Item: 2

Education, Communities and Housing Committee: 11 November 2026.

Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

1. Overview

1.1. This report presents the Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy, for approval.

1.2. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensuring that children and young people are able to access learning, develop positive relationships and achieve their full potential.

1.3. On 29 March 2023, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended approval of Guidance for Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools.

1.4. The updated Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, provides a clear consistent and supportive framework for promoting attendance and responding to attendance concerns across Orkney schools.

1.5. The revised Policy establishes clear expectations for attendance monitoring, attendance recording, communication with families and staged interventions when attendance concerns arise. It clarifies procedures relating to alternative provision, reduced timetables, prolonged ill health and children missing from education.

1.6. The approach is consistent with that being adopted by local authorities across Scotland following publication of the revised national guidance. In particular, it promotes a preventative and supportive response to attendance concerns, recognises the link between attendance, wellbeing and attainment, and emphasises the importance of understanding and addressing barriers to attendance rather than relying on punitive measures.

1.7. The Policy also aligns with national frameworks including Curriculum for Excellence, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and The Promise.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:

i. Approve the revised Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

3.1. Attendance is a key factor in supporting educational attainment, achievement and wellbeing. Evidence consistently demonstrates that persistent absence has a negative impact on educational outcomes and increases the risk of disengagement from learning.

3.2. In November 2023, Education Scotland published 'Improving attendance: understanding the issues' to support better understanding of the issues around attendance.

3.3. The Improving Attendance in Scotland: 2024-2026 by Education Scotland provided an updated understanding of attendance and absences over the last two years, and the practice that is having a positive impact nationally, across local authorities and in educational establishments.

3.4. Following publication of revised Scottish Government guidance in 2026, a further review has been undertaken to ensure local arrangements reflect national policy and best practice.

3.5. The Policy has been fully revised to align with the Scottish Government's latest attendance guidance, 'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Improving Attendance in Scotland's Schools'. It reflects a shift from punitive approaches towards preventative, relationship-based and solution-focused practice.

3.6. The updated Policy places greater emphasis on:

- Early identification of attendance concerns.
- Partnership working with children, young people and families.
- Understanding and addressing barriers to attendance.
- Consistent recording and monitoring of attendance through SEEMiS (the local authority management information system).
- Proportionate staged intervention and multi-agency support where required.
- Safeguarding responsibilities and procedures for unexplained absence.

3.7. The Policy recognises that attendance difficulties can be linked to a range of individual, family, school and wider circumstances. Schools are expected to work collaboratively with children, young people, parents/carers and relevant partners to identify and address barriers to attendance.

3.8. The Policy also strengthens arrangements for supporting vulnerable groups including children and young people with additional support needs, care experienced children and young people, young carers and those impacted by poverty.

3.9. The Policy provides greater consistency in the monitoring, recording and management of attendance, including expectations for SEEMiS recording, authorised and unauthorised absence, lateness, attendance at alternative provision and children and young people who are in school but not attending scheduled classes.

3.10. The revised Policy will support schools in ensuring a consistent and equitable approach to attendance management while maintaining a strong focus on inclusion, wellbeing and positive outcomes for children and young people.

4. Consultation

4.1. The Policy has been developed through the Attendance Working Group, comprising Head Teachers, Depute Head Teachers, representatives from Community Learning, Development and Employability (CLDE), the Quality Improvement Officer (Achievement and Attainment) and, until recently, the authority's Education Scotland Attainment Advisor. The group reviewed national guidance and local attendance procedures to develop an updated approach for Orkney schools.

4.2. The draft Policy was subsequently shared with Head Teachers, Service Managers, groups of children and young people, and Parent Council Chairs to seek feedback on the proposed approach.

4.3. Feedback from the consultation highlighted broad support for the staged intervention model, the focus on identifying and addressing barriers to attendance, and the commitment to a supportive rather than punitive approach. Comments received helped strengthen the policy by clarifying roles and responsibilities, improving sections relating to communication with families, and ensuring the procedures are practical and achievable within school settings.

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial -** None directly relating to the recommendations in this report. Any additional costs associated with this Policy will need to be met within existing resources.
2. **Legal -** Supports statutory duties relating to education, attendance and safeguarding.
3. **Corporate Governance –** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources -** Not applicable.
5. **Equalities -** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
6. **Island Communities Impact -** An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
   ☐Growing our economy.
   ☒Strengthening our Communities.
   ☐ Developing our Infrastructure.
   ☐Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
   ☐Cost of Living.
   ☐Sustainable Development.
   ☒Local Equality.
   ☐Improving Population Health.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk -** No implications identified.
10. **Risk -** Failure to maintain effective attendance monitoring may negatively impact educational outcomes and safeguarding responsibilities. However, the policy mitigates risks by promoting consistency of monitoring and recording across all schools and education services.
11. **Procurement -** Not applicable.
12. **Health and Safety -** Not applicable.
13. **Property and Assets -** Not applicable.
14. **Information Technology -** Not applicable.
15. **Cost of Living -** Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

- Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Improving Attendance in Scotland's Schools (2026).
- Improving attendance: understanding the issues (2023).
- Improving attendance in Scotland: 2024 – 2026.
- Curriculum for Excellence.
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- The Promise.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 3 – Island Communities Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1

ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Education, Communities and Housing

Monitoring and Tracking Attendance in Schools Policy

Version Control

Document Reference.	Revision.	Issue Date.	Reason for Issue.	Reviewer.
SLI/001.	00.	3 May 2023.	New Policy.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
ELH/030.	01.	3 October 2024.	New Policy Number.	Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion
ELH/030	02.		Updated policy	QIO Achievement and Attainment

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1. Introduction and Aims

All children and young people have the right to an education and to be provided with the support that they need to reach their full potential. Attendance at school is crucial to support children and young people's wellbeing, attainment and achievements.

This policy sets out the national approach to promoting and managing attendance and explains the responsibilities Education, Communities and Housing have along with schools to monitor and track the attendance of children and young people in school and what actions can be taken if attendance is or becomes a cause for concern. It recognises the collective responsibility to support children and young people to attend school and actively engage with their learning. It seeks to support all those caring for, or working with, children and young people in an educational setting, to promote the importance of good attendance and work together to identify and respond to any barriers to attendance and engagement that may be impacting children and young people.

When children and young people do not attend school regularly, both their learning and overall wellbeing are negatively affected. Consistent attendance supports better educational outcomes and helps develop punctuality and reliability; all valuable qualities that are important for lifelong learning and for success within the world of work. Regular attendance at school also encourages the development of strong, positive relationships with peers and staff, which can provide valuable support and act as protective factors during challenging times.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Encourage good relationships between our schools and parents/carers.
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively, and absence followed up quickly on the day to ensure the safety of all children and young people.
- Raise awareness of attendance by making all staff, parents, carers, children and young people aware of its importance and their responsibilities.

2. Guiding Principles

Approaches to attendance across Orkney should be informed by the following guiding principles:

- All children and young people have a right to education. Parents and education authorities have a responsibility to ensure that this right is fulfilled in a way that best meets the needs of the child or young person.
- Parents have a legal duty to provide their child with efficient and suitable education. This can be through school attendance or other suitable means.
- Education authorities have a duty to provide education to children and young people in their area.
- Schools should actively and meaningfully engage with parents, working with them to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are removed.

- 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 are 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.
- All children and young people have the right to have their views heard and taken into account.
- 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 from other policies.
- Partner services and agencies should work collaboratively with schools to improve whole family support.

