

Clacton County High School

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Higher Expectations, Raising Aspirations, Transforming Lives

Attendance Policy 2023-24

Policy reviewed and adopted	Summer 2023
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Clacton County High School Attendance Policy for Parents

Mission Statement

Clacton County High School aims to provide a caring environment where individuals develop their full potential and their achievement is celebrated. It is our expectation that all students attend school every day when the school is open.

What the Law Says

All children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education. The school leaving age is the last Friday in June of the same academic year in which the child reaches their 16th birthday, or 17th Birthday, if born after September 1996, or 18th Birthday, if born after September 1997 (*Education Act 1996*).

- The parent/carer is legally responsible for ensuring that their child receives a suitable education. (*Education Act 1996*)
- Local Education Authorities are required by law to enforce school attendance. They usually do so through the Education Welfare Service, or as it is known now, the Attendance Compliance team.
- Failure to ensure that your child attends school, may lead to legal action being taken against the parent. This could result in **each** parent/carer receiving a fine of up to £2,500 for each time, or up to 3 months' imprisonment.
- According to the Education Act (1996), Section 444A and Section 444B, authorised personnel are able to issue penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444 and this enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction by paying a penalty. The current penalty prescribed for each parent is £60, if paid within a 21-day period on receipt of the notice, rising to £120, if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the Attendance Compliance team will either prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. This will be a joint decision between Essex Attendance Compliance and the school.
- In line with the current code of conduct 2017, Penalty notices may be issued where there have been at least ten unauthorised sessions of absences, during a period of ten school weeks. Attendance Compliance will also issue penalty notices for unauthorised term time holidays of 5 days (10 sessions) or more, and a penalty notice may be issued if there are 6 or more unauthorised sessions, due to holiday taken during the first two weeks of September. (Essex Code of Conduct 2017 October 1st)
- Where a previous PN (Penalty Notice), or prosecution has been applied to a parent(s) within the last 12 (max 18) months, schools can now make unauthorised leave of absence requests for direct prosecution. Attendance Compliance officers, can also use court proceedings to seek an Education Supervision Order or Attendance Order on the child.
- During these court proceedings, the magistrates may consider issuing a Parenting Order, which would include parents attending parenting skills sessions.
- By law, only the school can approve absence, not the parent, once the school has received a reason from the parent and in some cases, this may require medical evidence.
- The absence of a student without an established acceptable reason, or where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer, should be recorded as unauthorised.

What the Local Authority Compliance Team (Essex County Council) states

Taking your child out of school during term time could be detrimental to your child's educational progress.

'Having a good education will help give your child the best possible start in life. If your child does not attend school, he/she will not be able to keep up with the work. Employers will want to be sure that the people they are thinking of taking on are reliable. Therefore, children who have not attended their school for no good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse. They may also be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.'

What CCHS says for September 2023

- Attendance at CCHS is a whole school responsibility and it is our expectation that children attend school every day when the school is open. CCHS follows the guidance in 'working together to improve school attendance' September 2022.
- Children are expected to attend school, arrive on time and attend all lessons.
- If your child is ill, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to contact the school on the first day of absence and each day after, as long as the absence continues. (*Telephone the school before 8.45am, if possible, on the 'Student Absence Line' on 01255 424266.*)
- The school will attempt to contact the parent/carer of any student whose absence has not been established by previous contact via the 'Student Absence Line'.
- When a child returns to school following a period of absence, there needs to be communication with the Attendance Team with reasons for the absence. Medical evidence may be required in certain circumstances.
- If your child starts missing school, help the school to put things right. Make sure your child understands that you do not approve!
- Medical or similar appointments for your child should, wherever possible be made outside of school hours. If this is impossible, written notification or email confirmation must be sent into the Attendance Team, who will make arrangements for your child to sign out at the Attendance Office and provide a green 'Permission to be Out of School' slip. He/she/They must sign back into school at the same office, upon return. This is vital in the event of an evacuation.

