

Public Document Pack



EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE TUESDAY, 23 APRIL 2024

A MEETING of the EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS on TUESDAY, 23 APRIL 2024 at 10.00 am. This will be a blended meeting.

All Attendees, including members of the public, should note that the public business in this meeting will be livestreamed and video recorded and that recording will be available thereafter for public view for 180 days .

N. McKINLAY,
Director of Corporate Governance

13 April 2024

BUSINESS		
1.	Welcome and Introductions	
2.	Apologies and Absences	
3.	Order of Business	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
5.	Minute (Pages 3 - 6) Minute of Meeting held on 23 January 2024. (Copy attached.)	5 mins
6.	School Attendance Policy Revision (Pages 7 - 82) Consider report by Director of Education & Children's Services. (Copy attached.)	20 mins
7.	Proposal for the Closure of the Wilton Centre, Princes Street, Hawick (Pages 83 - 124) Consider report by Director – Education & Children's Services. (Copy attached.)	20 mins
8.	School Dogs Policy (Pages 125 - 154) Consider report by Director – Education & Children's Services. (Copy attached.)	20 mins

9.	HMIe Reports - Peebles High School (Pages 155 - 176) (Copies attached.)	30 mins
----	---	---------

NOTES

- 1. Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.**
- 2. Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**

Membership of Committee:- Councillors L. Douglas (Chair), J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, A. Orr, N. Richards, S. Scott, F. Sinclair, A. Smart and C. Ramage

Religious Representatives:- A. Hood and M. Docherty

Teacher Representatives:- N. York and C. Clements

Parent Representatives:- Vacant

Pupil Representatives:- Daniel Newsam (PHS) and Eliza Bevan (BHS)

Please direct any enquiries to Fiona Henderson Tel: 01835 826502 or e-mail: fhenderson@scotborders.gov.uk

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the
EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE held in
Council Chamber and via Microsoft
Teams on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 at
10:00am

- Present: - Councillors L. Douglas (Chair), J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton,
N. Richards, C. Ramage, S. Scott, A. Smart, F. Sinclair, Pam Rigby (Youth
Engagement Worker), M. Docherty (Religious Representatives), A. Hood
(Religious Representative), Eliza Bevan (Pupil Representative), Daniel
Newsam (Pupil Representative), Bruce McDougall (Pupil Representative), C.
Clements, (Teacher Representatives.)
- Apologies: - Councillor A. Orr. N. York (Teacher Representative).
- In Attendance: - Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Chief Education Officer,
Equality Improvement Manager, Senior Lead Officers – Education
(G. Frew, G. McKenzie, J. Bewsey), Democratic Services Officer (F.
Henderson).

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which included members of the Sub-Committee and those watching via the Live Stream, and outlined how the meeting would be conducted.

2. **MINUTES**

There had been circulated copies of the Minutes of the Education Sub Committee held on 5 October 2023 and 24 October 2023.

DECISION

AGREED the Minutes of the 5 October and 24 October for signature by the Chairman.

3. **SCOTTISH BORDERS REVISED ADMISSIONS POLICY**

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, the purpose of which was to seek approval of the revised Admissions Policy (2024) which covered Enrolment to Primary and Secondary Schools; Placement requests; and class sizes and composite classes. The report explained that the Policy responded to and sat within the context of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, along with the associated amendments and guidance for these Acts.
- 3.2 Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended, it was the duty of the Education and Lifelong Learning Service to provide an adequate and efficient school education for all children living within the Scottish Borders Council area. The report highlighted the significant changes to the previous policy.

- 3.4 In response to a question about Families finding an appropriate school when English was not their first language, Ms McKenzie explained where the information could be found and that translation services were available where required.

With reference to paragraph 7.8.5, Councillor Sinclair requested that this be re-worded as it reads as if the child would require to move school.

In response to a question about the creation of composite classes, Ms McKenzie confirmed that it was the sole responsibility of the Headteacher. In terms of composite classes, it was acknowledged that composite classes can cause anxiety amongst parents, however Headteachers take great care in creating composite classes, ensuring that friendship groups were taken into account. Mrs Munro advised that gender balance had been removed from the policy for a number of reasons, one of them being to protect friendship groups. It was acknowledged that communication with parents could be improved with better explanations of what a composite class would look like and the benefits for children within them.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) **Agreed that the wording of para 7.8.5 be amended to read:-**

If during the course of a school session, a family moves house to another catchment area but wish their child to remain at the original school, parents would become liable for any transport costs. Any siblings not already at the school would need to be considered as an out of catchment placement request.

- (a) **the changes to the Policy;**
(b) **that the revised Policy be implemented as of February 2024; and**
(c) **that the Policy be reviewed and updated, if required, by December 2026.**

4. **AYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

In Attendance: - Ms Jill Horsburgh (Headteacher), James Bewsey (Quality Improvement Officer).

- 4.1 The Chairman welcomed the representatives from Ayton Primary School.

HMIE report

- 4.2 There had been circulated copies of a report on His Majesty's Inspector of Education (HMIE) Reports for Ayton Primary School and the Improvement Plan developed by the Headteacher to address the key recommendations. The report explained that Ayton Primary School was inspected using a 'full' inspection model, which means that 4 key quality indicators were inspected in the Primary School over a 5-day period. The HMIE Report evaluated the primary provision as good, across all quality indicators. The evaluation gradings range given by HMIE on school inspections can range from unsatisfactory to excellent. A grading of very good indicated there were major strengths in this aspect of the school's work. Gradings of good indicated there are important strengths with areas for improvement in this aspect of the school's work.

- 4.3 The following areas for improvement identified and discussed with the Headteacher and representatives from Scottish Borders Council a) the very welcoming children and

staff who make Ayton Primary School a happy place to learn. Caring and nurturing relationships between all staff and children ensure children feel safe and engage well in learning b) the Headteacher provided strong leadership for the school community and was driving forward school improvements well. In her short time in post, the positive impact on children's experiences and outcomes was evident c) the recent improvements in digital learning approaches which were leading to children using technology effectively to enhance and extend their learning and d) The positive steps in raising attainment of children across the school, particularly in reading, listening and talking and numeracy.

- 4.4 The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Headteacher and a representative from Scottish Borders Council a) Senior leaders and teachers should continue to improve high quality learning and teaching across the school, which should include increased opportunities for children to lead and review their learning b) develop a robust strategic overview of children's additional support needs across the school. This would ensure all staff were confident in the range of supports used in Ayton Primary School to meet learner's needs and help senior leaders to evidence more clearly the positive impact of the support children receive and c) Senior leaders improve the recording and tracking of data and measure and close gaps in children's learning more effectively.
- 4.5 Ms Horsburgh explained that Ayton Primary School was located in the heart of the village, near to the playing fields, children's play park and the bowling club which was another key part of the village for many residents. Ayton was a village of over 500 residents and the new housing estate which was completed after 2020 had provided housing to younger residents in the local community. Ayton Primary was part of the Eyemouth Learning Community and was one of five a feeder Primary Schools to Eyemouth High School. At the time of the inspections there were seventy children attending the school, organised into 3 composite classes, there was no ELC provision in the school. The Headteacher and the P4/5 Teacher are nurtured trained and the Teachers I P1-3 and P6-& were undertaking nurture training to help support and better meet the needs of children who required bespoke interventions. The school provided the conditions for children to be active and engaged, by tailoring learning to the needs of a range of learners, differentiating appropriately. Children experience a broad range of learning experiences, including regular opportunities to apply learning in different contexts. Visitors to the school would see this clearly through the quality of the teaching and learning and adult interactions supporting the children in their learning. For some children developing a growth mindset was helping them and staff know their children well and work with families to improve outcomes for all. The staff and children were benefitting from being a partner school with nearby Reston Primary School, which was clear from professional development of the teaching staff and entitlements provided.
- 4.6 The staff team were clear about the direction of the school and as a team were committed to move the school forward for their learners and the community. Two of the teachers lived just outside the village and all of the teachers knew what was important and what was needed, and the school was entering an exciting time for change and challenge at a pace. The school would continue to take partners and parents on their journey to move the school from being good to very good.
- 4.7 Although not present, Amy Meek, Parent Council Chair had submitted a statement, in which she explained that it had been a privilege to work alongside the school throughout the inspection and the report from the inspection and the communication

from the Head Teacher was very informative and positive. As a parent from Ayton Primary School it was important that her child felt safe, secure and included when attending the school. It was important that all children had a voice within the school, and the way the information from the report was shared within the school and at home really opened this up for the children and families, who were able to share thoughts and feelings with the school. Looking forward and making plans for the future of the school, children, learning and families would discuss the report at the PFA meeting, which was attended by many members of staff and ensured the PFA support. The school improvement plan had been touched upon at previous meetings, but would be revisited. Overall, the work and support from the school continued to be shown to parents and the communication on all aspects was super. Exciting learning was happening in the school all the time.

- 4.8 Mr Bewsey, Quality Improvement Officer congratulated the Headteacher, who had only been in post just over a year when the inspection took place, for her continued hard work and strong leadership and was confident that the school would continue to move forward at pace.

**DECISION
AGREED: -**

- (a) The School Improvement Plan for Ayton Primary School which addressed areas for improvement as outlined in the HMIE Inspection Report (December 2023).**
- (b) The Quality Improvement Team's plan for support and showcasing of the work of Ayton Primary School following a strong inspection.**

Meeting concluded at 11.15 a.m.



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY REVISION

Report by Director of Education & Children's Services

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

23 April 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report proposes the approval of the revised Scottish Borders Council School Attendance Policy. The current Policy from 2013 required updating to align with national guidance and best practices for promoting school attendance.**
- 1.2 The revised Attendance Policy sets out the positive approaches, partnerships, and expectations to promote engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders schools. It details the procedures for responding to attendance concerns and provides guidance on flexible attendance arrangements to ensure Scottish Borders Council is getting it right for every child. The Policy was developed through extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including school staff, partner agencies, children, young people, and families. It incorporates national legislation, guidance, and research on effective practices for improving school attendance.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Committee:

- (a) Approves the revised Scottish Borders Council Attendance Policy as set out in Appendix 1;**
- (b) Agrees that the Policy will take effect from the start of the 2024/2025 school year; and**
- (c) Notes that a communication and engagement strategy will be implemented to raise awareness of the policy among staff, partners, children, young people, and families.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Borders Council School Attendance Policy was last updated in 2013 and required revision to align with updated national guidance and incorporate evidence-based practices for promoting school attendance.
- 3.2 Regular attendance is essential for children and young people's academic attainment, achievement, social development, safety, and wellbeing. Attendance continues to be a challenge for schools both nationally and within the Scottish Borders, with a declining picture nationally since 2012/13 and persisting gaps for children impacted by poverty and care experience. The attendance rate fell for every Local Authority between 2020/21 and 2022/23. Overall school attendance in Scottish Borders for academic session 2022/23 was 91.5% which is above the national average of 90.2% and the Family Group average of 90.8%. When ranked, this places Scottish Borders 8th out of 32 Local Authorities.
- 3.3 In the context of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, all Local Authorities in Scotland have included attendance as a core plus stretch aim. Scottish Borders Council is committed to working with schools, families, and partners to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to attend school regularly and fulfil their potential.

4 POLICY REVISION PROCESS

- 4.1 The revision of the Attendance Policy was undertaken by a working group with representation from key stakeholders, including primary and secondary school leadership, home-school link workers, school attendance officers, educational psychology, inclusion and wellbeing, pastoral staff, and business support.
- 4.2 The revision process involved seeking out good practices and national documentation, creating an initial working draft, and engaging in consultation with various groups, including the Education Community of Practice, Business Support, Children and Families Social Work, cluster leads, and officers.
- 4.3 A crucial component of the revision was a consultation with children, young people, and families to gather their views and ideas on what helps with school attendance. The consultation involved 247 participants across 18 schools, with representation from those who struggle with attendance. Key themes from the consultation included the importance of supportive relationships, engaging learning activities, flexibility, and communication between school and home. Quotes from the consultation have been incorporated throughout the Policy to illustrate the perspectives of children, young people, and families.
- 4.4 The revised Policy incorporates national legislation and guidance, including the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the Scottish Government's Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1 guidance. It also draws upon research and evidence-based practices for promoting attendance, such as nurturing approaches, parental engagement, and

curriculum flexibility. The Policy also draws evidence from Education Scotland's recent report: Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues.