3. Legislation, National and Local Guidance

This Attendance Policy is informed by relevant legislation, national guidance and local authority procedures which support the learning, wellbeing and safeguarding of children and young people.

This policy reflects the expectations set out in the Scottish Government guidance Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools, which provides national guidance for local authorities and schools in promoting attendance and supporting children and young people to engage in their education.

The policy is underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which affirms every child's right to education and places a responsibility on services to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights in all decisions that affect them.

The guidance sits within the wider educational and wellbeing frameworks of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Curriculum for Excellence provides the national framework for learning and achievement, while GIRFEC offers a national approach to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people through early intervention and partnership working.

This policy also aligns with National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, recognising that concerns regarding attendance may, in some circumstances, be linked to wider wellbeing or safeguarding concerns. Effective partnership working is therefore essential to ensure children and young people receive the right support at the right time.

4. Working in Partnership with Parents/Carers

Collaborative working with parents and carers is essential in promoting and supporting regular school attendance and should be embedded within an inclusive, welcoming and supportive school culture. As key partners in their child's education, parents and carers should be empowered and supported to engage meaningfully in their child's learning and the wider life of the school.

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable education. Most parents and carers fulfil this responsibility by ensuring that their child attends school, although some choose to educate their child at home (see Policy and on Home Education, Flexi Schooling and Part-time Timetables). Where a child or young person is registered at a local authority school, parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that they attend regularly. Regular attendance is important because every day of learning, connection and support contributes to a child or young person's educational progress, wellbeing and wider development.

We recognise, however, that there may be times when children and young people experience difficulties in attending school and that family circumstances can present challenges. Communication with parents and carers is therefore essential in promoting the positive benefits of regular attendance and in identifying and addressing any barriers at the earliest opportunity. Schools and settings should seek to understand the individual circumstances affecting attendance and ensure that discussions and any support offered are respectful, sensitive and considerate.

Challenges may include balancing work and family commitments, financial pressures, difficulties accessing or processing information, or physical and mental health difficulties within the family. Parents and carers may not always feel able to talk openly about circumstances that are affecting their child's attendance, and schools should therefore strive to create an environment where families feel listened to, valued and able to seek support without fear of judgement.

We recognise that regular attendance is most effectively achieved through strong partnerships between children and young people, families, schools and the Local Authority. We are committed to working collaboratively with parents and carers to promote the importance and positive benefits of regular attendance, while providing appropriate support to identify and overcome barriers. Through positive relationships, open communication and early intervention, we can work together to help children and young people attend school regularly, benefit fully from their education and achieve the best possible outcomes.

5. Reasons for absence

As long as the school has been informed of the reason for the absence, and the school is satisfied that this is a valid reason, then the absence would be called an authorised absence and recorded on SEEMiS accordingly.

The following are valid reasons for absence:

- The child or young person is ill or has ongoing/long term health issues.
- The child or young person is attending a doctor or other medical appointment.

- The child or young person is going to a meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children's Hearing, care review or court.
- Someone close to the child or young person has died.
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in the family.
- The child or young person is going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them.
- The child or young person has extended leave with parental consent, for example: extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school; short-term parental placement abroad; parental leave (where they are members of armed forces or emergency services and periods of leave have previously been restricted) or family returning to its country of origin (to care for relative, or for cultural reasons).
- Representing Orkney
- In exceptional circumstances, family holidays can be authorised.

There may be other reasons that a child or young person might be absent, such as bullying, feeling isolated or being unable to access the curriculum. If this is the case, schools will work with parents/carers and the child or young person to resolve the issues to support a return to school.

Other absences may be recorded as unauthorised. Schools should record an absence as an unauthorised absence where no satisfactory reason for missing school has been provided.

Unauthorised absence can include:

- Family holidays during term time – these should be recorded as unauthorised unless in exceptional circumstances.
- Absence with parental awareness in specific circumstances - this may be because a parent believes their child will benefit from participation in an alternative activity.
- Occasional absence without parental awareness.
- Longer term absence due to perceived school related issue or wider wellbeing issues.
- Absence relating to pupil substance/alcohol misuse.
- Non-attendance during the examination period when pupil does not have an external exam.

6. Representing Orkney

If children and young people are involved in an activity that means that they need time off school, for example representing Orkney in a sporting event or participating in activities that support wider achievement and enhance their curricular experience, the school will give consideration to the impact of this absence on the child or young person's learning when making a decision as to whether or not this is authorised. In doing so, the school recognises the value of wider achievement opportunities in supporting personal development, skills for learning, life and work, and enriching the

curriculum. Authorisation will usually only be considered where the child or young person's attendance is above 90%.

7. Identifying and supporting children and young people who are vulnerable to low attendance:

Some children and young people will face barriers to attendance and engagement that require targeted intervention and support in addition to universal approaches that a school has in place. Poor attendance often signals underlying needs and challenges. This could include a combination of factors arising from poverty, unmet needs, challenges in the learning environment, difficulties in peer or staff relationships, issues at home or in the community, or mental health difficulties, including anxiety. (See risk factors below)

Additional support needs / disability

Children and young people with additional support needs may face barriers to their attendance and engagement. In addition, children and young people who are struggling to attend or are disengaged may be more likely to require additional support to overcome barriers to their learning. Providing additional support may help children and young people to engage more fully with school and support them to attend regularly. Schools should use their staged intervention processes and work with relevant multi-agency partners to ensure that any barriers to learning are identified, and appropriate support is provided and reviewed regularly.

Impacted by poverty

Poverty can significantly impact school attendance and engagement. Children and young people affected by poverty may face barriers to accessing essentials such as food, clothing, and digital resources, alongside emotional pressures and family responsibilities. These challenges can lead to disrupted learning, lower participation, and reduced attainment and achievement.

In Orkney, we recognise and respond to poverty-related barriers, considering their interconnections and work sensitively with children and young people, parents and partners to help mitigate their impact.

Children and young people who have been excluded

Children and young people who have experienced exclusion may be more at risk of low attendance following this. Being excluded from school is correlated with poor mental and physical health, substance abuse, antisocial behaviour, crime, low academic achievement and post-education with unemployment and homelessness. It is also important to recognise that some children and young people may be more at risk of exclusion. This may include children and young people who have an additional support need, are care experienced and those impacted by poverty. Exclusion from school should only be used as a last resort and should be a proportionate response where there is no alternative. Safeguarding and wellbeing should be prioritised for any child or young person who has been excluded or has low attendance. It is important that a child or young person's views and those of their parents are taken into account.

Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP)

Under the 2004 Act, children and young people who are care-experienced are presumed to have an additional support need, unless an assessment concludes otherwise. Schools should support Care-experienced children and young people to participate fully at school and, working with relevant multi-agency partners, take action to address particular barriers to attendance that these children and young people may face. This should be considered within the context of responsibilities and actions to Keep the Promise

Other reasons for absence

Children and young people may be absent from school for a number of reasons. It is important to understand the individual circumstances of children/ young people who are not managing to attend school and use the GIRFEC framework to ensure that barriers to learning and attendance are identified and appropriate support provided. Barriers to maximising school attendance can be grouped under four categories as outlined below. It is important to note that for some children and young people they may experience several barriers across categories which makes attending school very challenging.