Contacts

Attendance Contacts: Absence Line: - 01255 424266 Email - FAO attendance team admin@cchs.school Miss E Clay - Attendance Officer Miss Ellie Granger - Attendance Administrator

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- Parents or carers are expected to phone the school on the first day of their child's absence on the Student Absence Line 01255 424266.
- In cases where a student's attendance rate falls and parents are involved in a school Attendance *support* Meeting (SAM) or school Attendance Meeting/phone call (SAMP), parents are expected to provide medical evidence in order for the school to authorise absences. If this is not provided, absences are unauthorised, which could lead to further attendance actions.

- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed, in order to help identify patterns, set targets and support students. The New Lets Talk .. We miss you document will provide a source of strategies to improve those students with attendance difficulties.
- Our Attendance Team, together with Assistant Year Leaders/ Year leaders/Pastoral Leaders, will monitor and review these targets on a regular basis.
- Students who are absent through sickness for a long period of time and have valid medical evidence, may have work sent home for them and will be re-integrated back into school on their return. Please contact the Year leaders to organise this.
- Pastoral Hub staff will, when appropriate, liaise with outside agencies Education Psychology Service, Social Care and any others who may serve to support and assist students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Assistant Year leaders meet weekly to discuss those with attendance difficulties, in order to identify and support those students who are experiencing attendance issues.
- The Attendance Officer may visit/contact parents, to support them in trying to improve attendance when required.
- Pastoral team/Attendance Officer may speak with students without informing parents/carers, who are experiencing difficulties attending school, during the school day, as part of a SAP (school Attendance Plan), to create a support plan in order to improve attendance.
- Aquinas Provisions, are a private company used by the school to help raise attendance. They, and/or the Attendance Officer, will intervene if no improvement is made following a SAP and will run a SAM, a SAMP, carry out home visits and have the legal power to issue Penalty Notices for Essex County Council. Contact: paul.watkins@aquinasprovisions.org
- The school also use the Local Authority Education Compliance team for certain cases and they may contact parents/carers, and/or make home visits.
- The Attendance Compliance Team, or Aquinas Provisions, in conjunction with the school, may on selected days, visit the homes of students when no reason has been provided to the school for a child's absence.
- Punctuality is regarded as very important and if a student arrives at school after the registers close at 9am, they can be marked as an unauthorised late, which is treated the same as an unauthorised absence. Students that are continually late may be referred to the Local Authority Compliance team.
- Ultimately, the Local Authority may take parents to court for the non-attendance of their children at school.

Punctuality

Punctuality is key and compulsory; students must be at their bases at the beginning of registration or in assembly and in classrooms ready to learn at the beginning of their lessons.

- If students are late to form between 8.45am -8.50am, students will be given a 'late' on the register and lates will be monitored
- If students are up to 5 minutes late, the teacher will have a discussion 'to get the students to reflect on the impact of their lateness on both them and the class'. If further behaviour concerns occur through the lesson, students are removed to another classroom as the opportunity to reflect has not been taken on board. Class charts will be updated as per BFL.
- Any student arriving more than 5 minutes late to form or lessons will be issued with a detention and the teacher will find a suitable time in the lesson to remind the students of this. There will be some students who have legitimate reasons for being late to form or other lessons throughout the day and these students need to sign in at the attendance office at the

beginning of the day and will be given a green slip to excuse their lateness. No consequence will result if the lateness has been corroborated by parents/medical slips/pastoral team. If students arrive with a green slip and it has been validated, a present mark is put into the register.

- Any student who arrives after 9.00am, should go to Attendance first to collect a green slip and the attendance team will tick whether the lateness is genuine on the green slip and class teacher simply marks them present when they arrive. If it is not, the student will be issued with a detention by the attendance team. Any student that does not sign in with attendance after 9.00am will be sanctioned with a Detention and issued with this by the the attendance team.
- Lates to form and lessons are monitored and if students are late for more than 3 times in a week, there will be a consequence.
- If students don't turn up for lessons or are refusing to go to the lesson but are in school, students will be deemed as truanting and a RESET will be set for the following day.
- DAILY: Lessons 1-4 All students should arrive promptly and if students do not, a late mark will be put on registers. These lates will be monitored by pastoral team/ form tutors.