- 4.5 The Policy outlines roles and responsibilities for promoting attendance, procedures for monitoring and addressing attendance concerns, and guidance on alternative attendance arrangements such as flexi-schooling and modified timetables. It emphasises an integrated, child-centred approach that addresses barriers to attendance and provides support to children, young people, and families.
- 4.6 Following approval, a communication and engagement strategy will be implemented to raise awareness of the Policy and support its implementation. This will include engagement events with staff, partners, children, young people, and families, as well as a targeted social media campaign. Schools will engage with the Policy and undertake self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement in their attendance practices.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications associated with the approval and implementation of the revised Attendance Policy. Any costs related to training, communication, or resources to support the policy implementation will be met within existing budgets.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The risks associated with not updating the Attendance Policy include:
- i. Inconsistency in attendance procedures and practices across schools.
 - ii. Failure to align with national guidance and incorporate best practices for promoting attendance.
 - iii. Continued challenges with attendance and persistent gaps for vulnerable groups.
 - iv. Negative impact on educational outcomes, wellbeing, and life chances for children and young people.
- (b) These risks will be mitigated through the approval and implementation of the revised Policy, which:
- i. Provides clear guidance and procedures for promoting and managing attendance.
 - ii. Incorporates national guidance and evidence-based practices.
 - iii. Emphasises early intervention, partnership working, and support for vulnerable groups.
 - iv. Includes a robust communication and engagement strategy to raise awareness and support implementation.
- (c) The Policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed to assess its effectiveness and identify any further areas for improvement. Schools will be supported to engage with the Policy and undertake self-evaluation of their attendance practices. Ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders will ensure that the Policy remains responsive to local needs and priorities.

- (d) While the Policy aims to promote consistent and effective practices, there remains a risk that some schools may face challenges in implementation due to local circumstances or resource constraints. This will be mitigated through ongoing support, training, and sharing of good practices across the Local Authority.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is included as an Appendix.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

Following completion of the Sustainable Development Goals Checklist, the following areas are noted:

- (a) Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Policy aims to identify and tackle barriers to school attendance, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised children and young people.
- (b) Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. The Policy seeks to align resources and support to boost attendance and attainment for children from the most disadvantaged communities.
- (c) The Policy also indirectly supports several other goals by aiming to improve children and young people's overall wellbeing, life chances and future employability, which can contribute to reduced poverty (Goal 1), improved health (Goal 3), sustainable economic growth and decent work (Goal 8), and more peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16).
- (d) While not a specific focus, the engagement and planning processes involved in developing and implementing the Policy also align with elements of Goals 16 and 17 around participatory decision-making, community responsiveness, and partnership working.

5.5 **Climate Change**

- (a) The revised Attendance Policy has been assessed against the Climate Change Checklist.
- (b) The Policy itself does not have any direct impacts on energy use, waste, or biodiversity. However, there are some potential indirect positive impacts in terms of promoting sustainable transport and active travel to school, as the Policy recognises transport challenges as a potential barrier to attendance and promotes working with partners to ensure safe and accessible travel options. The Policy also supports the provision of local services like breakfast clubs that can enhance amenities and promotes a community-based approach to supporting wellbeing and attendance that may contribute to overall community resilience.
- (c) Ongoing partnership working referenced in the Policy to ensure transport access to school will be important to adapt to any future climate related disruptions. No other specific climate change adaptations are required for the Policy at this stage. While the

climate change impacts of this Policy are relatively limited, there may be opportunities in the implementation stage to further promote active travel and local community resilience building approaches that can support both attendance and wider climate objectives.

5.6 Rural Proofing

- (a) The revised Attendance Policy has been assessed against the rural proofing checklist. Key points:
 - i. The Policy aims to promote a consistent approach to supporting attendance across all Scottish Borders schools, while allowing flexibility based on local context. It is not expected to negatively impact availability of services in rural areas.
 - ii. The Policy recognises potential barriers to attendance in rural areas related to transport and connectivity. It promotes working with partners to ensure accessible travel options and appropriate communication methods.
 - iii. Supporting attendance through the range of approaches in the Policy may have some additional delivery costs in more remote rural areas. While the Policy does not specifically address this, any additional costs would need to be met within overall budget allocations.
 - iv. More broadly, the Policy aims to have a positive impact on employability, economy, and disadvantaged groups in rural areas by supporting long term attendance and attainment for all pupils.
- (b) While the Policy allows for some flexibility based on school size and circumstance, Officers will continue to engage with smaller rural schools during implementation to understand and address any specific challenges they may face in delivering on Policy aims. Overall, the Policy is expected to have a neutral to positive impact on rural areas.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report. This assessment is based on the following considerations:

- (a) The Policy sets out general principles, expectations, and procedures for promoting and managing attendance. It does not involve any new or changed processing of personal data.
- (b) The Policy refers to the use of existing school data management systems (SEEMiS) to record and monitor attendance. This would be covered by existing data protection arrangements and privacy notices for these systems.
- (c) The consultation process summarised in the Policy appendix involved gathering views and experiences from pupils, parents and staff but is anonymous with no personal data collected.
- (d) In implementing the Policy, schools will continue to follow existing data protection legislation and best practice when handling any personal data related to attendance monitoring, referrals or support.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

- (a) The revised Attendance Policy introduces a new procedure for managing persistent absenteeism, referred to as the Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP). This replaces the previous School

Attendance Sub Group process outlined in the 2013 Attendance Policy.

- (b) The Scheme of Delegation will need to be updated to reflect the roles and responsibilities within the CAP process. Based on the information provided in Appendix 3 of the Policy, the following changes are proposed:
- i. Education Functions: "Consider referrals of persistent absenteeism in line with the Cluster Attendance Panel procedure outlined in the Scottish Borders Council Attendance Policy."
 - ii. Delegation to Officers add under Director of Education: "Make referrals to the Cluster Attendance Panel in cases of persistent absenteeism where school-level interventions have been unsuccessful, in line with the Cluster Attendance Panel procedure outlined in the Scottish Borders Council Attendance Policy."
 - iii. Delegation to Officers add under Headteachers: "Initiate the Cluster Attendance Panel process for pupils with persistent absenteeism, following the procedure outlined in the Scottish Borders Council Attendance Policy."
- (c) The Scheme of Delegation will need to be updated to include the authority of the Cluster Attendance Panel to consider persistent absenteeism referrals, and the roles of the Director of Education and Headteachers in making referrals and initiating this process, in line with the procedure set out in the revised Attendance Policy.
- (d) These proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation may require approval by the full Council as part of the Policy approval process.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council, the Finance Business Partner and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

6.2 The Director of Public Health, the Director (Social Work & Practice), the Director (Education & Children's Services) and the Director (Resilient Communities) have also been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Children's Services

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Scott Watson	Equity and Inclusion Lead Officer - +6960

Background Papers: N/A

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Scott Watson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA. Tel: 018935 824000.

This page is intentionally left blank



Attendance Policy [Draft]

A Positive Approach to Promoting School Attendance

Scottish Borders Council – Education
and Children's Services



Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Aims and Objectives.....	3
1.2 Policy Focus and Target Audience	3
1.3 Guiding Principles	3
1.4 Legislative and National Policy Context	4
1.5 Other Guidance and Policy Informing the Policy	5
1.6 SBC Supporting Documents	6
1.7 Defining Attendance.....	6
1.8 The Impact of Low Attendance	6
1.9 Groups Who Are More Vulnerable to Low Attendance	7
2. Promoting Good Attendance	8
2.1 Positive Approaches to Promoting School Attendance.....	8
2.2 Whole School Ethos and Culture.....	9
2.3 Nurturing Schools.....	10
2.4 Meeting Learnings Needs	10
2.5 Additional Support for Learning.....	11
2.6 Parental Engagement	12
2.7 Pastoral Care	13
2.8 Curriculum Design.....	13
2.9 Setting Expectations and Self-Evaluation	14
2.10 Roles and Responsibilities.....	15
3. School Attendance Procedures	17
3.1 Recording Attendance.....	17
3.2 Early Learning and Childcare Settings	18
3.3 Authorised Absence	19
3.4 Medical and Dental Appointments	19
3.4 Supporting Children and Young People with Prolonged Ill Health.....	19
3.5 Diverse School Communities.....	20
3.6 Unauthorised Absence.....	21
3.7 Compulsory Measures	22
3.8 Children or Young People Missing from Education for Extended Periods	23
3.9 Attendance Beyond Statutory School Leaving Age	23
4. Alternative Attendance Arrangements	24
4.1 Home Education.....	24
4.2 Flexi-Schooling	25
4.3 Flexible Curriculum	25

4.4	Build-Up Timetables.....	25
4.5	Hosting Arrangements	27
	Appendices.....	29
	Appendix 1: Relevant National Legislation, Guidance and Useful Resources.....	29
	Appendix 2: Measures for Compulsory Compliance.....	31
	Appendix 3: Procedure for Calling a Cluster Attendance Panel	35
	Appendix 4: Scottish Borders SEEMiS Absence and Attendance Codes.....	38
	Appendix 5: Monitoring and Tracking Procedures for Schools – Flow Chart.....	42
	Appendix 6: Attendance Support Plan (template)	43
	Appendix 7: Absence Letters.....	45
	Appendix 8: Consultation with Children, Young People and Parents/Carers.....	53

DRAFT

1. Introduction

Regular attendance is essential for children and young people's academic attainment, achievement, social development, safety, and wellbeing. Scottish Borders Council (SBC) is committed to ensuring that all children and young people attend school regularly.

Scottish Borders Council has statutory duties within the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to ensure that all children and young people within compulsory school age receive regular and appropriate education. For most children and young people engagement will be achieved through attendance at their local school, for some it may be through flexible programmes involving the wider community and organisations.

This policy sets out the positive approaches, partnerships, and expectations to promote engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders. It details the procedures in responding to concerns around attendance and where needed, the flexible attendance arrangements ensuring we are getting it right for every child in Scottish Borders.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of this attendance policy are to:

- Support schools to build an inclusive and nurturing environment that encourages children and young people to attend school willingly.
- Ensure a commitment to maintaining open communication between schools, parents/carers, and children and young people regarding attendance matters.
- Ensure that all children and young people attend school regularly.
- Provide support to children and young people and their families to improve and maintain good attendance.
- Address the potential impact of external factors on attendance, such as transportation issues, health concerns, or socio-economic challenges.
- Ensure clarity and consistency for all stakeholders in matters related to school attendance.
- Identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from school.
- Reduce the number of children and young people who are persistently absent from school.

1.2 Policy Focus and Target Audience

This policy and associated guidelines apply to all learning environments in Scottish Borders and are relevant to all children and young people. Staff, stakeholders, and partner agencies are included within the scope of the guidelines. In addition, staff in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings may find this policy useful as an indicator of good practice in the promotion of attendance and the prevention and reduction of absence.

1.3 Guiding Principles

This attendance policy is based on the following principles:

- All children and young people have the right to a quality education that meets their individual needs and the right to attend school regularly. Education authorities have a duty to provide this. These are key components of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and The Promise Scotland.
- It is the duty of parents/carers to provide an education for their child. They can provide that education by sending their child to school or by other means.
- Children and young people who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve academic success, make friends, feel safe and feel positive about themselves.
- Attendance is a shared responsibility between children and young people, parents/carers, schools, partners, and the local authority who should all work collaboratively to promote and support good attendance.

- Open and transparent communication between all stakeholders is a requirement to promote good attendance.
- Schools and settings should actively engage with parents/carers to try to ensure that any barriers to good attendance are understood and addressed.
- Children and young people who are absent from school should be supported to return to school as soon as possible.
- There should be a clear and consistent approach to attendance management.

1.4 Legislative and National Policy Context

The legislation and policies in Scotland which underpin our approach to promoting engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders include but are not limited to:

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (2008, 2022)

Our national commitment to provide all children, young people, and their families with the right support at the right time so that they can reach their full potential.

Provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992)

Recognises education as a key social and cultural right and has a crucial part in the alleviation of poverty and inequality:

- Article 28 (Access to Education) states that every child has the right to an education.
- Article 29 (Aims of Education) states that children's education should help them develop their personalities, talents, and abilities.

Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools (2019)

Promotes a relational approach to consider what schools and local authorities can do to promote good attendance and manage absence to ensure all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved in their education.

Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions (2017)

Provides guidance on approaches that can be used to prevent the need for exclusion, ensuring all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved in their education and summaries the legislative duties placed on Local Authorities regarding exclusion from school.

The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupil Records) (Scotland) Act 2002

Schools must make reasonable adjustments for the needs of disabled children and schools must not discriminate against disabled children. The Education Authority must prepare and implement an accessibility strategy to increase access to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, to school buildings and to information.

Education Scotland Act (1980)

States that it is the duty of parents to provide an education for their child. They can provide that education by sending the child to school or by other means (section 30¹). The Act states that educational arrangements are "without prejudice the choice afforded a parent." Local authorities have duties placed on them which say: "pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of

¹ [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

their parents.” It is incumbent on local authorities to listen to and act upon the decisions that parents make about where they wish their child to be educated.

Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act (2000)

States that it is the “right of every child to be provided with school education by, or by virtue or arrangements made, or entered into, by, an education authority.” The act underlines the importance of considering the views of children and young people stating that the local authority shall “have due regard...to the views of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect that child or young person.”

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004, 2009, 2018)

Outlines the concept of Additional Support Needs and places duties on local authorities to identify, meet and keep under review the needs of pupils for whom they are responsible.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, 2023)

This document explains what people need to do to keep children safe in Scotland. It covers the *various levels* of support that all children should get, from the basic support everyone gets to the extra support needed to protect children from serious harm. The document makes it clear that children's wellbeing and safety are closely linked. It also emphasizes how important the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach is for protecting children.

The Promise Scotland (2021)

Outlines Scotland’s promise to care-experienced children and young people – that they will grow up safe, loved, and respected so they can reach their full potential. The guidance is built on the five foundations of family, voice, care, people, and scaffolding.

Curriculum for Excellence (2004)

Aims to provide a coherent, flexible curriculum for all children and young people aged 3-18 years. The curriculum comprises the totality of experiences which are planned for children and young people wherever they are being educated. Entitlement includes: a coherent curriculum from 3-18 years; a broad general education until S3; a senior phase after S3 and personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the curriculum and support in moving into a positive and sustained destination beyond school.

The Children and Young People Act (2014)

Has wide reaching powers to promote the Scottish Government’s aims to encourage effective and targeted services for children and families as well as the promotion of children’s rights. Through the GIRFEC National Practice Model, the Act promotes cross-boundary models of service delivery to make best use of expertise and resources in an integrated way with the wellbeing of children and young people being paramount. The wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included) promotes an integrated approach to ensure the wellbeing of all children and young people. Introduced increased provision of early learning and childcare and a range of corporate parenting responsibilities to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in care.

1.5 Other Guidance and Policy Informing the Policy

The National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (2014)

Sets out the Scottish Government’s vision and priorities for children’s progress in learning. The Framework, updated annually, is key in driving work to continually improve Scottish education and address the poverty related attainment gap, delivering both excellence and equity.

Equality Act (2010)

Simplified and strengthened previous protections for children and young people with ‘protected characteristics’ (e.g. age, race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation) from discrimination. This strengthened inclusion in education for all children and young people regardless of their additional support needs or disability.

European Convention on Human Rights (1953)

Article 2 of Protocol 1 in the convention stresses a child or young person’s right to an education: “No person shall be denied the right to an education.”

Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues (2023)²

This report is the result of 'deep dive' analysis led by Education Scotland. It describes the issues affecting attendance and outlines the support available to local authorities.

1.6 SBC Supporting Documents

This policy is supported by and should be used in conjunction with other relevant policies and frameworks including:

- SBC Child’s Planning Manual, including supporting documents and appendices³.
- SBC Inclusion Framework and Policy, including supporting document and appendices.
- SBC Partnership with Parents Framework⁴
- SBC Nurturing Approaches Guidelines
- SBC Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy⁵

1.7 Defining Attendance

The Scottish Government (2019) defines attendance as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school (or setting), including:

- Attendance at school
- Learning outwith the school provided by a college or other learning provider while still on the roll of the school.
- Educational visits, day, and residential visits to outdoor centres.
- Activities connected to psychological services.
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events.
- Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school.
- Study leave for pupils participating in national exams, if arranged by the school during the period of the national examination timetable.
- Sickness where special arrangements have been made to receive education elsewhere e.g. receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services.
- Work experience and work-based learning.

Schools should seek to ensure that children and young people attend school or another learning environment for the national recommended **25 hours in primary schools** and **27.5 hours for secondary schools**.

1.8 The Impact of Low Attendance

Regular school attendance is crucial for children and young people's education and future life chances. Evidence demonstrates that when attendance falls below 90%, there is a significant impact

² [Improving attendance: Understanding the issues \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot)

³ [childs planning manual 2021 \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

⁴ [Partnership with Parents Framework | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk)

⁵ [scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/570/respectful-relationships-and-anti-bullying-policy](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/570/respectful-relationships-and-anti-bullying-policy)

on a child's learning, achievement, and development. An attendance rate of 90% (missing 19 days of school) is the equivalent of missing one school day every two weeks. When averaging 90% attendance over the course of their school career, by the time a young person has reached S3, they will have missed the equivalent of an entire year of school. Research shows that low attendance can lead to:

- Lower academic attainment and achievement.⁶
- Difficulty maintaining friendships and relationships and becoming socially withdrawn.⁷
- Increased risk of becoming involved in antisocial or offending behaviour.⁸
- Higher likelihood of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness in adulthood.⁹

Even one day of absence can negatively impact a child's learning. The Scottish Government recognises 90% attendance as a minimum standard, but schools should aim for all children to achieve 100% attendance whenever possible.

Impact of Time Lost in School		
Attendance Percentage	Number of days missed	Potential Impact
100%	0	Gives a child/young person the best chance of success.
95%	9	
Under 90%	19	Less chance of success due to low attendance. A young person could drop a whole grade in secondary school.
Under 85%	27	Serious implications on learning and progress.
Under 80%	More than 36	
Under 75%	More than 47	

School staff should closely monitor attendance, be alert to any patterns or changes, and work with children, young people, and their families to address issues early on. Schools should take a proactive, supportive approach to promote good attendance and help children and families overcome barriers.

1.9 Groups Who Are More Vulnerable to Low Attendance

Groups more vulnerable to low attendance include:

- Children and young people impacted by poverty.¹⁰
- Secondary-aged young people: an attendance rate of 89.1%, compared with a rate of 92.0% for all pupils in 2020-21. S4 attendance was the lowest at 87.2%.
- Children and young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities: Outcomes for these children and young people are among the worst in Scottish education. Their school attendance rates are the lowest of any ethnic group and exclusion rates are the highest.¹¹

⁶ Klein & Sosu (2023) [Determinants and consequences of school absenteeism \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.glowscotland.org.uk)

⁷ Gottfried, M. A. (2015). [Chronic absenteeism in the classroom context: Effects on achievement. *Urban Education*, 54\(1\), 3-34.](#)

⁸ Dräger, J., Klein, M. and Sosu, E. (2023) [‘The long-term consequences of early school absences for educational attainment and labour market outcomes’. Charlottesville, VA, p. 1-44.](#)

⁹ John, A. et al. (2021) [‘Association of school absence and exclusion with recorded neurodevelopmental disorders, mental disorders, or self-harm: a nationwide, retrospective, electronic cohort study of children and young people in Wales, UK’, *Lancet Psychiatry*, 9, pp. 23–34.](#)

¹⁰ [Scottish Government \(2021\) Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2021.](#)

¹¹ [Scottish Government \(2017\) Included, Engaged, and Involved part 2: Preventing and Managing School Exclusions](#)

- Children and young people who have been excluded: Exclusion is associated with poor mental and physical health, substance use, antisocial behaviour, crime, low academic achievement, unemployment, and homelessness.¹²
- Children and young people with additional support needs: Children and young people with additional support consistently have lower attendance rates than pupils with no additional support needs.¹³
- Certain types of support needs are more likely to have lower rates of attendance. For example:
 - Children and young people who have experienced care (looked after) have lower attendance rates than all pupils in all school sectors¹⁴
 - In secondary schools, the difference in attendance rates between looked after children and all pupils was greater than in primary schools and special schools in 2020-21. Looked after pupils had an attendance rate of 83.4%, compared with a rate of 89.1% for all pupils.¹⁵
 - Young Carers: Around 7% of young people in Scotland have caring responsibilities, although it is likely this is an underestimate¹⁶. Over a quarter of young carers aged 11-15 regularly miss school¹⁷
 - Anxious children and young people: Research suggest the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated absence issues particularly for those with pre-existing anxiety.¹⁸

2. Promoting Good Attendance

Children and young people are more likely to be motivated to attend school when they feel fully included and engaged in the wider life of the school. Families are likely to encourage full attendance where they feel part of the school community and where schools work alongside them as equal partners. Promoting good attendance requires schools to ensure positive relationships within an inclusive ethos and culture. Schools should engage positively with parents/carers to ensure good learning, teaching, and assessment with a key focus on supporting additional support needs. They should collaborate with community partners to ensure that children and young people and their families are supported. By promoting good attendance and addressing issues early, we can help give every child the best start in life.

2.1 Positive Approaches to Promoting School Attendance

The following key principles promote effective whole school approaches to ensuring good attendance:

- Welcoming educational establishments which prioritise positive and nurturing relationships underpinned by high expectations and core values.
- Children and young people are fully included and engaged in the life of the school and understand that school absence affects attainment, achievement, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.

*"My school makes me feel important and welcome. I want to come to school."
(Primary School Pupil)*

¹² [Lereya, T. and Deighton, J. \(2019\) Learning from HeadStart: the relationship between mental health and school attainment, attendance and exclusions in young people aged 11 to 14. London: EBPU](#)

¹³ [School attendance and absence statistics \[Scottish Government\]](#)

¹⁴ [Children's Social Work Statistics Collection \[Scottish Government\].](#)

¹⁵ [School Attendance - Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2020/21 \[Scottish Government\]](#)

¹⁶ [Executive Summary - Young carers: review of research and data \[Scottish Government\]](#)

¹⁷ [Young carers: who are they and why do they need support? | Action For Children](#)

¹⁸ [McDonald, B., Lester, K. J., and Michelson, D. \(2023\) 'She didn't know how to go back: School attendance problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - A multiple stakeholder qualitative study with parents and professionals'. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 93, pp. 386–401](#)

- Schools understand what barriers can be in place for children and young people’s attendance, and work to understand and address these.
- Schools have supports and strategies in place for children and young people who have additional support needs.
- Promoting attendance is part of regular conversations with parents/carers and children and young people and there is a mutual understanding that school absence affects attainment, achievement, wellbeing, and wider outcomes.
- Schools work collaboratively with families and partners to understand and address any barriers to attendance for individual children and young people and intervene at the earliest stage to address any emerging patterns of non-attendance.
- Schools have in place clear and consistent procedures for monitoring the attendance of all children and young people (appendix 5)
- Schools have clear and consistently applied procedures for following up on unexplained absence. Staff understand absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and recognise their role in keeping children and young people safe.

2.2 Whole School Ethos and Culture

Creating a positive whole school ethos and culture is essential for good attendance¹⁹. This means ensuring every child feels included, respected, safe, valued and celebrated for their achievements. To create this positive environment, everyone in the school community should understand wellbeing, focus on building good relationships and respect children's rights.

“The school building is calm and ordered and a good place to be. Nurturing environment and small schools mean young people are known.” (Secondary school parent)

The overall feel of the school has a significant impact on children and young people’s wellbeing and mental health. When a school uses universal programs to improve social and emotional skills, it can improve and maintain a positive ethos which can help improve both attainment and attendance (Banerjee et al, 2014²⁰; Freeman et al, 2016²¹)

Attendance issues are closely linked to relationships, behaviour, and wellbeing in school. To improve attendance, schools should focus on building good relationships, finding solutions together, restorative approaches and teaching about children’s rights. When children and young people know their rights and are included in decisions about their learning, they are more likely to want to attend school.

Nurturing approaches and nurture groups can help children and young people feel more connected to their school. Some may have had difficult experiences that affect them at school. By understanding this and providing extra support, schools can help these children and young people feel safer and more included.

Preventing bullying is important for maintaining good attendance, as some children and young people miss school because of bullying. Schools anti-bullying approaches should be based on the national framework for anti-bullying [Respect for All](#) and [SBCs Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy](#).

¹⁹ [Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour - gov.scot](#)

²⁰ [Working with ‘Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning’ \(SEAL\): associations with school ethos, pupil social experiences, attendance, and attainment](#)

²¹ [Relationship Between School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Academic, Attendance, and Behavior Outcomes in High Schools](#)

2.3 Nurturing Schools

Nurturing approaches are based on attachment theory. This theory says that early experiences with key adults' shape children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. When children feel safe, secure, and comforted by adults, they are more likely to explore and learn.