Risk factors

Individual	Peer/Social	Family	School/Classroom
Self-esteem, social skills, social confidence. Struggling with learning or specific lessons. A learning need or Additional Support Need. Adverse Childhood Experiences Social emotional and behavioural needs Health.	Conflict with, or fear of another child or young person. Social isolation. Bullying and/or perceived bullying. Lack of belonging or connectiveness. Issues relating to social media.	Parent mental health. Being a young carer. Migrant and immigrant status. Financial factors. Family challenges. Low belief in value of education.	Social and emotional needs and concerns relating to mental health and anxiety about school. Difficult relationship with teacher or perceived support from teacher. Curriculum and Teaching and Learning. Classroom management. Transition difficulties.

8. Managing Absence

Registration

All education services are required to keep an attendance record of all their pupils on SEEMiS (Orkney Island Council Information Management System). Recording of attendance should take place at least twice a day to enable the school to note attendance and absence of children and young people for each morning and

afternoon session. Secondary schools however, should monitor attendance in every lesson. This can provide useful information to help monitor and manage absences effectively and support identification of developing patterns of absence to inform strategic intervention where necessary. It can also be helpful in identifying and supporting children and young people who are present in school but are not attending classes. (See section 12 and refer to SEEMiS codes guidance for appropriate coding)

Absence information should be used to inform immediate follow-up action as part of safeguarding responsibilities.

Recording Lateness

Benefits of punctuality in the context of school attendance should be communicated with pupils and parents as part of the school developing a positive culture of promoting attendance. Late coming can be an early indicator of future declining attendance or a barrier to attending therefore should be tracked as part of universal attendance monitoring.

When a child or young person arrives late, this should be noted and added to SEEMiS, (as per SEEMiS codes guidance). On occasions where a child or young person is late to arrive due to issues with school transport provision (e.g. transport break down) then the children and young people will be marked as present as long as they arrive in school and will not be marked as late on these occasions.

A record should be kept of late arrivals and early departures and these situations should be dealt with through the school's normal procedures for managing attendance. In circumstances where a pattern of lateness is emerging each case should be looked at on its own merit however, further intervention is likely to be required as an early intervention to support attendance:

- explain the concerns and procedure in relation to patterns of lateness and agree a way forward with the pupil and their parent(s)
- using the GIRFEC framework to establish the reasons for persistent lateness and plan for supports.

Reporting an Absence

Parents/carers must follow the school's procedures for reporting an absence by the agreed time on the first day of absence. This will be within half an hour of the close of registration and will vary from school to school.

If a child or young person has an infection or symptoms that require them to be off for a set amount of time in accordance with preventing and controlling infection, parents/carers are asked to make the school aware of this. Nurseries should refer to Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings

Alternatively, parents/carers are asked to report the absence every day.

It is important that parents/carers remain in regular contact with the school for any prolonged period of illness. Schools have a legal obligation to know where pupils are at all times when they should be in school. There may be exceptions, e.g. prolonged

periods of ill health, but parents/carers should have a dialogue with the school on these occasions so plans can be made to support children and young people.

If Absences are not Reports

If schools have not received notification of an absence before the agreed time (within half an hour of the close of registration), the absence should be recorded as an unauthorised absence until an explanation is received.

Parents/carers will be contacted through the agreed procedures involving texting/phoning no later than half an hour after registration has closed.

If parents/carers cannot be contacted, then schools/nurseries will move to contacting the child's/young person's emergency contacts and, if they are known to Social Work, they will be notified too before 11:00. This is to ensure the safety of our children and young people.

If contact cannot be made with either the parents/carers or the emergency contacts by 11:00 am, schools will contact Police Scotland to carry out a welfare check and inform the Education Service.

9. Monitoring Attendance

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance data should be monitored and reviewed as a minimum fortnightly to detect short but frequent absences and identify any emerging issues. This allows schools to work with individual children and young people and their parents/carers to support improvement in attendance and quickly remove barriers to attending or, put in intervention where required in a timely manner.

Attendance data should be used to:

- Monitor the attendance of all pupils as well as placing a specific focus on groups of the most vulnerable children and young people (e.g. those who are Care Experienced, have Additional Support Needs and/or Disability, young carers, impacted by poverty).
- Target interventions required for specific individuals and groups of children and young people.
- Set and monitor annual attendance targets.
- Continually review performance in relation to attendance.

If a child has 90% attendance, they will have the equivalent of:

- ½ a day off per week.
- 19 days off per year; almost 4 weeks.
- 247 days off over their school career of 13 academic years, equivalent to over 1 year of lost education.

10. Responding to Absences

Taking Action

Where attendance drops **below 93% in Secondary and 95% in Primary**, schools will scrutinise absences closely and work in partnership with families on improving the attendance of the child or young person. In a small number of cases, there may be a clear reason for the fall in attendance e.g. significant long-term illness, the family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative, and where this information is known to the school, they will take a proportionate response.

However, there may be occasions when a child or young person's absence is unexplained or there are gaps in their attendance record that the school is unable to account for. In these circumstances, the school should take prompt action to establish the reason for the absence and ensure the child or young person is safe and supported.

In the first instance, schools should contact parents or carers to discuss the attendance concern. This may be through a telephone call, the school's usual communication channels, an invitation to meet with school staff or a written letter. Schools should use the method of communication most likely to be effective for the individual family, recognising that staff will have an understanding of the family's circumstances and preferred means of communication. Schools may use a combination of these approaches, depending on the circumstances and the level of concern. The aim is to understand and address any barriers to attendance as early as possible.

School staff must demonstrate that they are committed to resolving attendance concerns and working in partnership with parents and carers. Where appropriate, this may also involve working with relevant services and partners through a multi-agency approach to support the child or young person's attendance and wellbeing.

The staged intervention process should be used when responding to attendance concerns at each level. Further information is provided below.

11. Staged Intervention

Early intervention

Attendance concerns are noted and monitored at an early stage with advice and support being provided to children, young people and their families at the earliest opportunity to avoid any difficulties becoming engrained. Educational attendance research tells us that **persistent absence (90%, or below)** means attainment is already impacted. In Orkney, when a child or young person's attendance drops **below 93% in Secondary and 95% in Primary** intervention should be triggered unless illness or family holidays have been recorded. This early intervention is intended to identify and address any emerging barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity, helping to prevent concerns from escalating and attendance declining further.

A whole school approach

Attendance must be a whole school priority (responsibility of all). All adults understand that everyday interactions with children and young people can promote wellbeing and a sense of belonging and connectedness.

Collaborative Working

Collaborative working with children, young people, parent/carers, staff and partners promotes better understanding and assessment of needs to identify and implement appropriate supports. Staff should promote open communication with parents and carers to enable them to share difficulties around their child's attendance.

Pupil voice

In line with UNCRC and good practice generally, pupils should be encouraged to express their views in a meaningful way around the obstacles to attendance and potential solutions.

Supportive Approach

Approaches are supportive rather than punitive. Re-engagement and planning for catching up on lost learning is always prioritised. Where there has been illness or long-term absence, enhanced support should be offered to support children and young people to re-engage.

Solution focused approach

In addressing barriers to attendance, it may be appropriate to collaborate with the child/young person, their family, or carers to explore temporary or longer-term changes to the demands being experienced.

Staged intervention to promote attendance

Staged intervention to promote attendance and reduce absence is supplementary to staged interventions which address other additional support needs.

- **Universal**: Preventative - at class/school level.
- Additional: Low level intervention - targeted to individual needs but may still happen within universal settings or may require withdrawal from class/setting.
- **Enhanced**: Highly individualised targeted support - may be multi-service e.g. support from outreach, EPS, inclusion team, CLD for learner, Social Work…
- **Intensive**: Higher level of support - may include alternative provision or multi-agency support e.g. from health, social work, police, inclusion team etc...