Persistent Absence Plan

Students with persistent absence, will be intervened through a variety of the above actions and follow the flowchart at the end of this document, but there will be targeted intervention depending on what the school knows about these students, in terms of their previous attendance and family circumstances. Some of the students who are regular non-attenders each year, will not start at the beginning of this flowchart, but will often be contacted early in the year by the attendance team and meetings will be set up with parents. Each half term, the school will target a number of students who are considered to be in danger of being in the 'persistent absence category'. Each week form tutors and Pastoral Teams/Attendance officer will target these students through mentoring. For example, in Half Term 6, the focus will start on those between 28-32 sessions of absence, as the threshold for Persistent Absence (PA) at the end of the school year is 37 sessions.

Attendance Rewards

Clacton County High School aims to provide a caring environment where you will develop to your full potential and where your achievements are celebrated. If you have excellent attendance and low behaviour points across each term you will be eligible for our end of term 'reward'. This is often decided by students, through a school survey. The termly reward will be announced at the beginning of each term in an assembly or through form time.

Attendance Rewards

We believe attendance is particularly important to your development, which is why the expectation is that you attend every day when school is open. In order to celebrate this we will reward you in the following ways:

- Those with 100% attendance and the highest Proud+ points (Top 10) in each year group have the chance to win the 'Golden Ticket' each week, whereby you are able to 'jump the queue' to go to the front, in Clouds restaurant on a day of your choice.
- Those with 100% attendance and the most number of PROUD points each week (top ten in each year group) will also be nominated in assemblies and have the chance to win the weekly prize.
- The tutor group within each year group, with the highest number of students with 100% attendance for each half term will receive a breakfast reward .

• The attendance team will present weekly attendance percentages for each tutor group and publish league tables.

Monitoring Attendance

- The Form Tutor will discuss any developing attendance problems with the student.
- The Form Tutor will monitor any developing attendance situations and discuss the issues with the Pastoral Team/Attendance team.
- The Attendance Officer will provide percentage attendance information to Form Tutors and the Pastoral Team on a weekly basis, with identification of students who are likely to fall into the 'Persistent Absentees' category. There will be weekly mentoring of these students throughout the year.
- The Attendance Officer will discuss strategies with Form Tutors and the Pastoral Hub to support students with attendance difficulties, with a particular focus on those who are likely to be in the 'Persistent Absentees' category.
- If appropriate, letters, visits, or phone calls, will be made to the parents/carers of students who are experiencing attendance difficulties, informing them of the attendance record of their child.
- A School Attendance Plan may be discussed with the student in a meeting.
- A School Attendance Meeting (SAM)/(SAMP) with Aquina Provisions and Attendance Officer/Pastoral Teams may be arranged.
- The school will use the Essex Document '<u>Lets Talk....We Miss you</u>' in order to engage those students who are suffering from Emotional Behaviour School Avoidance (EBSA)- See Flow Chart at back.
- When a student is absent from school and parents have not contacted the school Sick Line, a text message will automatically be generated to alert parents/carers. The text will request parents to contact the school urgently regarding their child's absence.
- Where parents/carers have not contacted the school within 5 days of a student's absence, the Local Authority will be informed, who may decide to take further action.

Children Missing from Education, and Deletions from Roll

If a child is absent from school without reason and we are unable to contact parents, or establish your child's whereabouts, the school will contact the police after 5 days and they will carry out checks. After 10 days, the Local Authority will be informed – this is called a 'Child Missing from Education' (CME). The Local Authority will then carry out checks, including with the Police and Social Care where appropriate, to determine the wellbeing and safety of the child. In certain circumstances, the school may remove the child's name from the roll, for example, if the child is enrolled with another school or if the local authority has no contact with either a parent or guardian within 10 days. The school will always attempt to make contact prior to this happening and will act only within the legal guidelines set out regarding these processes. It is therefore important that parents inform the school if they know that their child will not be returning to the school and provide the school with details such as a new address, the name of the child's new school, the date of the move and so on.

Reduced Timetables

A reduced educational offer means an agreement made with the child or young person, parent or carer and, in some circumstances, the Local Authority that the number of hours spent in education is reduced for a time-limited period.

Under Section 7 Education Act 1996 the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable—

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

Most parents / carers choose to fulfil this duty by sending their child or young person to school and would expect them to participate in a full school day. Any decision by a school to move to a reduced educational offer may lead to parental / carer concerns that they will not be fulfilling their statutory duty to educate their child. A decision to implement a reduced educational offer must always be made with the full agreement of the parent /carer of the child or young person.