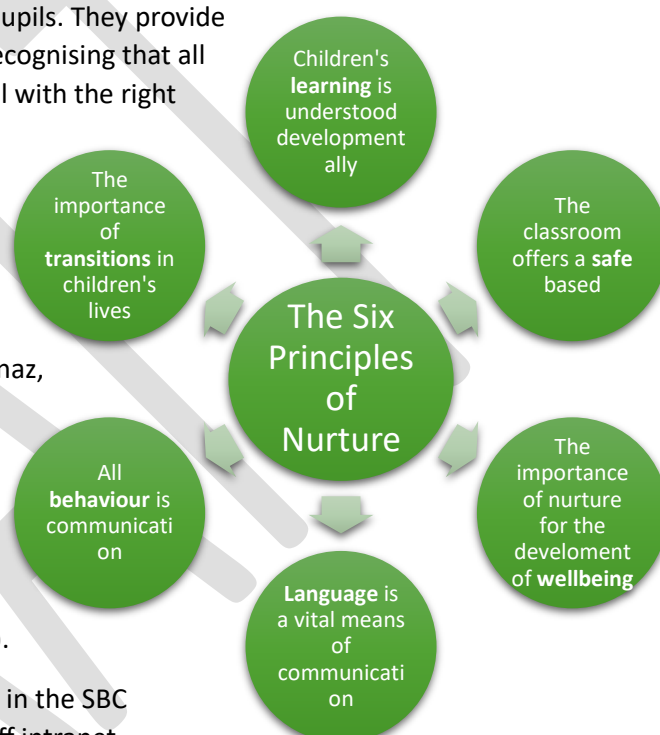
Children develop internal working models based on their earliest attachment experiences. These models guide their behaviour and development in all future relationships. They help children predict and choose behaviours based on their previous expectations. Children may not be aware of these models, but they show their experience through their behaviours.

Whole school nurture is a broad approach that can be used to support any child or young person facing a barrier to learning. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) states that additional support needs may arise from a range of factors and may be short-term or long-lasting. Nurturing schools create positive environments with a focus on warmth, empathy, and attuned interactions between staff and pupils. They provide structure and have high expectations for all learners, recognising that all children and young people can reach their full potential with the right balance of care and challenge.

Research shows that whole school nurture supports:

- Improved skills for learning (Gerrard, 2005)²²
- Improved language and literacy skills (Hosie, 2013)²³
- Improved behaviour and social skills (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005²⁴; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007²⁵)
- Positive changes in social and emotional functioning at home (Binnie & Allen, 2008²⁶)
- Early nurturing intervention leads to significant gains in social functioning and academic performance (Scott & Lee, 2009²⁷), which are maintained over time (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002²⁸).

The approach to [Nurture in Scottish Borders](#) is detailed in the SBC Nurturing Approaches Framework, available on the staff intranet.



2.4 Meeting Learnings Needs

Schools should understand and work to address the specific challenges faced by certain groups of children and young people. These challenges can make it harder for them to attend school regularly.

The Scottish Government report, [Achieving Excellence and Equity 2021 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan](#) shows the differences in attendance rates for different groups of learners. In 2018/19:

²² [Do nurture groups improve the social, emotional, and behavioural functioning of at-risk children?](#)

²³ [An Evaluation of the Impact of Nurture Provision upon Young Children, Including their Language, and their Literacy Skills: UEL Research Repository](#)

²⁴ [Progress and challenge in Nurture Groups: evidence from three case studies](#)

²⁵ [The effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress: evidence from a national research study](#)

²⁶ [Whole school support for vulnerable children: the evaluation of a part-time nurture group](#)

²⁷ [Beyond the 'classic' nurture group model: an evaluation of part-time and cross-age nurture groups in a Scottish local authority](#)

²⁸ [The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education](#)

- The overall attendance rate for Scotland was 93%
- Primary schools had a higher attendance rate (94.5%) than secondary schools (90.7%)
- Children living in the 20% most deprived areas had an attendance rate 4.9% lower than those living in the 20% least deprived areas.
- Looked after children had a lower attendance rate (86.8%) compared to all pupils (93%), with the biggest difference in secondary schools.

The Scottish Government report, [Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential 2020](#) highlights the barriers to attendance for children and young people with additional support needs. National attendance for all pupils is 94.1%, while for pupils with additional support needs it is 91.2%.

When looking at barriers to attendance, schools should be aware of the challenges faced by groups of children, young people, and families and those with protected characteristics, including:

- Care experienced children and young people.
- Those with additional support needs.
- Young carers or impacted by the care of a family member.
- Those from Gypsy / Traveller communities.
- Children receiving support from Children's Services, including those on the Child Protection Register.
- Those with health care needs.
- Those experiencing socioeconomic deprivation.
- Children and families from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Those who identify as LGBTQI+

Schools in the Scottish Borders recognise that low attendance can often be related to, or a sign of, an additional support need. They will use the [SBC Child's Planning Manual](#) to identify any barriers to learning and provide appropriate support to agree and maintain a suitable attendance pattern.

2.5 Additional Support for Learning

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004²⁹ requires education authorities and other agencies to make provisions for all children and young people who need extra support to overcome barriers to their learning. Additional support may be needed to overcome needs arising from their learning environment, disability or health, family circumstances, or social and emotional factors, including mental health concerns. Under the Act, every looked after child is assumed to have an additional support need, unless an assessment concludes otherwise.

Providing additional support can help children and young people engage more fully with school and promote good attendance. Schools should recognise that poor attendance can often be related to, or be a sign of, an additional support need. They should use the SBC Framework for Staged Intervention ([SBC Child's Planning Manual Section 2](#)) to ensure any barriers to learning are identified and appropriate support is provided.

A Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP)³⁰ may be required when a child or young person needs significant long-term additional support from SBC as well as from another agency, such as health or social work services. The CSP outlines the educational objectives to be achieved and the additional support that needs to be coordinated to help the child or young person achieve these objectives.

²⁹ [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

³⁰ [Chapter 5: Co-ordinated Support Plan - Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017 - gov.scot](#)

Guidance on planning to meet additional support needs is available in the Supporting Children's Learning Statutory Guidance³¹.

2.6 Parental Engagement

Parental engagement is particularly important for good attendance. The Scottish Borders approach to school-parent relationships can be found in the [SBC Partnership with Parents Framework](#). Positive relationships in education start in the early years through informal, casual contact when parents drop off and pick up younger children. Making the most of these early opportunities can lead to long-term relationships based on trust and mutual respect. These positive relationships can continue throughout a child/young person's school years. Clear plans for transitions at all stages would support positive relationships. These plans should start as early as possible and include families and all appropriate support.

"Keep open communication with me about my child's attendance and raise any issues early." (Primary school parent)

Schools should have regular contact with parents through different ways of communicating. Parents are key partners in their child's education. It is especially important that they know their responsibilities and are encouraged and supported to help their child attend school. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 30, says that parents have a legal responsibility to provide efficient education to their child until they reach school leaving age. They can do this by making sure their child attends school regularly. Collaborating with parents to ensure positive and trusting relationships is vital to promote the benefits of regular attendance and reduce any barriers.

When talking about attendance with parents, it is important to be practical and recognise the challenges that can be part of family life, such as balancing work commitments or dealing with financial challenges. Schools should work with partners to ensure that any barriers for families are supported and addressed as early as possible. Some schools have found that breakfast clubs improved attendance as they helped families with morning routines. Other schools have found that supporting parents with their own literacy or numeracy has helped them feel more confident in engaging with their child's learning, which has then improved the child's attendance.

The '[Cost of the School Day](#)' initiative has helped raise awareness of the financial barriers for families that might impact on them coming to school. It should be clear to parents and children/young people that consequences for lateness will be respectful and considerate of any family circumstances. When school staff become aware of any difficulties, they will do what they can to help in partnership with other services. Schools can find more information on local Cost of the School Day approaches in the SBC Inclusion Policy [available on staff intranet].

"As a working mum I have 2 children to drop off for breakfast club, I am able to drop both of them off at the same place. This makes getting to work on time much easier!" (Primary school parent)

When care experienced children and young people are moving placement, they may have to travel longer distances or adjust to new routes. The designated senior leader for care experienced children and young people in the school should ensure that support is in place as early as possible to ensure continuity.

Parents should be given clear information, updated regularly, about their responsibility to inform the school if their child will be absent and to provide current emergency contact information. It is helpful

³¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/pages/1/>

for schools to have an answering machine to receive communications from parents outside school hours.

To promote good attendance, schools should engage with their wider parent body to better understand any potential local barriers. This should include engagement with families from a wide range of backgrounds. The Parent Council can support engagement with the wider parent body around attendance issues and be involved in developing and implementing initiatives to encourage regular school attendance.

Information for parents on school attendance and absence is available on [Parentzone Scotland](#).

2.7 Pastoral Care

All school staff have a role in promoting good attendance and helping to reduce absence. Staff with pastoral care responsibilities should:

- Be aware of early signs or concerns that may cause absence, so support plans and adaptations can be arranged as needed.
- Make sure absence does not become a pattern or habit after a specific issue.
- Develop positive, trusting relationships with pupils and parents to prevent difficulties and ensure any difficulties are discussed and resolved.
- Respond quickly to absence, to ensure children and young people are safe and well.
- Follow up on absence, so the school and partners can respond effectively.
- Support reintegration into learning when returning from absence.

*"If there is something worrying me, my teacher can speak to my parents to help fix the problem."
(Primary school pupil)*

Pastoral care staff should establish links with partner agencies to strengthen support for children, young people, and parents. Education authorities can support school-based teams by having appropriate structures for centralised support to schools.

Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) for all staff on areas like promoting positive relationships, parental engagement, and learner participation can help schools develop practices that support good attendance. CLPL that explores systems and processes to monitor and improve attendance can also be helpful. There should be a focus on the underlying reasons for absence (which may include mental health), especially for those working more directly in this area, such as home-school link workers or family support workers.

Pastoral care staff have a key role in monitoring, assessing, and supporting absence. Where possible, they should identify patterns and underlying causes of absence so these can be addressed quickly. Other school staff and agencies may also contribute to this assessment.

2.8 Curriculum Design

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) promotes flexibility, creativity, and innovation in the curriculum, allowing schools to personalize learning journeys to meet the needs of all children and young people and reduce pressure on those in the Senior Phase. Schools must support children and young people's engagement and attendance by offering a coherent curriculum that builds skills in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. This should include a range of work-based learning, wider achievement, and qualifications beyond the SQA menu of choice. Partners from within and SBC should support schools in providing support packages to engage children and young people.

Throughout the Broad General Education (BGE) and when making subject choices in the Senior Phase, children and young people should be encouraged to participate fully in their learning and the wider life of the school. Self-evaluation using 'How Good is Our School? 4'³² (HGIOS 4) can help

³² [How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

schools assess the effectiveness of their school improvement approaches across various quality indicators and develop a strong culture of learner participation and engagement.

Building on the foundations of CfE, Developing the Young Workforce³³, Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, encourages schools to offer flexible programs of skills development and vocational experiences to meet individual needs. In partnership with agencies such as Skills Development Scotland, Borders College, DYW Borders and local businesses, schools may develop learning programs with vocational and work experience elements to ensure young people are fully engaged and develop the skills needed for the world of work, including regular school attendance.

To support children and young people's attendance, schools can offer a range of wider achievement programs and access to apprenticeships or work-based learning. Based on appropriate assessments, schools may consider using individualised, planned support packages to promote good attendance. Educational provision delivered by partners outside school should be overseen by school staff and included in a learner's attendance records in line with this policy.

"(I would like) a variety of clubs to do and this could be on a Monday because there aren't really any clubs on a Monday." (Secondary school pupil)

2.9 Setting Expectations and Self-Evaluation

Scottish Borders schools should have a clear vision and strategic plan to promote and manage attendance. This should include:

- Identified staff to support tracking and monitoring attendance.
- Robust systems for tracking and monitoring attendance.
- Clear procedures for responding to absence.

Schools and settings should use self-evaluation to ensure they meet the needs of all children and young people and promote good attendance for everyone. This is especially important for children and young people who face barriers as outlined in section 2.3.

The [Attendance Self-Evaluation Tool](#) developed by Forth Valley and West Lothian³⁴ can be used by schools to review and develop their strategic approach to promoting good attendance. Education Scotland has produced [Guidance](#) to support the use of the tool.

The tool uses level five illustrations, features of highly effective practice, and challenge questions from various quality indicators in HGIOS 4 related to promoting and supporting attendance. This allows schools to:

- Reflect on their work.
- Evaluate their work.
- Use evidence from these activities to plan future improvements.

Education Scotland's [Promoting attendance: self-reflection questions for educational settings](#) has been developed for uses alongside Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1. They have also produced a

³³ [DYW - Scotland - Home](#)

³⁴ [Using the Forth Valley and West Lothian attendance toolkit | Education Scotland](#)

series of [Supporting Attendance Workshops](#) to support the ideas discussed in their 'Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues' report³⁵.

In addition to co-producing policies and procedures, schools can encourage good attendance by raising the profile of attendance and absence within school communities and in school documents like the School Handbook or using social media.

*"My teacher talks about how important it is to come to school every day."
(Primary school pupil)*

Many schools link incentive schemes with good attendance.