Universal School based adaptations and differentiation When attendance is a concern and is below **95% in primary and 93% in secondary but above 85%**	
Who is responsible?	Universal assessment is the responsibility of practitioners and may also involve pastoral support depending on the setting.
Universal Assessment, Support and Planning	• Explore children and young people's views of school, identifying barriers to engagement, any emotional wellbeing concerns, or triggers for anxiety. Gathering children and young people's views should be seen as a process, completed with a trusted adult who can provide support. Consider prompt questions below. • Guidance teacher/ class teacher / key adult will have lead role in identifying barriers within the school, classroom, and social environment. • At the Universal level the CIRCLE Inclusive Classroom Scale should be considered as part of this assessment and intervention process. • 'Push-pulls' factors should be considered in 4 categories of: school/classroom, peer/social, family, or individual needs (as per section 7). Together, this information will form the basis of planning and reviewing how a child / young person's needs are met. • Discussion with parents regarding attendance and any concerns including emotional wellbeing should inform planning. Information should be gathered from any other involved partners. • Relevant information shared with family where appropriate - understanding and managing anxiety. - evening and morning routines. - promoting wellbeing. - signpost parents to support available through Parent Club. • Appropriate planning in place for all transitions between stages for pupils, as appropriate. • Support options will be explored and monitored for effectiveness, may not require individual intervention but joining existing supports within school. • Interventions may include breakfast club, soft start, time out card, alternative break, lunch plans... Consider how attendance data is shared with parents and carers in a timely, supportive way. Fortnightly monitoring through SEEMiS would be the minimum but would need to be monitored more closely where there are concerns.
Prompt Questions	What is the reason of the absence? What are the barriers to attendance? Are there patterns in attendance / period truancy? Are there any identified triggers to non-attendance? Can action be taken to minimise triggers? How is the child / young person coping with the curriculum? Who would be a key adult for the child / young person?

Additional School based adaptations and differentiation Concerns are increasing, despite engagement with families and attendance drops **below 85% but above 75%**	
Who is responsible?	Additional assessment is the combined responsibility of practitioners, pastoral support and middle/ senior leaders depending on the setting
Universal Assessment, Support and Planning	• Evaluate effectiveness of actions taken so far to address concerns with pupil and parent/carer. • Additional supports should be in place to help to address patterns of non-attendance emerging, schools must act quickly to support children, young people and their families. • Identify key link person in school. This should be an adult with whom the learner has an existing positive relationship. (This would normally be the class/guidance teacher.) • Consider using School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS) to better understand function of non-attendance – pupil and parent version aids triangulation. Signpost parents to this for further support to the School Avoidance Alliance. • Consider using CIRCLE School Participation Scale, School Experience Contextual Assessment Tool (with upper primary or secondary pupils), to help understand barriers to attendance. All potential push-pulls should be considered as per section 7. • Seek parent/carers understanding of their role in supporting attendance and any support they may need • An Individual Learning Plan should be developed (in the absence of a child's plan) with the child/young person, parents/ carers and partners. Plan shared with relevant staff and reviewed. • Consider consultation with link educational psychologist and/or partner agencies for advice Consultation from partner agencies is recommended in line with the principle of early intervention. Consideration should be given to existing relationships and how to use these effectively to avoid introducing too many new people to a child or young person. • If partner services/agencies are to be involved, hold a child's plan meeting. The child's plan meeting should: - Discuss and agree understanding of barriers to attendance and function of non-attendance. - Agree a shared long-term goal and short-term targets. - Agree supports/interventions which address barriers and functions of non-attendance. - Agree support to be provided by relevant partners. - Consider is social work should be involved. - Regularly review and evaluate the plan including the barriers to attendance, function of attendance, goals/targets and effectiveness of the interventions.

	• Regularly review and evaluate Child/Young Person's Plan. Part of this should be reviewing the barriers to attendance and the function of attendance as well as the goal and supports tried. Continue to share attendance data with parents / carers and monitor weekly.
Prompt Questions	What are the child's/young person's strengths, interests and aspirations? When do things go well? What makes the difference? Are there health concerns? Should school liaise with school nurse? Are there specific barriers that need to be worked on and how can these be addressed? How does the family model positive coping skills? Are family supports required? What supports would the family engage with?

Enhanced Highly individualised support, including multi-agency. When attendance does not improve and falls **75% but above 60%**	
Who is responsible?	Enhanced assessment is the combined responsibility of practitioners, pastoral support and senior leaders but may also involve other agencies/services.
Universal Assessment, Support and Planning	• Expectation that a Child Plan is in place, reviewed and evaluated every 4-6 weeks. This should involve: - Continuing to review the barriers to attendance and the function of non-attendance, as this may have changed over time. - Ensuring these barriers are addressed and supports fit with the function of non-attendance to meet the individual's needs. - Considering support needed in school, at home and for parents and who is best placed to provide this. - Consider a referral to other agencies for support. • A key adult will continue to engage with the pupil to help them express their views and support them to be at the centre of the planning and review process. This should not only focus on school but more broadly encourage views regarding interests, goals, and strengths. • School will continue to have an overview of pupil's needs and responsibility for the school's role in the agreed plan. Assessment at this level will be collaborative and may draw on specialised assessments from partners. • Consider whether information should be shared with GP/CAMHS, with child/young person's/parental permission. • Consideration of appropriate interventions or supports using a creative, individualised approach. This may include the use of alternative curricular activities, involving partner agencies in supporting the child / young person and/or family, group interventions and considering alternative locations. • If the child/young person is on a part-time timetable, (see section 12) ensure that this is regularly reviewed. Part-time timetables require careful consideration and should not be used as a standalone intervention for attendance difficulties. • A referral to Social Work will be made unless there are documented and evidenced reasons why this would not be appropriate. (E.G health) • Consider a referral to the Children's Reporter (see section 18).
Prompt Questions	• Is educational progress being made? If so where, when, with whom….? • Are targets and supports addressing wellbeing? • Are there small achievable targets agreed and regularly reviewed? • Are there opportunities for progressing integration through small groups or split placements (attending some classes with some time in an alternative space)? • To what extent are social and community links being maintained? How can this be improved / built on? • Are supports effective? Are they being implemented appropriately and everywhere? Is the support consistent?

Intensive Highly individualised support and adaptations over a prolonged period, may include alternative placement or curriculum When attendance does not improve and falls below **60%** and there are multiple and complex needs requiring multiagency assessment and intervention	
Who is responsible?	Intensive assessment is the responsibility of the agencies involved. The named person is responsible for coordination of supports.
Universal Assessment, Support and Planning	• Multi-agency assessment/intervention should be integrated to support holistic understanding of needs. • Ongoing and regular re-assessment of the barriers to attendance, the function of non-attendance and the effectiveness of interventions. • Where the plan has been implemented and reviewed, and attendance and engagement continue to deteriorate then consideration may need to be given to more intensive supports. This may include: - An individualised timetable - Access to an alternative location - Alternative placement may be considered - Community based support - Work experience - Structured graded exposure plan in cases of emotionally based absence / school-related anxiety • Individualised planning continues to focus on addressing needs and includes a focus on: - Maintaining key relationships and ensuring these key people are provided with the support they need. - Continuing to review barriers of attendance and function of non-attendance. - Planning may need to focus on short term, manageable goals but with awareness of how these contribute to longer term goals. • Consider whether a CSP is required. • Wellbeing/welfare checks in order that the young person is seen at least weekly. • Consider a referral to the Children's Reporter (see section 18)
Prompt Questions	• Are planned supports appropriate and effective? Are there issues with implementing the supports? • Is education the priority or is health and wellbeing? Are the targets/supports also addressing wellbeing needs? • Have the views of the child/young person been properly considered? Are goals meaningful to the learner/parent/carer? • Do targets need to be made smaller and more achievable? Are they reviewed regularly enough?