Although there is no statutory basis upon which to establish a reduced educational offer for pupils Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that in very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary reduction in an educational offer to meet a pupil's individual need. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a reduced package is considered as part of a reintegration programme.

A reduced educational provision must never be treated as a long-term solution to a problem presenting needs. The agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend access full-time education or be provided with alternative provision, usually within 6-8 weeks. The Local Authority EAT should also be notified when a reduced provision starts and ends. This should be done by submitting the Exception report and also the reduced provision closure form, both of which should be sent to provision@essex.gov.uk

More detail of Reduced timetables can be found through Essex Local Authority Policy Education Access - Reduced Timetables (essex.gov.uk)

Elective Home Education & Flexi schooling

Guidance for parents considering home education can be found in the <u>Department for Education</u> <u>document</u>, also published in April 2019.

Some parents/carers may decide to provide a suitable education by educating their child at home, rather than seeking to enrol their child at a school. This is known as home schooling or Elective Home Education and is where the parent/carer takes full responsibility for the education of the child. There is a legal right to a school placement and to Elective Home Education.

Flexi-schooling

Flexi-schooling is not the same as home schooling/Elective Home Education. Parent/ carers who request flexi-attendance are asking for a pattern of provision which will involve both attendance at school, as well as times when the child will receive educational provision at home.

Flexi-schooling is also different from reduced timetable arrangements (as above) which the school/parent/carer may seek to make. Such arrangements are monitored and reviewed with the intention that the child be returned to full time attendance as soon as possible. Flexi-schooling is full time, although the provision may be split.

Arrangements for flexi-schooling can only be made at the <u>request of a parent or carer with parental</u> <u>responsibility</u>. This is not an arrangement that can be initiated by the school.

Whilst there is a legal right to a school placement and to Elective Home Education there is no legal right to flexi-schooling. Headteachers can refuse to agree to such requests. There is no right of appeal against the decision of a Headteacher not to agree a flexi-schooling request.

How a flexi-schooling arrangement is recorded within a school's registers

It is important to note that in the event of a flexi-schooling arrangement being agreed, any sessions where the pupil is receiving education at home will be recorded as 'authorised absences' within the school's register. This will have a detrimental impact on the overall absence levels of the school in question. The code which schools are required to enter into their register for any such sessions is the 'C' code which reflects that the pupil is absent due to 'other authorised circumstances' – in other words, the flexi-schooling arrangement has permitted the pupil to be absent from school.

It is not appropriate for schools to mark the register as "approved off-site activity" for the time the pupil is being flexi-schooled as the school has no supervisory role in the child's education at such times and has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home.

How to request flexi-schooling

If a parent/carer is interested in making such a request, the Headteacher of the child's actual or prospective school should be contacted so that the proposal may be considered. Children who attend part-time under a flexi-schooling arrangement will be subject to the same admissions processes as other children and are counted in the same way as a child who attends full-time for the purposes of infant class size regulations.

It will be the decision of the Headteacher as to whether they are willing to enter into an agreement with the parent/carer. The governing body may be involved in agreeing and reviewing a general approach to requests for flexi- schooling, but this does not exempt the Headteacher from the need to consider each request individually. The whole governing body should not become involved in individual cases and cannot overturn a Headteacher's decision.

Aside from the impact that a flexi-schooling arrangement will have on a school's overall absence levels, the implications of agreeing partial educational provision at home are significant both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment to make a shared provision work. The education provided at home and school should, together, constitute a full-time, suitable education.

Whilst there is no statutory curriculum for the home education part of a flexi-schooling arrangement, parents/carers will need to be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the School (or Academy) curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience.

Flexi-schooling is unlikely to be successful if the reasons for choosing it are negative and the choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, and peers or aspects of school discipline or attendance itself.

Flexi-schooling should not be seen as a means of opting out of an element of the curriculum with which a child, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable. The child may find that their limited attendance makes it difficult to maintain strong relationships with peers and may experience an element of social exclusion. If a child moves to a different school, there will be no guarantee that flexi-schooling will be able to continue. This will be a decision that the Headteacher of the new school will be required to make.