Engaging with children and young people can help determine if such incentive schemes are helpful and what incentives, if any, are appropriate. Schools should be sensitive when using incentive schemes to support attendance and recognise that low attendance is often not under a child or young person's control. Using incentive schemes inappropriately can demotivate and sometimes distress children and young people who have been unable to attend school for complex reasons.

Promoting good school attendance can occur authority wide. Key figures such as elected members, senior managers from the wider local authority, and community groups should be involved in raising the profile of the benefits of good attendance. Promoting good attendance and recognising improvements can help convey positive messages about young people to the wider community. SBC's quality assurance processes enable senior managers to develop an overview of attendance across their schools and support schools in developing good practices for promoting attendance and responding effectively to absence.

Scottish Borders Council and individual schools set Stretch Aims to raise expectations, ensure continuous improvement, and address poverty related gaps in attendance. Schools may consider setting realistic and specific targets around overall attendance and using improvement methodologies to achieve these targets. They should consider evaluating the effectiveness of any approaches to supporting attendance, using the Improvement Methodology supported by the Children and Young People's Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC)³⁶. Schools may consider collaborating with other schools in their cluster or regional area to share and develop effective practices around promoting good attendance.

Stretch Aims can determine the level at which appropriate intervention to support attendance should take place. While the specific Stretch Aims may vary across schools based on their context and data, clear processes should be in place to ensure parents and partners are informed and appropriate support is provided when attendance falls below the agreed level. Scottish Borders Council sets the **minimum** attendance threshold between 85 – 90%, depending on the context of the school community and the individual circumstances of the child, young person, and family.

2.10 Roles and Responsibilities

Promoting good attendance and addressing absence is a shared responsibility among children and young people, parents/carers, schools, partners, and the local authority. Each stakeholder has a role to play in ensuring that all children and young people attend school regularly and receive the support they need to overcome any barriers to attendance. This section outlines the specific responsibilities of each stakeholder group in promoting good attendance and addressing absence. By working

³⁵ <https://education.gov.scot/media/3kdenpq4/improving-attendance-understanding-the-issues-101123-pw.pdf>

³⁶ [Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative - Improving public services - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Children-and-Young-People-Improvement-Collaborative-Improving-public-services)

together and fulfilling these responsibilities, we can create a supportive environment that encourages regular attendance and helps all children and young people reach their full potential.

Children and Young People

- Children and young people have a responsibility to attend school regularly and on time.
- Children and young people should notify their parents/carers, who in turn should notify school if they are going to be absent or late.
- Children and young people should make up any missed work as soon as possible.
- Children and young people should participate in school activities and events.
- Children and young people should respect the rights of other children and young people and staff.

Parent/Carer

- Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that their child attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents/carers should notify the school office if their child is going to be absent from school or late.
- Parents/carers should support their child to make up any missed work.
- Parents/carers should attend school events and meetings when invited.
- Parents/carers should work with the school to improve/maintain their child's attendance.

Classroom Teacher

- Classroom teachers have a legal responsibility to accurately record and monitor attendance.
- Classroom teachers should work with children and young people and their parents/carers to identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from or late to school.
- Classroom teachers should provide appropriate support to children and young people to improve attendance.
- Classroom teachers should report any concerns about attendance to the headteacher.

Pastoral Leaders

- Pastoral leaders have a responsibility to provide or seek support for children and young people who are absent from school or late to school.
- Pastoral leaders should work with children and young people and their parents/carers to develop a plan to improve attendance when necessary.
- Pastoral leaders should monitor attendance and act, in line with school and local authority guidance when necessary.
- Pastoral leaders should liaise with other professionals such as, children and families social work, educational psychology, health colleagues and other partners to provide additional support to children and young people and parents/carers when necessary.

"The school is always happy to talk to me about when she's not coming to school; I get a call as soon as she's not coming to school to discuss why she's struggling to come in." (Secondary school parent)

Headteachers

- Headteachers have a responsibility to ensure that the school has an effective attendance policy and procedure and that staff comply with all legal requirements.
- Headteachers should monitor learner attendance and act, in line with school, local authority and national guidance.

- Headteachers should ensure that support is provided to children and young people and their parents/carers to improve attendance when necessary.
- Headteachers should liaise with other schools, local authority to share good practice on attendance.

Business Support

- Business support staff should maintain accurate attendance records and ensure compliance with data protection.
- Business support staff should maintain open communication with parents/carers, including phone calls, emails, 'Xpressions' app etc.
- Business support staff should liaise with school staff and other stakeholders to ensure accurate records.

Local Authority Officers

- Local authority officers have a responsibility to provide support and challenge to schools to improve attendance.
- Local authority officers should work with schools to identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from or late to school.
- Local authority officers should ensure that schools meet statutory entitlements and quality assurance procedures are in place to monitor this.
- Local authority officers should liaise with other agencies, such as the children and families social work and the NHS, to ensure that additional support is provided to children and young people when necessary.

3. School Attendance Procedures

3.1 Recording Attendance

Registers of Attendance

There is a legal responsibility for schools to complete and maintain accurate registers of school attendance. Class teachers are responsible for completing registers for the children and young people attending their classes. In SBC, registers should take place using SEEMiS Click & Go at least twice per day in primary schools and period by period in secondary schools. To ensure accurate recording of attendance and absence, reference should be made to the SEEMiS absence codes (appendix 4).

It is important that information is used to inform immediate follow-up action so that developing patterns of attendance and absence inform intervention where necessary. Delays between class level recording and further action should be minimised by the efficient transfer of information.

Schools, having due regard to the welfare, wellbeing and health and safety of children and young people, must be always able to account for those present or out on an organised activity.

SBC is required to report on school attendance statistics regularly and often at short notice to the Scottish Government.

Lateness

Schools should have a method of recording the attendance of children and young people who are late. Accurate recording of lateness is just as important as attendance. Lateness should be recorded on SEEMiS Click & Go in the following way:

Primary: If a child arrives late to either morning or afternoon opening, this should be marked using LAT.

Secondary: If a young person arrives after school start time but in time for the **beginning** of a period, they should be marked present from when they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code for the preceding time.

For example: young person arrives at the beginning of period 4 because they had a dental appointment:

- Period 1-3: PER (medical appointment)
- Period 4: Present

If a pupil arrives after school start time and **during** a period, they should be marked LAT in the period they arrive and the reason for lateness should be used to code the preceding time.

For example: young person slept in and arrived during period 2:

- Period 1: OUA (unauthorised)
- Period 2: LAT

As with absences, codes should be updated at the end of the day once a reason for absence/lateness has been established. If a reason cannot be sought, this should be marked as **unexplained (UNA)**.

Schools should monitor persistent late coming and seek to identify any patterns. This should be linked to other relevant information and be used to inform appropriate intervention.

3.2 Early Learning and Childcare Settings

All schools are required to keep an attendance register of every pupil to record if children are present³⁷. This applies to early learning and childcare where it is delivered as part of the entitlement for eligible young children. In addition, all early learning and childcare providers registered with the Care Inspectorate are required to maintain a record of children's attendance to show the total number of children in 'daycare of children' premises at any one time.

This has implications for practice in providers in the private, third or childminding sectors delivering funded early learning and childcare, and where there are blended placements, whereby education authorities should establish systems and procedures, e.g. links and communication between blended placements and clear responsibilities on settings delivering funded early learning and childcare to record, monitor and report changes in attendance. Providers in the private, third or childminding sectors delivering funded early learning and childcare need to work in an integrated way to ensure that a child's attendance is monitored, and any concerns shared and acted upon.

As set out under section 14 of the 1980 Act, if there is a longer-term absence of an eligible young child due to prolonged ill health, education authorities are under a duty to make alternative arrangements to ensure the child continues to receive early learning and childcare elsewhere and can access appropriate support with their learning. In these circumstances, and to support a consistent approach, it is essential that there is clear communication between the different agencies, services, professionals and the parent/carer and child concerned.

SEEMiS Early Years will provide the functionality for settings to record and monitor the attendance of children registered for funded early learning and childcare.

Section 3.2 is adapted from: [Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance \(Scottish Government, 2021\)](#)

³⁷ Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975

3.3 Authorised Absence

The school's senior leadership team can authorise absence when they are satisfied by a legitimate reason for the request, usually by the parent/care (via note, email, or phone call). Reasons for authorised absence can include:

- Illness
- Medical and dental appointments
- Meetings prior to, and during court appearances and other legal processes
- Attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or Care Review, or appointment with another service provider, e.g. social worker
- Religious observance
- Bereavement
- Weddings or funerals of close friends and family
- Arranged absence in relation to children in Gypsy/Traveller families.
- Participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school.
- Lack of transport – including due to severe weather
- Family recovery from exceptional domestic circumstances or trauma
- Period of exclusion to be recorded in a separate category.
- Extended leave with parental consent including some young carer activities.

3.4 Medical and Dental Appointments

Parents and children and young people should continue to be encouraged to arrange such appointments, whenever possible, outside of school hours. On occasion, it may be necessary to attend medical, dental, and other health related appointments such as hospital appointments during school hours, which schools should record within a Medical and Dental category in 'authorised absence.'

In many areas of Scottish Borders, keeping health appointments may require significant travel and cause more disruption to school attendance. Schools should use their partnership with child health services to ensure that there is a flexible approach to appointments to avoid disruption for children and young people during critical times, such as during exam periods. In some circumstances, schools may arrange for medical and dental services to be provided on site within schools.

3.4 Supporting Children and Young People with 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 several episodes. Although not an exhaustive list, this can be because of accidents or trauma, chronic, long-term, life-limiting, or terminal conditions, mental health issues, and conditions that require repeated medical intervention, such as dialysis.

A child or young person absent from school through ill health may receive treatment in various settings, such as a paediatric hospital, an adult hospital, a mental health facility, their own home, or in a different school. In some cases, this may mean that the child or young person travels to a hospital located beyond the Scottish Borders area. Education may be provided in all these settings, and the responsibility for doing so remains with Scottish Borders Council as the child or young person's home local authority.

The main emphasis in the initial period of absence will be on the child or young person's recovery of fitness and health, and the time for this will vary. However, where possible, absence should not lead to a reduction in education provision that would have a detrimental effect on the child or young person's progress. Legislation requires local authorities to make special arrangements for children

absent from school through ill health without undue delay through outreach teaching or other special provisions such as hospital education services.

It is important that schools identify what kind of work the child or young person can manage, in what format the work needs to be presented, and what kind of contact the child or young person needs with school. This should include both academic support and social support from peers. If appropriate, SBC's Inspire Learning digital approach to education should be used in these circumstances. Where appropriate provision is in place, schools should record this as attendance. Where it is not in place, this is still categorised as authorised absence. However, alternative arrangements must be made to ensure that children or young people can access their entitlement to education.

Where a child or young person's illness is known, or thought, to be likely to extend beyond 5 days, education should proceed immediately, if medical assessment permits. This is particularly important for children and young people who require recurrent admission to hospital, even for short periods.

Where there is less certainty over the possible length of any absence, education outside of school should commence at the earliest opportunity and certainly no more than 15 working days of continuous absence or 20 working days of intermittent absence.

Schools should work closely with parents/carers and appropriate professionals to help facilitate the child or young person's return to school, which may take place on a phased basis over a period and determine what supports will be required once they are back in school.

Further information on supporting children and young people impacted by prolonged ill health can be found in the Scottish Government's 'Guidance on Education of Children Absent from School Through Ill-Health'.³⁸

3.5 Diverse School Communities

Some groups of children and young people may need authorized absence due to their religious or cultural practices or their family's mobility:

Children and young people of all faiths may take authorised absence to participate in religious observances.

In some cultures, family weddings or funerals are significant events that may require children or young people to travel (e.g., overseas) or participate in extended preparations. If this lasts for more than four weeks, the school will normally have the right to remove the child or young person from the roll to avoid being penalised in terms of its attendance record. However, in these circumstances, children or young people should be considered as '**Z (EXL) - Extended Leave with Parental Consent**' which allows them to remain on the school register ready for their return, without the school being penalised.

Some families may travel as part of their tradition, for family connections, or work commitments. The Scottish Government guidance '*Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures*'³⁹ provides further information on supporting inclusive educational approaches for children and young people from travelling cultures, including culturally sensitive approaches to managing attendance.

The correct SEEMiS code to use when a pupil is travelling for cultural reasons is code 24 **[A (ABS) – Other Authorised Absence]**.

³⁸ [Education of children unable to attend school due to ill health: guidance - gov.scot](#)

³⁹ [Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures: guidance - gov.scot](#)

Pupils can be registered on SEEMiS with two schools at the same time. For example, some families arrange for their children to enrol in a 'base school' for part of the year and take authorised '**Z (EXL) Extended Leave with Parental Consent**' for periods of travel. The children may temporarily enrol in other schools as they travel, and these schools provide attendance and other data to the 'base school.'

