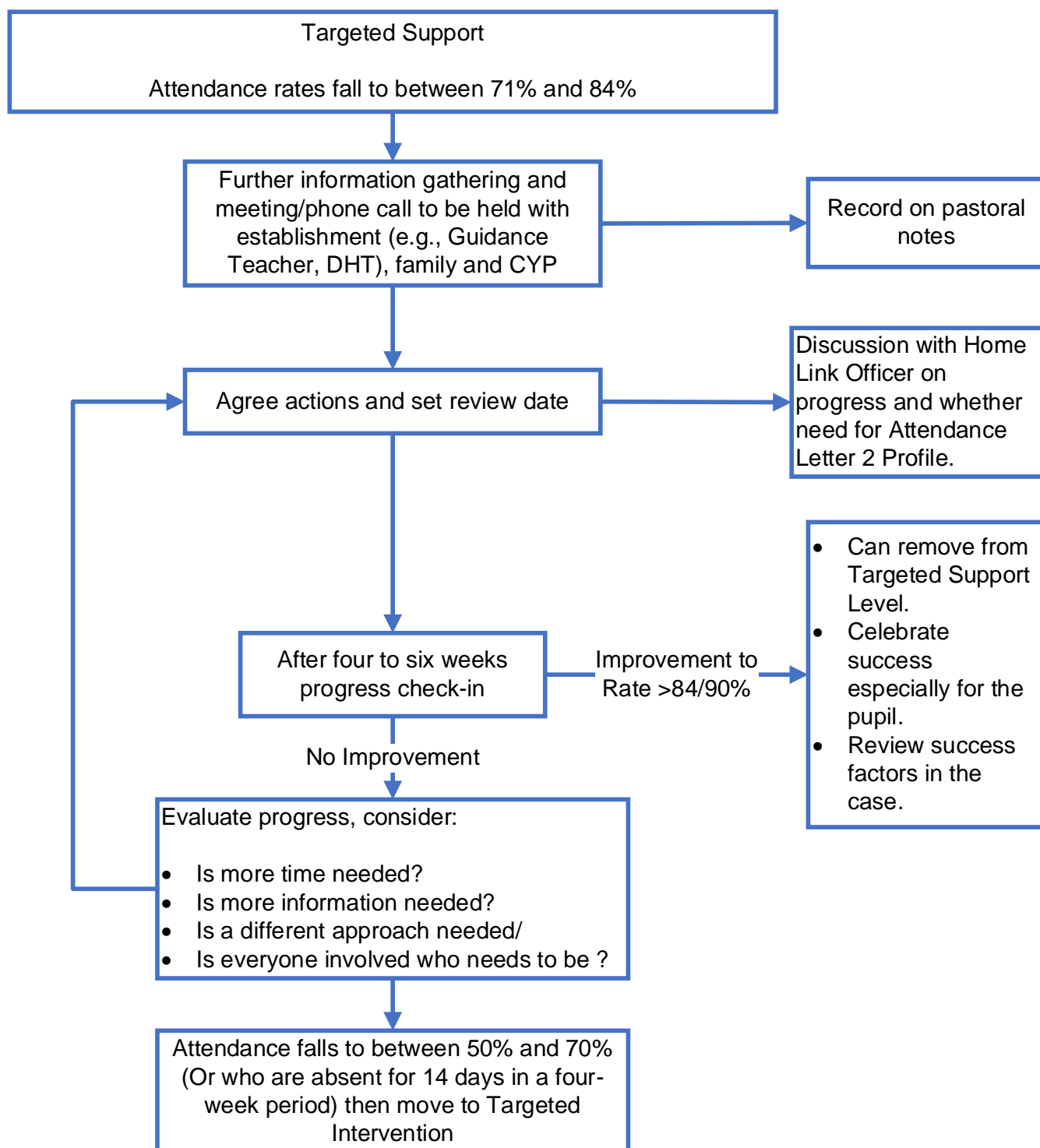
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Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence



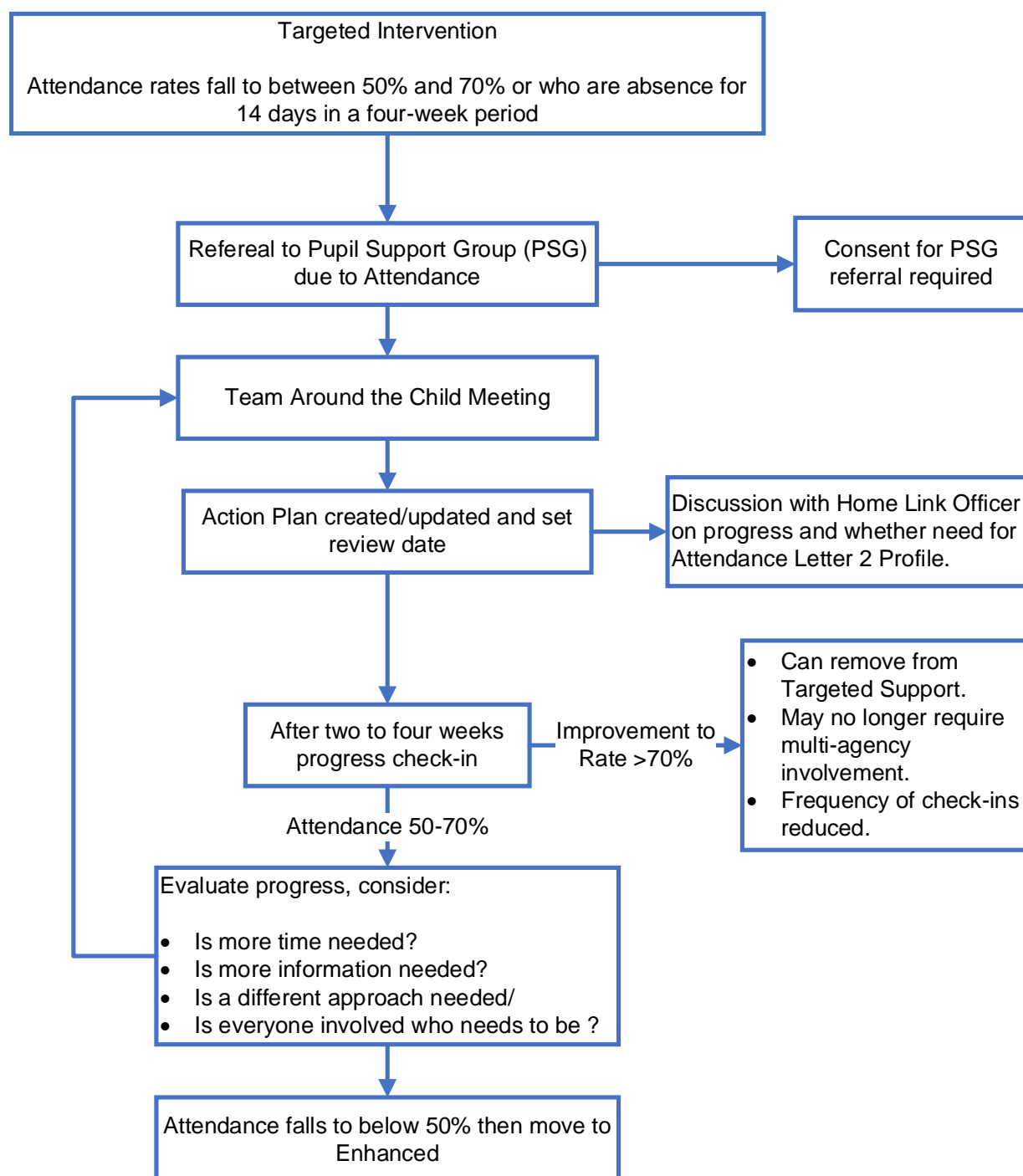
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Appendix 1: - Resources for Families, Children and Young People

Parent Line Scotland

At some point, all parents/carers find that parenting can be difficult or stressful. Parent Line Scotland is the free, confidential, telephone helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small. Phone: 0808 800 2222 or [online](#).

Parentzone

Parentzone provides information for families about how you can support your child's education.

My Rights, My Say

My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 have the rights to be more involved in the decisions that affect them. It's independent, confidential and easy to use, and here to make sure the voices of children with additional support needs are heard.

Scottish Child Law Centre

The Centre helps children and young people, their families and carers, and professionals working for and with children by providing advice and information through their advice line, email and text services.

Freephone for under 18s: Phone: 0800 328 8970 Phone: 0131 667 6333

Text: text 'SCLC' and your question to 80800

E-mail: enquiries@sclc.org.uk

Govan Law Centre

The centre has a national specialist Law Unit on Education. It provides legal representation in appropriate education law cases to families or pupils. The Education Law Helpline is available to anyone who has an enquiry about any aspect of education law in Scotland.

You can make an enquiry by phone: 0141 445 1955 Or Email advice@edlaw.org.uk.

The Centre aims to respond to all enquiries by the following working day.

The Scottish Legal Aid Board

The Board provides a list of lawyers and information about whether you might qualify for legal aid. Legal Aid allows people who would not otherwise be able to afford it to get help with their legal problems. The Financial Assessment Unit can assist with enquiries on eligibility. Phone: 0131 560 2164 or [online](#).

Citizens Advice Bureau

Your local CAB can provide information and support about rights and responsibilities when it comes to schools and education. There is information about a range of education issues in Scotland [online](#).