	• Are key relationships being maintaining/strengthened? Are there opportunities to further/accelerate integration back into school? Or could wellbeing/learning goals be better met in a different context (e.g. community setting?) • Are social and community links being built/maintained/strengthened?

12. Personalised Approaches

Children and Young People Unable to Attend School Due to Prolonged Ill Health

For some children and young people, their learning is interrupted due to prolonged ill health. This can be for a single block of time or for a number of episodes. During this time schools should maintain contact with children/young people and parents and make arrangements to support access to appropriate learning opportunities. These arrangements may include the provision of curricular work and/or remote teaching.

The main emphasis during the initial period of absence should be on the child or young person's recovery and wellbeing. Class teachers in primary and guidance in secondary have responsibility for maintaining an overview of the learning and support required during this period and for working with the child or young person, their family and relevant colleagues to support continued engagement with education where appropriate. Wherever possible, absence due to ill health should not lead to a reduction in educational provision that could have a detrimental effect on the child or young person's progress.

A child/ young person absent from school through ill health may receive treatment in a variety of settings. In some cases, this may mean that the child/ young person travels to a hospital which is located beyond Orkney. Education may be provided in any of these settings and the responsibility for doing so remains with the child/ young person's school.

Within the GIRFEC framework, the Named Person has a key role for maintaining communication with parents and carers and the child/ young person. It is paramount that they identify what kind of work the child/ young person can manage, in what format the work needs to be presented and what kind of contact the child/ young person needs with school – both in terms of academic support and social support from peers. They will also work with appropriate professionals to help facilitate the child/ young person's return to school, which may take place on a phased basis over a period of time, and what supports will be required once they are back in school.

Part-time Timetables Involving Reduced Learning Hours

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to implement a package of support that can only be achieved using a part-time timetable. A part-time timetable must be time limited with the intention of being a planned strategy which has as its principal purpose the successful, steady and incremental re-integration and inclusion of the child/ young person into full-time education.

It is expected that a reduction in learning hours is only considered as a reasonable measure in exceptional circumstances and where there is clear evidence that it is a necessary, proportionate and supportive intervention. The school remains fully responsible for the child or young person's education during this period.

For further guidance, refer to 'Policy and on Home Education, Flexi-Schooling and Part-Time Timetables / Reduced Learning Hours'

Positive approaches to alternative arrangements and adapted timetables

Attendance can encompass a range of educational activities that are arranged and agreed by the school. These activities may take place within the school or in another setting, and together they comprise a child or young person's full-time education.

An alternative timetable is a medium to long term timetable which is significantly different to that accessed by the majority of pupils. This may often involve a significant proportion of time engaging in planned educational activities which are not based in mainstream classes or a school building.

Alternative timetables are useful to consider in circumstances where engagement and motivation are significant obstacles to progression and alternative pathways based on the child/ young person's interests and targeted skill development, will build on a pupil's strengths; they are often linked to plans for post school destinations.

Alternative timetables should be designed and agreed through collaborative planning with the young person / family and should always aim to be as close to full time as is possible.

Monitoring Attendance at Another Provision

Where a child or young person attends an alternative, off-site or other educational provision, arrangements should be in place to ensure that their attendance is monitored and recorded on SEEMiS appropriately and timely.

While the school remains responsible for recording attendance on SEEMiS, the receiving provision, such as UHI Orkney or the Support for Learning and Inclusion Team, is responsible for informing the school of attendance and non-attendance to enable accurate and timely recording.

The school, in partnership with the receiving provision and relevant services, should maintain clear communication regarding attendance, engagement and any concerns that arise. Clear processes should be in place to ensure attendance information is shared promptly, and any unexplained absence is followed up without delay.

The school retains an important role in monitoring the child or young person's overall educational engagement and should ensure that any unexplained or concerning absence is followed up promptly. Where attendance difficulties arise, the school and partner provision should work collaboratively with the child or young person, their parents or carers and, where appropriate, other relevant agencies to identify and address any barriers to attendance and ensure that the child or young person continues to receive appropriate support and access to their education.

In School but not in Class

Children and young people may be recorded as attending school but fail to attend individual lessons or scheduled learning activities or spend periods of time unsupervised within the school. SEEMiS must be updated to reflect missed learning and actions must be taken immediately as this may be an early indication of disengagement or wider barriers to attendance. Schools should monitor patterns of missed classes and follow up concerns promptly, working in partnership with the child or young person, parents and carers and where appropriate, relevant partners and services.

Schools should maintain clear and consistent expectations that all scheduled classes should be attended, while seeking to understand and address the reasons for any non-attendance. This may include anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance, additional support needs, sensory overload, difficulties engaging with learning or other issues affecting the child or young person. Support should be proportionate, individualised and aligned with existing staged intervention processes and any agreed arrangements within an Individual Learning Plan or Child's Plan.

Where non-attendance at scheduled classes persists despite appropriate support, schools should review the strategies in place and consider escalation through staged intervention procedures, in partnership with parents and carers and other relevant services.

13. Safeguarding

Consistent and vigilant school-based processes are essential for safeguarding all children and young people. Follow-up action by alerting the parent must be taken following any identification of a pupil not in school without their parent's knowledge.

Child Protection procedures should be taken forward as required.

If the child/ young person has an allocated Social Worker, they should always be alerted to any unexplained absence.

Social Work must be notified immediately by telephone of the absence of any child who is on the Child Protection Register.

If a child or young person is looked after at home or away from home a monthly update of attendance should be shared with the named Social Worker.

If contact cannot be made with either the parents/carers or the emergency contacts by 11:00, names will be given to the Education Service, who will pass on the concern to Police Scotland so that a welfare check can be carried out.

14. Children or Young People Missing from Education

There are some circumstances in which a child or young person will be considered to be missing from education. This differs from children and young people who are persistently absent where the reason for the absence is usually known and includes:

- children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere, for example, at home, privately or at an alternative provision
- children and young people who are enrolled at a school but have not attended for a period of time. Typically, this will be if they have been absent for up to four weeks. However, this will be substantially less where there are welfare concerns.

The most important factor for any missing child is safety. Should there be any concern that the child may be at risk, it is essential that child protection procedures are followed. If the child has an allocated Social Worker, they should always be alerted to any unexplained absence. When a child/ young person leaves their school to enroll at another Scottish local authority school, an independent school, or a school out with Scotland, contact should be made with the new school to arrange a handover the child/ young person's information.

Information about children missing from education, the actions that can be taken to locate them, and the role of the Children Missing from Education (Scotland) Service is available from the Scottish Government's website at Children missing from education

15. Quality Assurance

The Education, Communities and Housing (ECH) Directorate Management Team Quality Assurance Calendar will include regular reporting by Headteachers to the Service Manager. This reporting will be completed through the tracking toolkits and aligned with the submission dates for predicted Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) data.

School attendance reports to include actions and impact for whole cohort and specific groups, including Free School Meals and Care Experienced Children and Young People. These will allow Service Managers to identify Orkney wide challenges and opportunities, ensuring additional resources are allocated efficiently and effectively.