If the school has not been notified that children or young people from travelling cultures are leaving to travel, the school should record their absence as '**TBC – To be Confirmed**' until school have confirmed that they are travelling.

3.6 Unauthorised Absence

Schools should record an absence as unauthorised when no satisfactory reason has been provided. The SEEMiS code '**TBC - to be confirmed**' should only be used temporarily until the actual reason for absence is known, as it will count as **UNA – unexplained or truancy** if not updated. Unauthorised absence can include:

Family Holidays During Term Time.

Family holidays during term time should not be recorded as authorised unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances include where a parent's employment, such as armed forces, emergency services, or professions requiring extended periods away from home, prevents them from taking leave during school holidays.

Absence with Parental Awareness in Specific Circumstances.

Sometimes parents allow absence because they believe their child will benefit from an alternative activity or because they are in dispute with the school. In these cases, clear school policies, regular communication of expectations, and early contact with parents to build relationships and restore trust are important.

Occasional Absence without Parental Awareness.

Schools should give clear messages that occasional absence is unacceptable and respond quickly by contacting parents. Effective supervision, monitoring of attendance, and providing a welcoming environment can help minimise this type of absence.

Longer Term Absence – School Related Issues.

Children/young people may be absent due to unhappiness with school life, such as struggling with learning, conflict with teachers or peers, feeling distressed by the school environment, bullying, or feeling stigmatised. Identifying and addressing the underlying causes is essential.

Longer Term Absence – Home and Wider Community Issues

Absence may be linked to challenging family circumstances, anxiety, mental health issues, substance misuse, or community issues. Schools should work with the child/young person, family, and other agencies to provide appropriate support.

Schools should be aware of the impact that early adversity and trauma can have on children and young people. Any approach to promoting and supporting attendance should be sensitive to the child or young person's needs and background. Care experienced children and young people are more likely to have experienced early adversity and trauma at some stage in their life and this may be ongoing.

Absence Relating to Substance and Alcohol Use

Substance use may affect attendance through intoxication, addiction, or avoidance of others involved in supply. Staff should be aware of signs for concern and collaborate with other agencies to support affected children and young people.

3.7 Compulsory Measures

SBC is committed to ensuring that efforts to improve outcomes for children and young people involve an appropriate and proportionate level of intervention. Measures for compulsion are expensive processes which are time consuming and can lead to further unnecessary interventions into family life. Compulsory measures can be used when multi-agency efforts through the Child's Planning Manual to improve attendance have been exhausted. Further details of measures can be found in **Appendix 1**.

In addition to the universal activities a school can implement to improve and maintain overall attendance (see section 2), targeted activities to increase attendance and engagement prior to implementing compulsory measures can include:

- Attendance letters to a young person (aged 12 and over) and parent/carer (Appendix 7) and ongoing monitoring of attendance patterns.
- Use of the SBC Attendance Support Plan (Appendix 6)
- Universal plus meeting and plan.
- Meeting Around the Child (MAC) and Child's Plan.
- Nurture Groups.
- Involvement of relevant partner agencies such as health, Children and Family's Social Work, commissioned services, education psychology service or home school link worker.
- Curriculum adaptations to improve engagement such as short-term wellbeing focussed work or work-based learning.
- Build-Up Timetable (see section 4.4).
- Hosting arrangement, in agreement with all parties (see section 4.5).
- Referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel (Appendix 3)

Under Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, non-attendance at school without reasonable excuse is an offence. 'Where the child is of school age..... On one or more occasions fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly then his parents shall be guilty of an offence against this section.' Under the Act 'reasonable excuse' is defined as:

- 'There is no school within walking distance of the child's home and the education authority has not provided transport or other appropriate arrangements to enable the child to attend school regularly.'
- 'The child has been ill and therefore unable to attend school.'
- 'There are other circumstances which in the opinion of the education authority or the court afford a reasonable excuse.'

Where a child or young person fails to attend school regularly without a reasonable excuse, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011⁴⁰. This option may be appropriate where there are a range of other concerns which together with non-attendance, form grounds for referral.

Before reaching a decision to proceed to an initial referral, schools will work together with Children and Families Social Work and other partners to complete a thorough assessment, through the Child Planning Manual, to ensure that all other options (such as those above) have been exhausted.

Prior to any referral being made to the Children's Reporter schools must involve Children and Families Social Work.

⁴⁰ [Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

If the Reporter considers that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, the matter will be referred to a Children's Hearing for a decision.

Attending a children's hearing can be a stressful experience for a child or young person, and there is little evidence that imposition of legal sanctions improve attendance. It should therefore be seen as last resort.

3.8 Children or Young People Missing from Education for Extended Periods

There may be occasions where a child or young person goes missing from education for an extended period and the education authority has made extensive unsuccessful attempts to contact a family. In these circumstances, school staff should refer to [Scottish Borders Child Protection Procedures for Children Missing from Education](#).

There are many complex reasons why a family cannot be contacted. Often, staff in schools are aware of individual circumstances and family connections which will enable them to find children or young people quickly. Children or young people may simply have moved schools or have moved homes, and when the new school is contacted, information can be transferred to help the child or young person settle quickly.

Schools should refer to the [Children Missing from Education Checklist](#) for guidance on actions to take when children and young people who are absent from school cannot be contact.

Sensitivity should be given to children or young people in Gypsy/Traveller families (see section 3.5 diverse school communities). There are other circumstances which might lead to children or young people being missing from education for an extended period. These might include female genital mutilation, forced marriage and child sexual exploitation, in cases where awareness has been raised of factors that might lead schools to believe this could be a concern for children and young people.

3.9 Attendance Beyond Statutory School Leaving Age

School leaving dates are set by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. There are two dates: 31 May and the first day of the Christmas holiday period (or 21 December, if earlier).

Summer Leaving Dates

- Young people who turn 16 between 1 March and 31 May can leave school on 31 May.
- Young people who turn 16 between 31 May and 1 October can also leave on 31 May.

Winter Leaving Dates

- Young people who turn 16 between 1 October and the first day of the Christmas holiday period can leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).
- Young people who turn 16 after the winter leaving date but before 1 March can also leave school on the first day of the Christmas holidays (or 21 December if earlier).

Young people who choose to stay in school beyond the leaving age, and their parents, should be encouraged to commit to full attendance, defined as *"participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school."*

Scottish Borders schools will use the flexibilities of Curriculum for Excellence and the support provided by Developing the Young Workforce programmes to work with young people and their parents/carers to plan a learning programme that best suits the individual's personal development and encourages them to work towards their next step beyond school. Ongoing support and encouragement should be provided to ensure sustained commitment and engagement.

For young people in their sixth year, there is a balance between continued achievement and the desire for increased independence in preparation for post-school destinations. It is recommended

that a sixth-year student's timetable should provide a minimum of two-thirds of the full-time timetable, including National Qualification classes and opportunities for wider achievement.

Attendance must also be monitored to ensure proper entitlement to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a means-tested weekly payment designed to help overcome financial barriers that may prevent young people from staying in school. For more information and to apply for EMA please see [Education Maintenance Allowance | Scottish Borders Council](#).

4. Alternative Attendance Arrangements

Curriculum for Excellence allows schools to personalise learner journeys to meet the needs of all children and young people. When an alternative to traditional school attendance is requested, it should be considered in relation to the child or young person's wellbeing needs and supported by the Child's Planning Manual. Decisions to grant alternative attendance arrangements should be underpinned by a child or young person's right to education as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

4.1 Home Education

Parents can request to withdraw their child from a Scottish Borders school for full-time home education or part-time flexi schooling. Under section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents must seek local authority consent before withdrawing their child from school, and Scottish Borders Council must not unreasonably withhold this consent. Parents/carers wishing to make a request for home education should consult the Scottish Government's Home Education Guidance⁴¹ and access [Scottish Borders Council: Home Education](#) for more information.

When considering these requests, Scottish Borders Council is guided by Article 18 of the UNCRC, the child or young person's voice, and a child-centred approach, as well as the duties, obligations, and rights of parents and its own legislative and policy position.

Parents may choose to withdraw their child from school for several reasons, including:

- Following a particular educational or ideological philosophy
- Religious or cultural beliefs
- Dissatisfaction with the system
- A child's reluctance to go to school or problems at school (e.g., bullying)
- Geographical factors (remoteness or mobility for work or cultural reasons)
- Addressing a child's additional support needs in a particular way
- As a short-term intervention for a specific reason

Parents do not have to provide a reason for choosing home education, but it is helpful for the school and Scottish Borders Council to understand their reasons. Consent is given based on how the parents intend to educate their child at home, not their reason for doing so.

In some circumstances, parents do not need consent to home educate their child, such as when the child has never attended a local authority school, has finished primary but not yet started secondary school, or if the school they were attending has closed.

For children with Additional Support Needs, Scottish Borders Council has no legal duty under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and subsequent amendments to provide additional support to children who are educated at home. The parent is responsible for meeting these needs.

⁴¹ [Home education guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/home-education-guidance)

4.2 Flexi-Schooling

A flexi-schooling arrangement means that the local authority alongside parents/carers agree to have joint responsibility for educating the child or young person. The child or young person would attend school some of the time (e.g., certain days, or certain subjects) and be educated at home the rest of the time. Flexi-schooling is different from a build-up timetable where the local authority remains responsible for all the child or young person's education. The local authority and schools consider requests for flexi-schooling on a case-by-case basis considering the specific strengths and needs within each situation.

The child or young person's attendance pattern must be accurately recorded on SEEMiS using the code '**SNA – Should Not Attend**' for the periods that it has been agreed that the child or young person should not attend.

Flex-schooling arrangements should be monitored and reviewed on at least an annual basis and recorded on SEEMiS Wellbeing Application and pastoral notes.

4.3 Flexible Curriculum

A flexible curriculum provides the duty of education in a variety of settings or contexts to meet the needs of the child or young person. Where flexible curriculum arrangements are required, they should be planned and regularly reviewed. Digital technology and Inspire Learning can be used as the basis for planning, reviewing, and maintaining connection. The views of the child or young person and their family are central to this process. Arrangements should be informed by an understanding of their strengths and aspirations as well as a robust understanding of their needs.

Flexible arrangements should be approved by the school and may involve other providers such as therapeutic interventions, skills development, or work-based learning in local community settings such as third sector organisations or local employers.

4.4 Build-Up Timetables

Scottish Borders Council recognises the right that all children and young people have to an education which meets their needs. For most children and young people this will be through full time attendance at school. The following processes and considerations for Build-up timetables are adapted from the Appendix 1 of the SBC Inclusion Policy.

When Should a Build-up Timetable be Considered?

In exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a **temporary**, build-up timetable to meet a child or young person's individual need. For example:

- Where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and part time package is considered as part of a reintegration package.
- Where a child or young person has significantly disengaged with school and there is a significant impact on their learning.

A build-up timetable is considered at Stage 3 of SBC Framework for Staged Intervention and should only be considered after strategies at Stages 1 and 2 have been exhausted.

Build-up timetables should be considered as a short-term intervention and where there is a clear vision or rationale to re-track a pupil into the mainstream school community.

In order to monitor, review and quality assure build-up timetables, schools are required to submit details of a child or young person's timetable and attendance support plan (appendix 4), including the reasons for a build-up timetable, start date, review date and proposed end date of the timetable to the Education Duty Manager at educationduty@scotborders.gov.uk. This will be logged and tracked centrally.

The Purpose of a Build-up Timetable is to:

- Build a temporary, bespoke support package around the needs and interests of the young person.
- Create a safe, consistent environment with familiar staff.
- Help the young person to re-engage and build up to full time attendance.
- Foster trust and improved relationships with key adults who are supporting the child or young person.
- Promote improved communication and partnership working with parents/carers and partner agencies.

Key Points

- A build-up timetable should be a response to a Meeting Around the Child or Young Person (MAC)
- A parent/carer must consent to a build-up timetable, and this should be recorded in the minutes of a meeting.
- Decisions should be made with the child or young person, parent/carers and other multi-agencies involved with the child and young person.
- The timetable should be for a limited period. The suggested maximum length of a build-up timetable is 6 - 8 weeks.
- Arrangements for a build-up timetable should be regularly reviewed every 2 – 4 weeks.
- All parties should clearly understand the objectives of any build-up timetable.
- A parent/carer must be clear they are taking responsibility for the pupil when he/she is not in school and guarantee that the pupil will be supervised off site.
- Attainment, achievement, and attendance must be monitored, tracked, recorded, and reviewed throughout.