There is no opt-out for schools regarding the National (Academy) curriculum based on a flexischooling proposal, although the child is not attending all school sessions, the school will need to ensure that the child has appropriate access to the National (Academy) curriculum. The child cannot be dis-applied from the statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed. When the curriculum is delivered through cross-curricular activities, arrangements made with the parent/carer would need to protect the cohesion of the child's experience. There may be resource implications; effective co-ordination will require time and, although there is no obligation to do so, the school may well decide that it will need to provide materials so that learning can keep pace with that of other children. Arrangements for flexi-schooling may make both the identification of SEN and the ability to meet those needs more difficult to secure. Effective assessment would need to take place across both the school and home-schooling elements of the child's education and so could present logistical challenges.

Flexi-schooling for children with an Education, Health and Care plan

Where a child has an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) the decision to agree flexi-schooling must be taken in conjunction with the local authority (LA). Where flexi-schooling is agreed for a child with an EHCP this should be recorded on the EHCP and progress monitored through the usual annual review process.

Flexi-schooling agreements

In all cases where flexi-schooling is agreed, the school will meet with parents / carers and the written Flexi Contract agreement will be written up and signed by parents/carers and Headteacher so that expectations and arrangements are clear for both parties. The discussion and agreement will include:

- the normal expected pattern of attendance at school;
- the rationale for why the flexi-schooling arrangement is in the best interests of the pupil concerned;
- procedures for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement;
- agreement that if the parent/carer chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children and will be responsible for meeting all costs related to this decision;
- details of any special educational needs and associated provision;

- arrangements for regular planning and review meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home/school relationships;
- clarity about the circumstances under which and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement;
- the arrangements for the resolution of any disputes (usual processes are for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints will need to be considered by the Headteacher first and then the Governing Body as set out under the school's complaints procedure).

Monitoring flexi-schooling

Neither the LA nor the school have a statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis, however if it appears to the school that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parent/carer, the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action. If the parent/carer declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the provision of education at home, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi-schooling arrangement. The child would then be required to return to school on a full-time basis. Regardless the flexible contract will be reviewed every half term and recorded as part of the standard review.

Choosing flexi-schooling

The decision to undertake flexi-schooling should only be considered if there are positive reasons for doing so and where all parties are in agreement that such an arrangement is in the best interests of the child. The LA should share this document with parents as part of an EHC needs assessment, where appropriate. Parent/carer must be confident that they can meet the educational needs of the child fully and a school mindful of the fact that, if arrangements are agreed, the school will retain the responsibility for the child's progress and any absences incurred because of the decision to participate in a flexi-schooling arrangement.

Leave of Absence

- Leave of absence should only be taken in term time in 'exceptional circumstances', as outlined by the DfE and the Attendance Compliance team, on behalf of Essex Local Authority, e.g. where a parent is classed as Forces personnel on leave from a foreign posting.
- In exceptional circumstances and if it is absolutely necessary to take your child out of school during term time, parents/carers must request a 'Leave of Absence Form' from the school, which can be found on the school website.
- A request must be made in advance using the school's application form, which can be obtained from the Attendance Office. When completed and returned to the school, it should be accompanied by a letter of explanation.
- Where the school/head of school considers that the application has not justified 'Exceptional Circumstances', approval will not be given. This is a school decision.
- If the holiday is then taken with disregard to the outcome of the application, the school may seek to apply for a Penalty Notice in accordance with Education (Penalty Notices) Regulation 2004 and if there has been a previous Penalty Notice issues for irregular school attendance or parents / carers have been subject to previous prosecution, Attendance Compliance many not give the opportunity for a further Penalty Notice; your case may proceed to Court.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. Unacceptable reasons for absence may include: Visiting relatives

- Haircuts
- Shopping
- Transport difficulties
- Birthdays
- Sleeping late
- Looking after siblings
- Minding the house
- Truancy
- Unapproved holidays
- Arriving at school too late to get a mark

Note: the school authorises or does not authorise any absence – not the parent/carer. An absence remains unauthorised, until the school receives information about the reasons for the absence and a decision is made as to whether this is authorised.