Authority totals and individual school attendance percentages will also be monitored by the Education Service team fortnightly.

Progress will be reported to elected members annually.

16. Early learning and childcare settings (including nurseries and childminders)

Early Learning and Childcare is non-statutory, and a parent may choose how many hours their child will attend nursery up to the maximum of 1140 hours per year. All nursery settings in Orkney offer morning, lunch and afternoon sessions and some settings also offer extended days and year-round provision. Settings should work with parents to ensure that the nursery offer meets family childcare needs and is offered as flexibly as possible within the childcare model at the setting. This might include increasing the number of sessions through the year or offering a split placement between a nursery and a childminder. Nurseries should ensure that they do not restrict a child's access to statutory nursery provision by limiting the number of sessions a child can attend.

Parents/carers should let their setting know if their child is not going to attend nursery for one of their expected sessions. Parents/carers should do this by contacting the setting before their child is due to attend that day. After the initial phone call/contact, parents do not need to contact the setting daily unless there is a change in circumstances. If a child is poorly, parents/carers should also ensure that they follow any exclusion periods for childhood illnesses (for example, sick bugs), as per section 8 above.

The Strynd Nursery also offers non-statutory childcare for under threes. Although this is not part of the funded offer of early learning and childcare, the setting do need to know if a child who is due to attend is not attending that day for any reason.

Settings will contact parents/carers the same day if they have not heard from them to check if all is well. If a child is not back when expected, for example, from a holiday, the setting will contact parents/carers to establish when the child will return.

If families are working with other services, the setting may work with them and the family to support the child's attendance at nursery. The early learning and childcare service would try to support parents/carers with any barriers to attendance.

If there are concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, Child Protection procedures must be followed. If a child stops attending their early years setting on a regular basis without explanation or prior notification, nursery headteacher/managers have a responsibility to investigate the reason for the child's non-attendance. If the nursery manager is concerned about a child's wellbeing, then they will contact Social Work or the Police Scotland.

17. Post 16

There is no statutory requirement for young people to continue their education at school once they reach the age of 16 years. Young people, who choose to stay on at school beyond school leaving age, and their parents, should be strongly encouraged to consider their continued commitment to maximising their school attendance.

Attendance should be monitored and reviewed regularly in line with the Staged Intervention Model and where appropriate through engagement in the GIRFEC framework. Their curriculum should support them to work toward their next step beyond school.

All young people entering S5 and S6 sign a Learner Agreement confirming they will attend school and all timetabled classes, being punctual at all times. Young people who break this agreement, demonstrating a lack of commitment to their studies and school, will meet with the relevant senior leader to discuss the suitability of their current educational provision. Clear targets will be established and monitored.

18. Measures for ensuring compliance

Attendance Order

Where the Education Authority considers that a reasonable excuse for a child or young person's absence has not been provided, it has a duty under Section 36 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to require the parent to attend a meeting to explain

the non-attendance. This meeting will take place no earlier than two days and no later than seven days following notification to the parent.

Where the parent is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for the absence, the Education Authority may:

- Issue a warning and defer a decision on further action for a period of up to six weeks;
- Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal;
- Initiate prosecution proceedings through the Sheriff Court.

Where a decision is deferred and the child or young person is of school age, the Education Authority may issue an Attendance Order requiring the parent to ensure the child or young person attends the school named in the Order.

Where concerns indicate that the child or young person may require compulsory measures of supervision, consideration may also be given to a referral to the Children's Reporter following discussion with relevant agencies.

Referral to the Children's Reporter

Before deciding to refer to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) a complete and thorough assessment engaging with the child/ young person, parent and partners through the GIRFEC planning framework will have taken place to ensure all support options and interventions have been exhausted.

Referrals to the Children's Reporter should only be considered after full discussion with relevant agencies, including Social Work, and where it is assessed that the child or young person may be at risk and in need of compulsory measures of supervision. Multi-agency assessment and collaboration will normally inform any referral to the Children's Reporter; however, there may be circumstances where a single-agency referral is considered necessary and appropriate. Where a referral is made, consideration should be given to whether the child or young person may require compulsory measures of supervision. This may result in the child or young person attending a Children's Hearing and being made subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order, which could include a condition relating to attendance at a named school.

Non-attendance at school without reasonable excuse is not a standalone ground for referral to the Children's Reporter.

19. References

Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools

Putting children and young people's views at the centre | Improving attendance in Scotland | Resources | Education Scotland

Exemplification of staged intervention for attendance | Development of plans, policies and guidance | Improving attendance in Scotland | Resources | Education Scotland

School Avoidance 101 - School Avoidance Alliance

Parentzone Scotland | Education Scotland

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) - gov.scot

UN Convention on Rights of a Child (UNCRC) - UNICEF UK

The Promise Scotland | Transforming how Scotland cares for children, families, and care-experienced adults

Children missing from education (Scotland): guidance for local authorities - gov.scot

Exemplification of staged intervention for attendance | Development of plans, policies and guidance | Improving attendance in Scotland | Resources | Education Scotland

Responding to Behaviour in Schools Guidance

Education (Scotland) Act 1980

Appendix 2

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a proposal or changes by anticipating the consequences and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

Should you have any questions or wish for your draft EqIA to be reviewed by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, please contact OD@orkney.gov.uk.

1. Identification of the Proposal or Change	
Name of proposal or change being assessed.	Policy for Tracking and Monitoring Attendance in Schools.
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Education, Communities and Housing.
Date of assessment.	17.08.26.
Is the proposal or change existing? (Please indicate if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Updated policy in line with new government guidance.

2. Primary Information	
What are the intended outcomes of the proposal or change?	The intended outcomes of this policy are to improve attendance, reduce persistent absence and promote greater equity in educational outcomes. It aims to ensure that attendance concerns are identified and addressed at an early stage through a consistent, nurturing and collaborative approach that understands and removes barriers to attendance. Through effective partnership working with children, young people, families, schools and partners, the policy will support improved engagement, wellbeing, attainment and positive destinations for all learners.
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	No.
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	The policy will affect all children and young people, their parents/carers, school staff, Local Authority staff and partner agencies. While the policy applies universally, some

	groups may be disproportionately affected by barriers to attendance, including children and young people experiencing poverty, those with additional support needs, health or wellbeing needs, caring responsibilities, or other vulnerabilities. The policy therefore promotes an equitable, nurturing and individualised approach, with early identification of barriers and appropriate support to improve attendance and reduce inequalities in educational outcomes.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	Ther attendance working group have been involved – this includes headteachers from a range of schools, the Education Scotland attainment advisor and members of CLD. Further consultation has included, service managers, parents council, headteachers, children and young people and Unions.
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking.	There is significant national evidence demonstrating that attendance is an equity issue. Scottish Government attendance data shows lower attendance among children and young people with additional support needs, those living in areas of greater deprivation and care-experienced children and young people. Education Scotland and Scottish Government research also identifies poverty, ASN, care experience, exclusion, secondary age as factors that can increase vulnerability to low attendance. This evidence indicates that a universal approach to attendance needs to be balanced with an understanding of individual circumstances and barriers. This updated policy therefore promotes early identification, partnership working and appropriate support, ensuring that interventions do not disproportionately disadvantage particular groups. Local attendance data and feedback from children, young people, families and schools will be used to monitor the impact of the policy and identify any emerging inequalities. *Reference: Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: Improving Attendance in Scotland's Schools*
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise.	Research by Education Scotland identifies poverty as a factor that can increase vulnerability to non-attendance. Children and young people experiencing poverty may face a range of barriers, including difficulties accessing food, clothing and digital