Considerations Before Planning

- Maintaining a sense of belonging to the school is essential and the use of the school campus should be prioritised.
- Planning for the reintroduction of classes to the timetable should ensure opportunities to identify and address gaps in learning and to ensure coverage of topics, learning themes and learning opportunities missed are addressed.
- A commitment to maintaining and sustaining the planned timetable is important and it must be recognised that interventions take time to work. Setting a date at the outset for review and avoiding reactive responses to initial challenges are key to maintaining this as a strategic intervention.
- The voice of the child or young person should be integral to the plan – Person Centred Planning may support this, or your Educational Psychologist may be able to support or advise on this.
- The impact of a build-up timetable on the home life of the child or young person should be considered and carefully considered. It should not put a child, young person, or family at greater risk i.e. any child protection concerns or care placements.
- External Partners - The risks around using external partners to support the timetable should be carefully considered and the following considered:
 - Are they a sustainable option?
 - Do they have a clear, agreed educational outcome?
 - Is there a shared understanding of what success will look like for the child or young person?
 - What are the expected/anticipated timescales?
 - Are they PVG checked and Child Protection trained?
 - How will attendance/non-attendance be recorded and shared to ensure safeguarding?
 - How will they report on progress towards the agreed outcome/ target?

- Are there hidden costs or transport implications?

Planning the Timetable

- The timetable should be planned to build on the child or young person’s curricular strengths and the positive relationships they have in school from the beginning.
- Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing should be fully incorporated into any timetable offered.
- Restorative approaches and opportunities for restoring relationships should be planned into the timetable as appropriate.
- The responsibility for planning work and activities remains with school – this includes class teachers, subject teachers, support for learning and pastoral staff.
- The timetable should be clearly communicated with all staff.
- Adding opportunities to build and develop confidence and self-worth through reaching set targets, recognising, and celebrating achievement.
- Tracking and monitoring of progress in learning should be maintained including in the wellbeing indicators.
- Recording on SEEMiS should reflect the true picture of the educational provision and prioritise the safeguarding of the child or young person. Please see information below regarding appropriate codes. The full list of SBC SEEMiS absence codes is included in appendix 3.

Description	SEEMiS Code
A medical or diagnosed condition which prevents a child or young person’s full-time attendance at school, and they are unable to undertake any other learning when they are not in school. Only to be used when an agreed build-up timetable has been agreed and is in place. Review regularly, as per policy.	BUH
Where a child or young person has become significantly disengaged from school and build-up attendance is agreed as a suitable temporary and short-term intervention for reintegration back into school. There is concern that full time attendance may increase the likelihood of exclusion. Can also be used to support a return to school following a period of exclusion. Only to be used when an agreed build-up timetable has been agreed and is in place. Review regularly, as per policy.	BUX
To be used where a child or young person has refused to attend school.	RFS
Should be used where a child or young person is refusing to attend school due to social anxiety / mental health related reasons but is receiving education provision (e.g. accessing work via school iPad). This code should be used where education provision is provided, and all parties agree with the plan in place. Only to be used as a temporary, short-term arrangement, e.g. prior to arranging a build-up timetable.	RSA

4.5 Hosting Arrangements

A hosting formally transfers a child or young person who is experiencing difficulties in their own school (base school) for a placement in an alternative Scottish Borders primary or secondary school (host school) on a temporary basis (with a view to a possible enrolment in the hosting school). It is carried out in a supported way involving both base and host schools and with the agreement of both parents/carers and the child or young person.

The aim of a hosting arrangement is to address barriers a child or young person may be experiencing specific to their base school community. A hosting may be suggested as an intervention to improving attendance, engagement, relationships, or achievement. A hosting arrangement should only be considered in **exceptional circumstances** with due forethought given to the stress that the process

can cause to a child or young person and their family. It should only be considered when all other strategies have been exhausted.

The procedures and guidance for hosting arrangements are included in an **SBC Inclusion Policy Advice Note: Guidance on Effective Hosting Procedures** and is available on request from an education officer or the Duty Education Manager.

Monitoring and Review

The attendance policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure that it is effective. The policy will be reviewed considering any changes in legislation or guidance.

DRAFT

Appendices

Appendix 1: Relevant National Legislation, Guidance and Useful Resources

- Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools <https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-1-attendance-scottish-schools/>
- Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions <https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-2-positive-approach-preventing-managing-school/>
- Adverse Childhood Experiences: Action to prevent adverse childhood experiences where we can, and tackle their impact <https://www.gov.scot/publications/adverse-childhood-experiences/>
- Attendance Supports for Parents and Carers <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1680243748908302337>
- Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2016 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-2016/pages/10/>
- Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) <https://www.gov.scot/policies/improving-public-services/children-and-young-people-improvement-collaborative/>
- Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour <https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-positive-whole-school-ethos-culture-relationships-learning-behaviour/pages/1/>
- Developing the Young Workforce <https://education.gov.scot/learning-in-scotland/programmes/developing-the-young-workforce-dyw/>
- Education of Children and Young People Unable to Attend School Due to Ill Health: Guidance <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-education-children-unable-attend-school-due-ill-health/>
- Equality Act <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>
- Forth Valley and West Lothian toolkit <https://education.gov.scot/resources/attendance/using-the-forth-valley-and-west-lothian-attendance-toolkit/>
- Getting It Right For Every Child <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>
- Home Education Guidance – Guidance for parents and local authorities on home education <https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/>
- Improving Attendance in Scotland: Understanding the Issues <https://education.gov.scot/resources/attendance/improving-attendance-in-scotland/>
- Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-educational-outcomes-children-young-people-travelling-cultures/>
- National guidance for child protection in Scotland (2021) – Updated 2023 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/>
- National Improvement Framework <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/>
- Parentzone <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>
- Promoting Attendance: Self-Reflection Questions for Educational Settings <https://education.gov.scot/resources/promoting-attendance-self-reflection-questions-for-educational-settings/>
- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/>
- Scottish Attainment Challenge <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/>

- Support Attendance Education Scotland Workshops <https://education.gov.scot/media/btddd5ry/supporting-attendance-workshop-5.pptx>
- Supporting Children's Learning <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/pages/1/>
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

DRAFT

Appendix 2: Measures for Compulsory Compliance

Attendance Orders

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36). The education authority notifies the parent that a meeting or hearing is required, and that an explanation for non-attendance must be provided to the authority.

To allow the parent to prepare for the meeting, it will not be held within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification.

Process:

If the parent fails to satisfy the authority that there was a reasonable excuse for the pupil's non-attendance the authority may:

- Proceed to prosecution through the sheriff court, or
- Report the circumstances to the procurator fiscal, or
- Warn the parent and postpone the decision to report for a maximum of six weeks.
- Call a Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP) to make recommendations to the school, family, and local authority. See appendix 2 for details.

In the circumstance where the education authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the child or young person is of school age (5-16), make an attendance order. An attendance order requires the parent to ensure the child or young person attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children or young people residing in the same neighbourhood).

An Attendance Order:

- Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child or young person at a school named in the order.
- Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the authority.
- May name a public school, or other school which is willing to receive the child or young person. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.
- Shall not name a special school unless the child or young person has additional support needs requiring specialist support.

A copy of the attendance order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child or young person's regular attendance at the named school.

Right of Appeal

If parents are unhappy, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the sheriff. The sheriff can amend, confirm, or annul the order. The decision of the sheriff is final.

Parents may wish to seek legal representation when making an appeal to the sheriff. Legal aid may be available for advice and representation, subject to certain criteria for eligibility. Further information is available from the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Amending an Attendance Order

If the attendance order is later amended (e.g. a different school is named), the education authority should inform the parent of the proposed amendments and allow the parent 14 days to make

objections. If objections are made and not upheld by the authority, the parent can appeal to the sheriff as above.

Moving Between Local Authority Areas

A child or young person who is the subject of an attendance order may move from his or her home authority to a new authority area. In this case, the new authority may notify the parent of their intention to amend the attendance order by updating the school named in the order to a school which is in the family's new catchment area.

Where a child or young person is attending a school in another authority area and the education authority providing education believes that a parent should explain the non-attendance of a child or young person at school, the authority in which the child or young person resides would be responsible for arranging a meeting or hearing and serving notice on the parent to attend the meeting or hearing for an explanation to be provided.

Prosecution

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 states that if a parent has not complied with an attendance order, an application may be made to the sheriff court for prosecution (either by the education authority or Procurator Fiscal). If convicted, a parent may be:

- fined (not exceeding Standard scale level 3, currently not exceeding £1000),
- imprisoned for up to one month, or
- both fined and imprisoned.

The education authority may also make a referral to the reporter if compulsory measures are required to support the child.

Family Separation

In the case of a child or young person whose parents are separated, education authorities should consider the most appropriate means of communicating the process of making an attendance order to parents. It is likely that by the time an attendance order is being considered, there will have been difficulties in the relationship between the school/education authority and the parent. Advocacy or mediation services, where both parties meet voluntarily to discuss their concerns and agree a mutual solution with an independent third party, should be used to ensure that the parent understands the process and has support to express views or appeal. Further disengagement or conflict during the attendance order process will make positive outcomes for the child difficult to achieve.

Additional Support Needs

Children who have sufficient understanding of the process and who are judged to have sufficient legal capacity (this is presumed from age 12 unless the child does not have a sufficient understanding of the matter being considered) should be kept informed of the process. They may attend meetings or hearings with their parent. Such children should be consulted with the parent on the named school or subsequent amendments. However, the action is clearly being taken against the parent who has legal responsibility for ensuring the child attends school and it is for the parent to appeal, not the young person (a child of legal capacity may appeal in the case of exclusion, see Circular 8/03 Right of appeal against the decision to exclude – paragraph 37). The attendance order should be regarded as a stage in an ongoing process. The child may attend school following an attendance order, but support arrangements and long-term monitoring of attendance and support needs will be required.

Parenting Orders

Local authorities also have powers to apply to the sheriff for a parenting order under the Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004. These orders are for one year and require parents to participate in

programmes designed to improve their parenting by receiving support services which previously the parent has refused, and for their compliance to be monitored by a named officer.

The local authority must consult with other agencies in a multi-agency planning process, and consult with the reporter to the children's panel, before considering with its legal advisors whether an application for a parenting order should be made.

If the procurator fiscal raises criminal proceedings in respect of an alleged breach of an order and the parent is found guilty or pleads guilty, he or she will be liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale (currently £1,000). If the fine is not paid a court must impose a supervised attendance order (SAO). An SAO is a community-based alternative to imprisonment for fine default.

For this type of offence the court can only impose a sentence of imprisonment for the fine default where an SAO has been breached.

Guidance for authorities on parenting orders is available from Guidance on Parenting Orders: Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004

Referral to the Reporter

Referral to the Reporter may be an option considered by an education authority in conjunction with other approaches above, or usually separately, as an important stage in engaging the child or young person and the parent in compulsory interventions to improve outcomes for the child. Referral would usually only be made after appropriate measures at a local level have been exhausted.

Where a child is failing to attend school regularly without reasonable excuse, a referral to the Reporter can be made under section 67(o) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. However, non-attendance may be a factor considered alongside other grounds for referral where there are a range of concerns about the child or young person. Where the Reporter considers that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, the matter will be referred to a Children's Hearing. The Children's Hearing will make the decision on whether compulsory measures are necessary and if so, what those measures should be.

It is helpful for education authorities and Reporters to work together to make the Children's Hearing aware of the range of approaches that schools, and education authorities may have already tried, to improve a child or young person's school attendance. It is also helpful to consider with other services, which may provide interventions recommended by the Children's Hearing, how reintegration into school can be planned for during their work with the child or young person.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

An Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) or Acceptable Behaviour Agreement is a written agreement between a person who has been involved in anti-social behaviour and one or more agencies whose role it is to prevent further anti-social behaviour i.e. a housing association, local authority, police, or school etc.

They are used for young people, but can also be used for adults, and may be used with parents in relation to the behaviour of their children.

A local authority may also apply for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) under the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004. In these circumstances, a child or young person is likely to already have been involved in the hearings system and will be well known to children's services. The child or young person will be at risk of persistent anti-social behaviour.

Non-attendance at school is not anti-social behaviour, but while a young person is not at school, his or her activities may be part of their involvement in anti-social behaviour, causing significant

disruption to the community. Improving school attendance may be made a condition of an ABC or ASBO, and services should work together to ensure that the conditions applied enhance the potential for a young person to be engaged in learning, whether in school or in the community.

Education authorities and schools can make a significant difference to outcomes for children and young people on the cusp of persistent and serious offending by working in partnership with other services to devise flexible and creative approaches to learning opportunities.

DRAFT

1. Purpose and Summary

- 1.1. This guidance explains the procedure for calling a Cluster Attendance Panel to manage persistent absence.
- 1.2. It references the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and the Scottish Government's national guidance on managing attendance, Included, Engaged, and Involved Part 1: Attendance in Scottish schools.