Enquire

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. It operates as a helpline for families, carers and practitioners. Publications include 'A Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning'. An interpreter can be arranged upon request. Telephone helpline Phone: 0845 123 2303 E-mail: info@enquire.org.uk or [online](#).

A Guide For Parents: The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

This is a leaflet which provides information about the new Act. There is more information about coordinated support plans. This link also contains web links to the leaflet in community languages.

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Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Absence Letter 1

Baldernock Primary School
Fluchter Road
Balmore
G64 4AS

Our Ref:

If phoning or calling, ask for:

Tel: 0141 955 2341

E-mail: office@baldernock.e-dunbarton.sch.uk

Date:

Dear

Baldernock Primary believes that education brings a wide range of benefits to children. Good attendance is key to educational success, helping children build and maintain good relationships with their peers and staff, and to develop to their full potential.

You may not be aware that as the attached print out shows, your child's attendance for this school year so far is Insert percentage%. If it remains the same, over the course of a school year, this means they would miss approximately Insert number of days days of school.

I am therefore writing to share my concerns about insert pupil's name's attendance. We would like to arrange to talk/meet* with you so that we can work together to help improve insert pupil's name's attendance.

Please contact the school either by email (insert office email) or telephone (insert school telephone number) to arrange a convenient time to meet with/talk to* insert HT, DHT or PT's name as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Enc/...

J and K - Late

D - Absence

I - In service

P - Permission

H - Holiday

*Delete as appropriate

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Attendance Letter 2

Baldernock Primary School
Fluchter Road
Balmore
G64 4AS

Our Ref:

If phoning or calling, ask for:

Tel: 0141 578

E-mail: office@baldernock.e-dunbarton.sch.uk

Date:

Dear

East Dunbartonshire Council recognises that education brings a wide range of benefits to children. Good attendance is key to educational success, helping children build and maintain good relationships with their peers and staff, and to develop to their full potential.

We have been working to improve your child's attendance, however as the attached print out shows, your child's attendance for this school year so far is now Insert percentage%. If it remains the same, over the course of a school year, this means they would miss approximately Insert number of days days of school.

Following our previous letter dated insert date, we are therefore writing to you again to highlight our serious concerns about insert pupil's name's attendance. Working in partnership with you is essential to improving your child's attendance.

We would therefore like to invite you into the school on insert date at insert time to discuss the current situation, so that we can work together to help improve insert pupil's name's attendance.

Please confirm either by email (insert office email) or telephone (insert school telephone number) that you can attend this meeting or to make an alternative arrangement.

Regular school attendance is a legal responsibility of parents/carers. I am sure by working together we can improve the current situation and avoid the need for further measures.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher
Enc/...

J and K - Late

P - Permission

D - Absence

H – Holiday

I - In service

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Absence Letter 3

Baldernock Primary School
Fluchter Road
Balmore
G64 4AS

Our Ref: attlet3

If phoning or calling, ask for:

Tel: 0141 578

E-mail: office@baldernock.e-dunbarton.sch.uk

Date:

Dear

I would like to bring your attention to insert pupil's name's recent attendance as shown on the attached attendance report. Your child's attendance for this school year so far is now Insert percentage%. If it remains the same, over the course of a school year, this means they would miss approximately Insert number of days days of school.

While school have been working to improve your child's attendance, there has not yet been progress. These concerns are now serious and require urgent action.

It is important I remind you of your legal responsibilities. Every parent or guardian 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 guardian making sure that the child attends school regularly (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Part II Section 35 (1)(2))

The Education Authority has a duty to provide adequate and efficient facilities for the education of children of school age and a legal responsibility for ensuring that such children take advantage of this provision.

Following East Dunbartonshire Council guidance, if we are not able to work together to improve the situation urgently, a referral to Children's Reporter may be necessary. This could result in legal intervention. For more information, please visit Scottish Children's Reporter Administration: <https://www.scra.gov.uk/>.

There is still opportunity for us to work together and take steps to improve this situation. Please confirm either by email insert office email or telephone insert school telephone number that you have received this letter and to schedule a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Enc/...

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

J and K - Late

D - Absence

I - In service

P - Permission

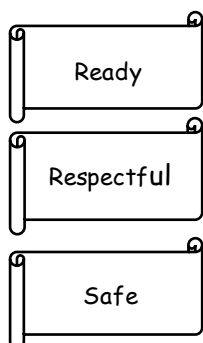
H - Holiday

In line with EDC policy the attached letter, [Appendix 2](#), will be issued to all parents along with our Attendance Matters Poster [Appendix 3](#) at the beginning of each session to reinforce the importance of regular attendance at school.