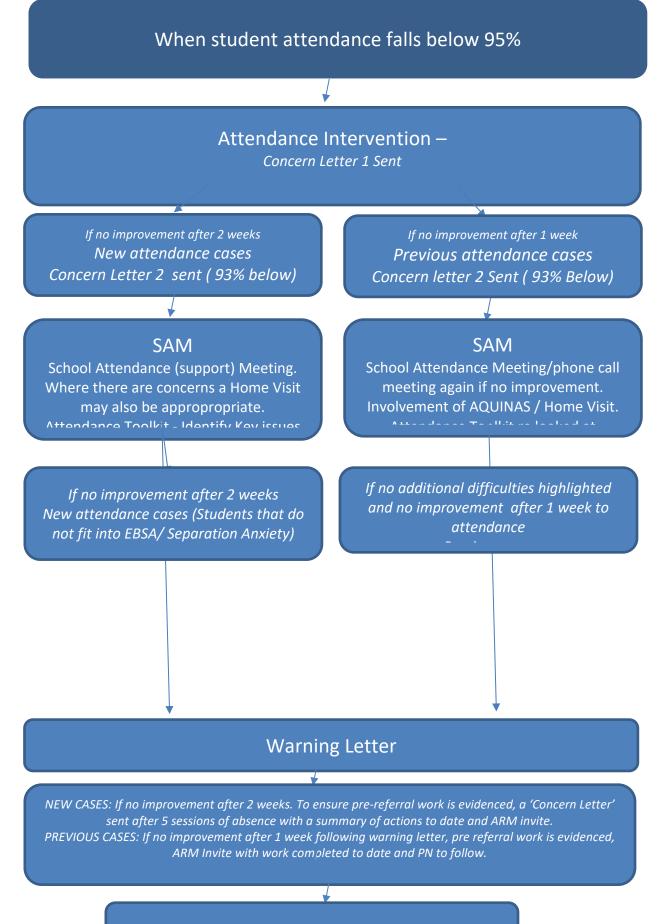
How Non-Attendance Can Affect Your Child's Education

If you raise a child's attendance, you raise their academic chances:

- 90% attendance = half a day missed every week.
- One school year at 90% attendance = four whole weeks of lessons missed.
- 90% attendance over five years of secondary school = half a school year *missed*!!
- What is the impact?
- Research suggests that seventeen *missed school days a year* = a GCSE grade DROP in achievement.
- If your child's attendance improves by 1%, they will see a 5% improvement in attainment.
- The greater the attendance, the greater the achievement.

The next scheduled review date for this policy will be summer term 2024.

ATTENDANCE FLOW CHART



Penalty Notice Issued

Lets Talk We Miss You - Flow Chart

Overview of guidance/changes

The latest Department for Education guidance (May 2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance' makes it very clear that a **coherent joined up approach** to attendance will be helpful. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it **must be a concerted effort across** all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners (Let's Talk we miss you-Essex).

Literature has typically referred to prolonged absence from schools as 'school refusal'. Pupils with school attendance difficulties are often described using labels such as 'school phobic' or 'truant', terms which are now considered outdated. These terms also mean different things to different people. The lack of a shared understanding and language is often a barrier to finding effective interventions for CYP. In Essex, our preferred terminology is **School Attendance Difficulties**, which is used to encompass the communicating behaviours of any pupil who struggles to attend or stay in school/education setting for any reason. **Care must be taken not to attribute cause or motivations which are unknown or misleading.** For example, the term 'refusal' is increasingly seen as unhelpful as it suggests a willfulness on the part of an anxious pupil which can obscure the underlying cause.

The **attendance and pastoral teams** in school should be the first place where attendance difficulties are recognised, assessed and understood. Members of the attendance team will work with parents/carers and colleagues to implement support plans for pupils who have school attendance difficulties.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) – however, it is important to note that EBSA isn't a medical condition in itself.

The term Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is widely used now to describe occasions where it has been established through assessment that a pupil's absence is because of an emotional distress e.g. anxiety. EBSA doesn't just mean not attending school entirely. Staff may also observe children and young people:

- not going to their classroom
- not staying in class
- not attending some lessons
- avoiding some physical spaces or people.

Whole school systems and preventative practice



