BRISTOL EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Strategies that are effective in reducing unauthorised absence.

The following list of initiatives, strategies and interventions are suggestions about how you might improve attendance either in a whole school, year group, key stage or tutor group. Many of them are in use in Bristol schools and evaluations have shown successful results.

- Ensure your Attendance Policy is up to date and has been reviewed in the last 12 months.

- Audit your attendance practices to ensure you have a whole school approach that is understood by all staff, that is followed daily and that has sufficient impact to make a difference.

- Ensure there is a consistent approach across the school.

- Use an electronic registration system to provide detailed, accurate and up-to-date attendance information

- Provide patterns of non-attendance to tutors and parents during reviews or meetings

- Set individual pupil attendance targets

- First day phone contact to all parents whose child is absent without school's knowledge.

- Plan regular 'blitz' weeks for specific year groups.

- Log pupils movement in and out of school.

- Provide an 'attendance folder' for staff, which incorporates all the necessary information required to comply with the schools arrangements for attendance.

- Provide a laminated information sheet for supply staff so that they are aware of the school's procedures with regard to registration, pupil absence and follow up.

- Invest in training by EWS on marking of registers, monitoring and follow up work.
- Regular workshops for teachers, in liaison with EWS, to discuss attendance issues.

- Make 'attendance' a fixed agenda item on all school meetings.

- Ensure there is regular liaison between tutor (pastoral staff) and subject teachers so that relevant attendance information can be shared.

- Establish supportive re-integration programmes for students who have been out of school for a period of time.

- Run a 'catch up' club for truants to make up the work they missed.

- Display attendance charts in class rooms, year areas, noticeboards as an incentive to combat truancy.

- Weekly newsletter publishing 'league tables' for individual form groups.

- Have attendance competitions between tutor/year groups.

- Run a 'breakfast club' which welcomes pupils in to school and allows them to have something to eat before the start of the day.

- Each half term display the names of all pupils with 90% plus attendance. All names displayed are entered into a prize draw which is held during assembly and the overall winner receives a prize. This could be done in year groups, Key Stage or whole school.(Funding for prizes could come from business sponsorship.

- Recognise and reward success - merits, certificates, treat etc - termly and annually.

- Present termly awards for good attendance - bronze for one term, silver for two terms and gold for three terms. (This could be changed into half terms, months or weeks depending on your requirements.)

- After school activities involving Learning Mentors and SENCO.

- Working with outside agencies (YMCA, Youth Service) to develop attendance projects for targeted year groups.

- Use Learning Mentors to support specific pupils with advice regarding meeting attendance targets

- Regular emphasis on the connection between attendance and attainment.

- Projecting a safer and friendlier image of the school to the community.

- Weekly information to parents whose child's attendance drops below 90%

- Agree individual attendance targets with pupils and their parents – use Individual AttendancePlans & Parenting Contracts

- Send reminders to parents who fail to provide a reason for absence. Constantly review until a reply is received.

- Install a dedicated 'attendance' telephone line which is specifically for parents to inform school of absences.

- Provide pagers to supportive parents of regular non-attenders.

- Interviews in school with parents to challenge unsatisfactory explanations.

- Involve Governors in meetings with parents where a students attendance has fallen below a certain level.

- Introduce a 'buddy' system, where a poor attender is paired with another pupil living close by. 'Buddies' call for the poor attender every day and escort them to school.

- Arrange timetables to ensure favourite activities are placed at critical times with regard to attendance - first thing, end of morning or end of day.

- Review KS4 curriculum - introducing new projects and courses that are vocational or work related for specific Yr 11 students.

- Include attendance and truancy in PHSE modules. Develop an 'I can do it' culture to raise values and standards.

- Make use of college link courses for specific students.

- Develop an 'Attendance Unit' led by a member of school staff and staffed by administration personnel. The aim is to oversee all matters relating to pupil attendance and absence and to promote the importance of good attendance. Also used to deploy a Pupil Support Officer who is pro-active in the community, visits parents, patrols local shops, helps the pastoral team collate information and works closely with the EWO.

- Appoint an Attendance Manager to deal with all attendance issues, including the analysis of data available from the electronic registration system.

- Carry out daily, random, post-registration truancy checks.

- Ensure staff regularly patrol the school building and surrounding areas to ensure pupils are not truanting in the vicinity of the school.

- Ensure attendance is mentioned in the Annual Report to parents.

- Provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance and what to do if your child is absent in the school prospectus. Put reminders in the school newsletter.

- Remind parents in the newsletter about their responsibilities in relation to the home/ school agreement.

- Ensure parents are aware of the guidance regarding holidays in term time - and the impact this can have on their child's overall attendance figure and academic achievement.

- Set up a fantasy 5-a-side Attendance League! This emphasises the use of competitiveness in tackling truancy. Pupils are split into teams. The team with the highest termly attendance wins the league and receives the prize/cup!