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

Appendix 2



Baldernock Primary School
Fluchter Road
Balmore
Torrance
Glasgow
G64 4AS
Telephone: 0141 955 2341

Dear Parent/Carer,

Attendance at school

At Baldernock Primary School, we value the importance of good attendance and time keeping as this helps support pupil's academic and social development and ensures they stay on track in learning to reach their fullest potential. We want to work with our families in a supportive way to make sure our pupils attend school every day. East Dunbartonshire Council has created a new Attendance and Absence policy which all schools will be implementing this session. As a leadership team, Mrs Meldrum and I meet monthly to monitor attendance and late coming across the school. From next month, as part of our attendance monitoring programme, we will be sending out letters to families where pupil attendance has fallen below 90%. This will give you an opportunity to see patterns of absence and seek any support from the school to improve attendance figures.

Late coming

As part of our monthly attendance meetings, we also monitor late coming. Did you know that if a child is 10 minutes late for school every day, this amounts to the same as losing 6 days of school or 30 hours of learning over the course of a year? If you are running late, please notify the school office in the usual way, so that we can amend our registers. It is really important that if your child is late, and the classroom doors are closed, they enter the school via the main door and report to the office where staff can take a note of their name and record this accurately on the class register. This will also prevent school staff phoning home as they may believe your child is absent.

Reporting absence

It is very important that you let us know when your child is going to be absent from school whatever the reason. Many parents/carers already make sure that we know by phoning the school office before 9.00.a.m, reporting the absence on Parents Portal or by emailing the school. I would be grateful if parents/carers continued to do this as required.

Families can sign up to Parents Portal via the EDC Website, or by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/residents/schools-early-years-and-learning/parents-portal>

This portal can be used to notify the school of pupil absence, as well as update contact details and view attendance.

Baldernock Primary School

Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence

In some circumstances, it might not be possible for you to pre-notify the school of an absence because your child may have become unwell during the night or another reason makes it difficult for you to contact us. If you do not inform us that your child is going to be absent, we are duty bound to take action to find your child and ensure they are safe. This will involve contacting you and, where necessary, your emergency contact(s). **It is therefore extremely important that we have up to date emergency contact information on file.**

Please let us know if any details change so we can update this on our system. If we are not able to contact you or the emergency contacts we have, we will ask the school's Home Link officer to visit your home. In some exceptional circumstances, where we can't make contact with you via the phone or at home, we will contact the Police and/or Social Work.

I hope that you will give full support to this new system. Children who do not attend school, and whose parents/carers have failed to notify the school, can be very vulnerable. It is important that we work together to help keep our children safe from harm.

You can ask for a copy of the Procedure for managing concerns relating to un-notified pupil absence in East Dunbartonshire schools.

This can be obtained from:

Chief Education Officer
Education, People & Business Directorate
12 Strathkelvin Place
Kirkintilloch
G66 1TJ
East Dunbartonshire Council
Tel: 0300 123 4510

Our own Promoting Attendance and Managing Un Notified Absence Policy will be uploaded onto our website.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to promote attendance and good time keeping at Baldernock Primary, as this has such a positive impact on pupil progress.

Kind Regards

Jill Carr
Head Teacher

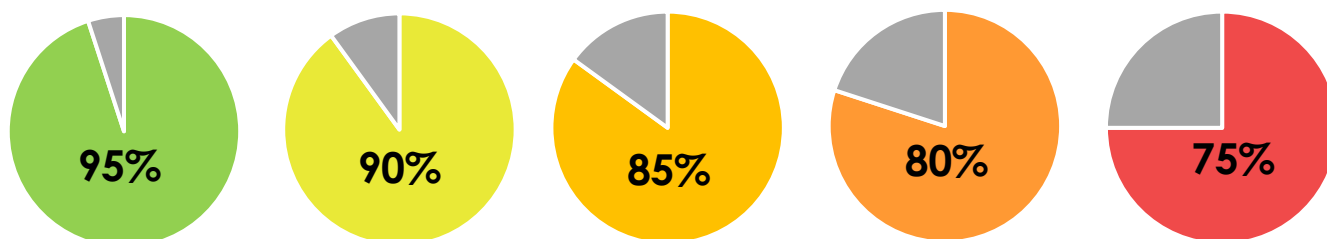
Baldernock Primary School
Promoting Attendance Policy including managing Un Notified Absence
At Baldernock Primary School...

Attendance Matters !

Appendix 3

Our School Vision is to create a school community where everyone **Works Together, Respects Others** and **Pursues Excellence** in all pursuits. Whilst our staff work hard to achieve this, good attendance and time-keeping has a huge impact on our ability to deliver this goal.

If your child's attendance is...



In a year, this means your child has been absent for...

10 days	19 days	28 days	38 days	47 days
or	or	or	or	or
2 school	½ a day a	Almost 4	1 day a week	9 ½ weeks
which equals	which equals	which equals	which equals	which equals
50 hours of learning	95 hours of learning	140 hours of learning	190 hours of learning	235 hours of learning

Also, if your child is late every day by...