E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	resources, family pressures and responsibilities, and challenges affecting wellbeing and engagement. These factors can contribute to disrupted learning and reduced attainment. Research also demonstrates that socio-economic circumstances are associated with different forms of school absence. This evidence highlights the importance of understanding the underlying reasons for absence and avoiding approaches which may disproportionately disadvantage children and young people experiencing poverty. This updated policy supports an equitable, early-intervention approach which identifies and addresses barriers to attendance, works in partnership with families and relevant services, and ensures that attendance improvement strategies do not inadvertently increase inequalities. Local attendance data will be analysed by available measures of socio-economic disadvantage, such as SIMD, free school meal entitlement and, where appropriate, other local indicators of poverty.
Could the proposal or change have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons:
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	The policy applies equally to all children and young people, however, we recognise that it may have potential differential impact on children and young people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. National attendance data does not currently indicate a significant negative attendance pattern for minority ethnic groups; however, differences in cultural practices, language, family circumstances and experiences of racism or discrimination may affect individual children's attendance and engagement.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	The policy applies equally to all children and young people. However, we recognise that it may have potential differential impact on children and young people of different genders.

	Pattern varies by sector, with female pupils having slightly higher attendance in primary schools and male pupils having higher attendance in secondary schools. Attendance data will be monitored by sex, where appropriate, to identify any emerging differential impact and inform future review of the policy.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	The policy applies equally to all children and young people, however, it may have potential differential impact on children and young people based on sexual orientation. There is limited data available on attendance rates by sexual orientation, as sexual orientation is not collected through the Scottish Pupil Census. However, national evidence identifies that LGBT young people may experience bullying, discrimination, exclusion and poorer wellbeing, which can contribute to absenteeism, disengagement and poorer educational outcomes. The updated policy promotes an individualised and supportive approach to attendance, ensuring that underlying barriers are explored rather than attendance concerns being addressed solely through thresholds or sanctions. Schools should consider whether bullying, discrimination, relationships, wellbeing or a lack of inclusion may be contributing to absence and ensure that appropriate support is provided.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	The policy applies equally to all children and young people, however, it may have potential differential impact on children and young people based on Gender Reassignment. The Equality Act 2010 protects people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment. Importantly, this does not require a person to have undergone medical treatment; it can include a personal process such as changing name or pronouns. There is limited direct data available on attendance rates for transgender pupils; however, Scottish evidence identifies significant levels of bullying, discrimination and negative educational experiences among transgender young people. These

	experiences may affect wellbeing, engagement and willingness or ability to attend school. This policy therefore promotes an individualised and supportive approach which considers the underlying reasons for absence. Schools should consider whether bullying, discrimination, concerns about safety, wellbeing or the learning environment may be contributing to attendance difficulties and ensure that appropriate support is provided.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	No impact has been identified
6. Age: people of different ages.	The policy applies to children and young people of school age. The policy may have a differential impact according to age. National attendance data demonstrates that attendance generally decreases as children and young people progress through school, with attendance significantly lower in secondary than primary education. (This is also the case in Orkney). Older children and young people are therefore more likely to experience persistent absence and may be more significantly affected by attendance interventions. OIC stretch aims for attendance take this difference into account. Primary schools are aiming for attendance of 95% whilst secondaries 93%
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	The policy may have a differential impact on children and young people based on religion or belief, including those with no religion or belief. While there is limited evidence of significant differences in attendance between religious groups, some children and young people may require absence for religious observance. Schools will authorise absence for recognised religious observance in line with the policy and should take account of individual circumstances when responding to attendance concerns. The policy promotes an inclusive and respectful approach, ensuring that children and young people are not disadvantaged because of their religion, belief or lack of belief. Religious discrimination and bullying should be challenged effectively.

8. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	The policy may have a differential impact on children and young people with disabilities. National data shows lower attendance among pupils with additional support needs and disability-related barriers such as health needs, fatigue, anxiety, accessibility and difficulties accessing the learning environment may contribute to absence. The policy promotes an individualised and supportive approach, ensuring that disability-related barriers are considered and reasonable adjustments and appropriate support are put in place. Absence related to a child or young person's disability or health needs should not result in them being unfairly disadvantaged or subject to inappropriate intervention.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No impact has been identified.
10. Caring responsibilities	The policy may have a differential impact on children and young people with caring responsibilities. Caring for a family member may affect a young person's ability to attend school regularly, arrive on time or fully engage in learning. The policy promotes an understanding and supportive approach, ensuring that caring responsibilities are considered when addressing attendance concerns. Schools should work with the young person and their family to identify barriers and provide appropriate support, avoiding approaches that may unfairly disadvantage young carers.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	The policy may have a differential impact on children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. There is clear national evidence of an attendance gap between pupils living in the most and least deprived areas. Poverty can create barriers to regular attendance, including transport difficulties, access to clothing and equipment, family circumstances and wellbeing. The policy promotes an equitable and supportive approach, with schools considering the underlying barriers to attendance and working with children, young people and families to provide appropriate support. The policy avoids approaches that may unfairly disadvantage families experiencing poverty.

12. Care experienced	The policy may have a differential impact on care-experienced children and young people. National evidence shows that care-experienced children and young people have lower attendance rates than the wider pupil population. Factors such as placement changes, disrupted relationships, trauma, wellbeing and changes in education can create barriers to regular attendance. The policy promotes an individualised and supportive approach, ensuring that the circumstances of care-experienced children and young people are considered when addressing attendance concerns. Schools should work with the child or young person, carers and relevant services to identify and address barriers to attendance and ensure they are not unfairly disadvantaged.

3. Impact Assessment	
Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	The analysis identifies potential differential impacts for a number of groups, particularly children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, those with disabilities or additional support needs and care-experienced children and young people. Other groups, including those with caring responsibilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBT and transgender young people, and those with particular religious or belief needs, may also experience barriers to attendance. These impacts will be addressed through an equitable, individualised and supportive approach to attendance. Schools will be expected to consider the underlying reasons for absence, identify and address barriers, make appropriate adjustments and provide early support. The policy emphasises partnership working with children, young people, families and relevant services. Attendance data will be monitored, where appropriate and where numbers allow, to identify any emerging differential impacts and inform future review of the policy.
Does the analysis above identify any potential negative impacts?	Yes.

Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	There is sufficient national evidence and research to assess the potential equality impacts of the policy. However, local attendance data will continue to be monitored and analysed, where appropriate and where numbers allow, to identify any differential impacts across protected and other relevant groups and inform future review of the policy.

4. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete the following action plan where you have identified any differential impacts or potential negative impacts in Section 3 of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
Children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage may face barriers to attendance, and national evidence shows an attendance gap between pupils living in the most and least deprived areas	Ensure schools consider poverty-related barriers when addressing attendance and provide appropriate support, including signposting to relevant services and financial support.	Schools and Education Service	Attendance data monitored by available measures of socio-economic disadvantage; review of attendance interventions and outcomes.	Ongoing review
Children and young people with disabilities/ASN may experience barriers to attendance related to health, accessibility, anxiety, transport or their individual needs.	Ensure attendance concerns consider individual needs and that reasonable adjustments and appropriate support are put in place.	Schools and Education Service	Monitor attendance and intervention data for pupils with ASN/disabilities and review through existing quality assurance processes.	Ongoing review

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
Care-experienced children and young people may experience barriers due to placement changes, disrupted relationships, trauma and changes in education.	Ensure attendance concerns are considered within the context of the child's circumstances and that appropriate multi-agency support is provided.	Schools / Education Service / Relevant partners, agencies	Monitor attendance of care-experienced children and young people and review the impact of interventions.	Ongoing review
Young carers may experience difficulties attending regularly due to caring responsibilities.	Ensure schools identify and consider caring responsibilities when exploring attendance concerns and provide or signpost appropriate support.	Schools / Education Service	Monitor attendance interventions and feedback from young people and families.	Ongoing review
LGBT and transgender children and young people may experience bullying, discrimination or concerns about safety and belonging which could affect attendance	Reinforce the expectation that discrimination and bullying are challenged and ensure underlying wellbeing, safety and inclusion concerns are considered when addressing absence.	Schools / Education Service	Monitor attendance and relevant wellbeing/anti-bullying information; gather learner feedback where appropriate.	Ongoing review
Children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds may experience language barriers, cultural differences or	Ensure individual circumstances, cultural needs and experiences of discrimination are considered when addressing attendance concerns.	Schools / Education Service	Monitor attendance data by ethnicity where numbers allow and review feedback/complaints relating to discrimination.	Ongoing review

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
racism/discrimination which could affect attendance				
Children and young people may require absence for religious observance.	Ensure absence for recognised religious observance is authorised in line with the attendance policy and that religious and non-religious beliefs are respected.	Schools	Monitor application of the policy through attendance recording and quality assurance.	Ongoing review
Older children and young people have lower attendance nationally and may experience age-specific barriers including wellbeing, peer relationships and disengagement.	Ensure interventions are age-appropriate and consider the views and circumstances of the young person when identifying barriers and planning support.	Schools / Education Service	Analyse attendance by age/stage and review intervention outcomes.	Ongoing review
Potential unintended negative impact: applying attendance thresholds or interventions rigidly could disadvantage children and young people experiencing complex circumstances.	Emphasise that attendance data and thresholds should be considered alongside individual circumstances and the reasons for absence.	Schools / Education Service	Review implementation through QA activity, attendance data, complaints, feedback from schools, families and learners.	Ongoing review
A universal attendance policy may have different	Ensure the policy promotes an equitable,	Education Service	Annual review of attendance data; school	Ongoing fortnightly monitoring of data

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
impacts on children and young people depending on their circumstances and protected characteristics.	individualised and supportive approach, with early identification of barriers, appropriate adjustments and partnership working with children, young people and families.		QA; intervention outcomes; feedback from children, young people, families and schools; review of complaints/concerns.	

5. Sign and Date	
Signature:	[redacted]
Name:	Katie Lucas
Date:	28/09/26

Island Communities Impact Assessment

Tracking and Monitoring Attendance in Schools Policy

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	This policy sets out Orkney Islands Council's expectations, procedures and responsibilities for promoting and improving attendance in schools. It aims to support regular attendance, identify barriers to attendance early and ensure appropriate interventions are provided where attendance concerns arise.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	**Response**
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	To promote regular school attendance, reduce persistent absence, improve educational outcomes, clarify roles and responsibilities and ensure a consistent approach across schools
Do you need to consult?	Yes. Consultation with headteachers, school staff, parents/carers, pupils and relevant partners.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	The policy applies to all schools across Orkney, including mainland and outer isles schools.
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	The intended outcomes are to improve attendance, reduce persistent absence and support positive educational outcomes for all children and young people. In island communities, these outcomes may be affected by factors such as transport, ferry/flight disruption, adverse weather, geographical isolation and access to services. The policy will therefore take account of local circumstances and promote a flexible, individualised and supportive approach while maintaining high expectations for attendance.
Is the policy, strategy or service new?	No. This is a review/update of an existing attendance policy.

Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Response
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	School attendance data, persistent absence data, exclusion data, attainment data, school transport records, and local intelligence from schools.
Do you need to consult?	Yes, to understand any local attendance barriers experienced by island communities.
How does any existing data differ between islands?	There may be variations in attendance rates and reasons for absence between mainland and outer isles schools due to geography, transport arrangements and weather-related disruption.
Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?	Flexibility around weather-related absences, transport considerations, digital communication methods and existing school support systems.
Step 3 – Consultation	Response
Who do you need to consult with?	Headteachers, Parent Councils, pupils, Education Service Officers and relevant partners.
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	Consultation has been undertaken during development of the policy through professional discussion and circulation of the draft for feedback. The attendance working group is made up of headteachers, CLD and QIO and attainment advisor. It has been distributed further with parent council chairs and service manages Headteachers have also engaged with their pupil councils were appropriate.
What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	Are there island-specific barriers to attendance? Does transport or weather affect attendance? Are current procedures proportionate and supportive for island families?

What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	Previous feedback has identified weather disruption, transport reliability and access to support services as factors impacting attendance.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	Yes. Consultation includes representatives from island communities and considers island-specific circumstances.
Step 4 – Assessment	Response
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	Some island communities may experience additional barriers due to travel, weather disruption and access to support services.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	Yes. The assessment identifies potential barriers associated with the geography and rural nature of Orkney. These include ferry and air transport availability and disruption, adverse weather, geographical isolation, travel distances, access to health and support services and differences in the availability of local resources. These factors may affect some children and young people's ability to attend school regularly and may be particularly significant for families living on smaller or more remote islands.
How will you address these?	These barriers will be addressed through a flexible and individualised approach to attendance, taking account of the circumstances of island communities. Schools will consider factors such as ferry/flight disruption, adverse weather and transport difficulties when assessing and recording absence. The Policy will provide clarity on how such absences should be recorded in SEEMiS and whether they should be recorded as authorised absence, ensuring that children and young people are not unfairly disadvantaged by circumstances outside their control. Attendance data will be monitored to identify any emerging patterns or differences between island communities.

You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

If your answer is **No** to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and **you can proceed to Step 6**.
If the answer is **Yes**, an ICIA must be prepared and y**ou should proceed to Step 5**.

To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:

- Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?
- Are these different effects likely?
- Are these effects significantly different?
- Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups?

Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	The policy is not likely to have an effect on an island community that is significantly different from its effect on other communities. While some island-specific factors exist, these are already recognised through existing procedures and mitigations and do not create a significantly different impact.
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	

Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response
Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	Limited flexibility may be required to account for weather, transport disruption and access to services in outer isles communities.
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	Consultation has been undertaken as part of policy development.
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	Yes.
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	Monitoring attendance trends by school and geographical area may help identify any unintended impacts.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	Through attendance data, attainment measures, school self-evaluation and stakeholder feedback.
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	No significant adverse impacts are anticipated. The policy aims to improve attendance outcomes consistently across all communities.
How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	Monitoring will inform future reviews and ensure island-specific barriers continue to be considered.
Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA	Response
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	If required
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	No specific requirement identified, although alternative formats can be made available on request.
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	The ICIA should be published alongside the policy and committee papers on the Orkney Islands Council website so that schools, families and other stakeholders can access it. Relevant Education Service communication channels can also be used to signpost the final policy.
Who will sign off your final ICIA and why?	Wendy Bowen, Head of Education, in accordance with Council policy.

ICIA completed by:	Katie Lucas
Position:	QIO (Achievement and Attainment)
Signature:	[redacted]
Date complete:	09 October 2026

ICIA approved by:	Wendy Bowen
Position:	Head of Education
Signature:	[redacted]
Date complete:	21 October 2026