2. Legislative framework

- 2.1. Parents who have enrolled their child at a Public School at any time, are then required to ensure their child attends, unless the Education Authority have consented to the withdrawal of their child from education (Education (Scotland) Act 1980; section 35).
- 2.2. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an Education Authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36). The Education Authority notifies the parents that a meeting or hearing is required, and that an explanation for non-attendance must be provided to the Authority. In the Scottish Borders, the meeting is referred to as a **Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP)**.
- 2.3. Where a child is attending a school in another authority area and the education authority providing education believes that the parent should explain the non-attendance of a child at the school, the authority in which the child resides is responsible for arranging a meeting and serving notice on the parent to attend the meeting or hearing for an explanation to be provided.

3. Calling a Cluster Attendance Panel

- 3.1. **A Cluster Attendance Panel (CAP) should not be considered until all interventions at school and cluster level have been exhausted.**
- 3.2. Schools should have consulted with Children and Families Social Work and considered the involvement of other partners such as Health, Police, and the Voluntary Sector. Evidence of joint working in the form of Meeting Around the Child (MAC) Paperwork, A Record of Attendance and Support Plans with interventions must be provided to the Head of Service to demonstrate the interventions tried with the child/young person and family prior to a CAP being requested. The Headteacher should provide copies and/or a log of correspondence with the family to indicate the parent's level of engagement.
- 3.3. Where interventions have failed, there is evidence of parental non-engagement or there remains ambiguity and lack of understanding regarding the barriers to attendance, Headteachers should contact the Cluster Lead Headteacher to convene a CAP. The Headteacher will provide the evidence referred to above to the Chief Education Officer for consideration. A CAP should take place at a suitable date within the required time frame.
- 3.4. If the Chief Education Officer agrees to the CAP, he/she will inform the Director of Education and Children's Services in writing of the intention to hold a CAP.
- 3.5. The Headteacher should consult with the Clerk to the Council of the intention to hold a CAP and agree a suitable date within the legally required time frame.
- 3.6. The Clerk to the Council shall serve a formal Notice on the parents informing them of the requirement to attend the CAP. To allow the parents to prepare for the CAP, it will not be held within two days of the notification but not later than seven days after the notification. The parent should be advised in the letter that the CAP will still go ahead if the parent chooses not to attend or respond.

4. Cluster Attendance Panel Membership and Process
 - 4.1. Selection of Cluster Attendance Panel; All members of the Cluster Headteachers, Depute Headteachers, Principal Teachers and all members of the Education Sub-Committee shall be members of a panel including religious, parent and teacher representatives from which the member of the specific CAP shall be drawn.
 - 4.2. Each panel shall be selected by the Clerk to the Council or authorised representative in consultation with the chairperson of the panel.
 - 4.3. The Clerk to the Council or their authorised representative, in consultation with the Cluster Lead Headteacher, shall appoint the chairperson of each panel. The chairperson should not come from the school the child/young person is currently enrolled in.
 - 4.4. Three members of an individual Cluster Attendance Panel shall constitute a Quorum, at least one of which will be a member of staff from an associated cluster school.**
5. Functions Referred
 - 5.1. The following functions shall stand referred to the panel:
 - 5.1.1. Consider parents who are failing to meet their responsibilities regarding their child's attendance at school if a parent fails to provide a reasonable excuse for the child's absence from school.
6. Powers of a Cluster Attendance Panel
 - 6.1. If a parent fails to satisfy the CAP that there is a reasonable excuse for a pupil's non-attendance at schools, the CAP may:
 - Proceed to prosecution through the Sheriff Court.
 - Report the circumstances to the Procurator Fiscal.
 - Warn the parent and postpone a decision for a six-week period. In this case only, if the child of school age, the panel may make an Attendance Order under Section 38 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980
 - Refer to the Children's Reporter
 - Make non-statutory recommendations to the parent and school to further support attendance.
7. Functions Delegated
 - 7.1. All the functions referred to the Cluster Attendance Panel.
8. Administrative Arrangements
 - 8.1. The Clerk to the Council or their Authorised Representative shall act as Clerk to the Cluster Attendance Panel and the Director of Education and Children's Services, or their representative shall present the case for the Council at any Attendance Hearing.
9. Attendance Orders
 - 9.1. In the circumstance where the Education Authority decides to postpone the decision it may, if the pupil is of school age (5-16), make an Attendance Order. An Attendance Order requires the parent to ensure the child attends the school which he or she has been attending or another local school (a school attended by children residing in the same neighbourhood as the child).
 - 9.2. An attendance order:
 - 9.2.1. Requires the parent to ensure the attendance of the child at a school named in the order.
 - 9.2.2. Requires that the views of the parent on which school should be named should be considered by the Authority.

9.2.3. May name a Public School, or other school which is willing to receive the child. A school at which the parent will be required to pay fees will not be named within the order unless at the request of the parent.

9.2.4. Shall not name a special school unless the child has additional support needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at the school.

9.3. A copy of the Attendance Order will be served upon the parent and will place them under a duty to ensure the child's regular attendance at the named school.

9.4. It is the responsibility of Legal Services to draw up and serve the Attendance Order. The Director of Education & Children's Services should sign the covering letter.

Amending an Attendance Order

9.5. If the Attendance Order is later amended (e.g. a different school is named) the Education Authority should inform the parent of the proposed amendments and allow the parent fourteen days to make objections. If objections are made and not upheld by the Authority, the parent can appeal to the Sheriff as below.

Right of Appeal

9.6. If parents are unhappy with the making of an Attendance Order, they may, within 14 days of being served with the order, appeal to the Sheriff. The Sheriff can amend, confirm, or annul the Order. The decision of the Sheriff is final.

Appendix 4: Scottish Borders SEEMiS Absence and Attendance Codes

Note - screens and printouts in SEEMiS use either a single letter attendance code (e.g., "D") or a three-letter code (e.g. "SEL") - both types of codes are shown in the descriptions below:

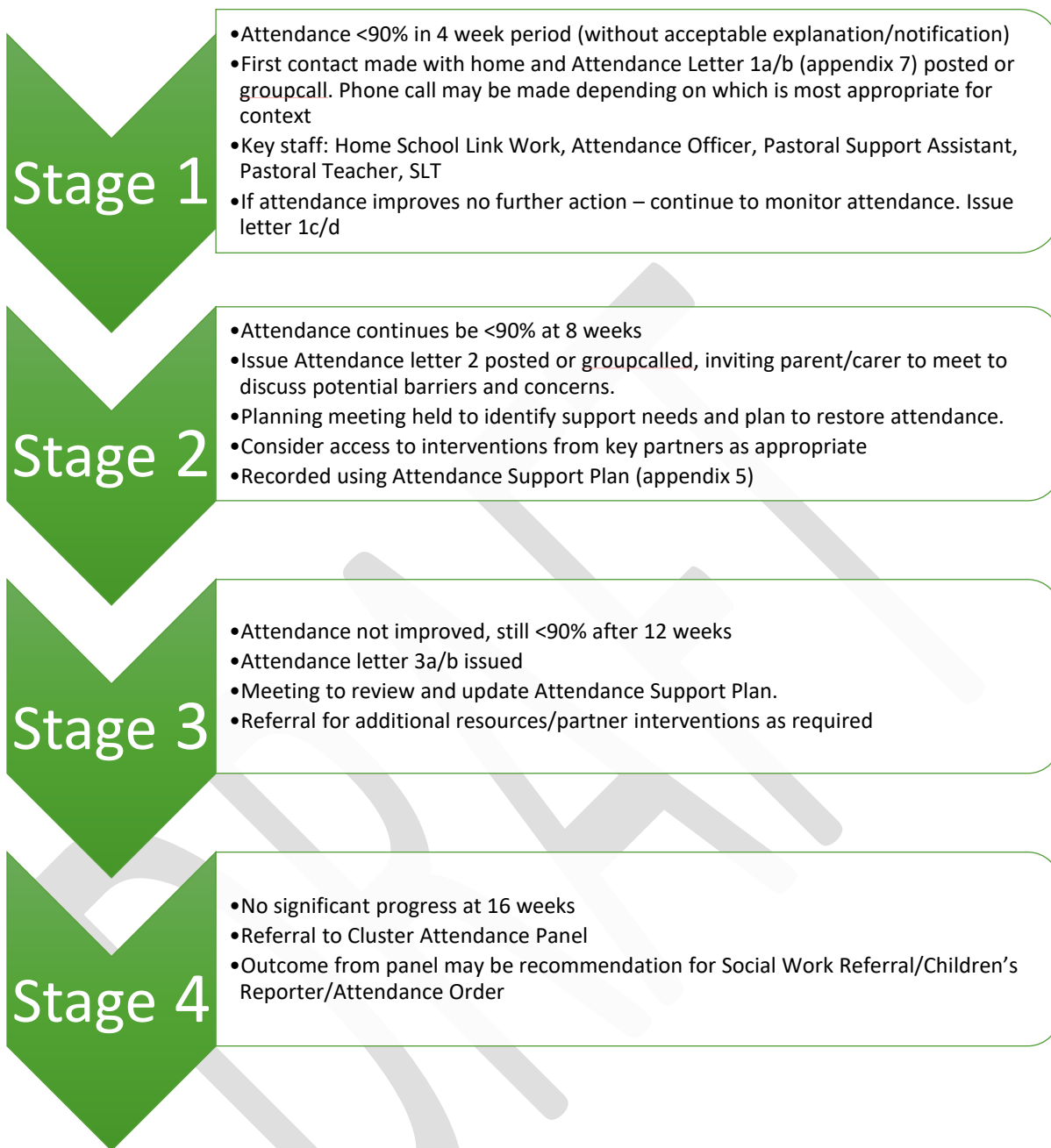
Reason and Code	Absence type	Impacts Attendance %
Sickness/Medical or Dental Appointments		
D (SEL) Self Certified Medical – this includes any time where a pupil is off sick, with proof of illness such as a parental phone call to absence line / message on Xpressions Groupcall or parental letter.	Authorised	√
F (MED) Medically Certified - this includes any time where a pupil is off sick or in hospital, certified by a doctor	Authorised	√
B (SEP) Sickness with Educational Provision – Use where a pupil is off sick, and an appropriate level of educational provision is being provided e.g. where a pupil is accessing work via their school iPad.	Attendance	x
P (PER) Medical/Dental Appointments – to be used for all medical/dental appointments outside of school.	Authorised	x
Late Coming		
L (LAT) Late – Use when pupil arrives late during that opening. This is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason. Secondary schools should use the appropriate code for absence in the periods preceding the late arrival.	Attendance	x
K (LT2) – Late 2 - Use when pupil arrives late during the second half of an opening. This recording is regardless of whether the lateness is for a valid reason.	Authorised	x
[(LTB) Bus Late - Use when a pupil arrives late due to late arrival of school transport.	Late	x
Parental Holidays		
G (UPH) Unauthorised Parental Holiday – the following are examples of reasons that would cause a family holiday to be classed as unauthorised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of cheap holidays • The availability of desired accommodation • Holidays which overlap the beginning or end of term • Parental difficulty obtaining leave (with local judgement applied in cases where evidence is provided by the employer that it cannot accommodate leave during school holidays without serious consequences). 	Unauthorised	√
E (PHL) Authorised Parental Holiday – The majority of holidays taken within term time should be categorised as unauthorised absence. However, it is acceptable under	Authorised	√

<p>exceptional circumstances to authorise a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement, or other traumatic events. 		
<p>Z (EXL) Extended Leave with Parental Consent – Should not be considered the same as a family holiday. Extended leave with parental consent will be recorded separately outside the figures for attendance and absence and includes circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term parental placement abroad • Extended overseas educational trips not organised by the school. • Family weddings or funerals or other events and exceptional circumstances which may require children to travel or participate in extended preparations, for cultural reasons or to care for a relative 	Authorised	<p>Not counted as absence or attendance This code reduces total number of possible attendances for a pupil and must be used with care.</p>
Refusal to Attend		
<p>7 (RFS) Refusal to Attend – use this category where a pupil refuses to attend school.</p>	Unauthorised	v
<p>9 (RSA) Refusal to Attend due to Mental Health & Wellbeing – Educational Provision - to be used where a pupil is refusing to attend school due to social anxiety / mental health related reasons and receiving education provision (e.g. accessing work via school iPad). Note – this code should only be used where education provision is being provided and the pupil, school, parents, and other relevant practitioners agree with the plan in place.</p>	Authorised	x
Other Authorised Absences		
<p>A (ABS) Other Authorised Absence – this category covers situations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate family weddings • Bereavements • Religious observances • Attendance at court • Attendance at a childcare review • Sporting and cultural events not arranged by school but approved by them. • When children and young people from gypsy/travelling communities are travelling. 	Authorised	v
<p>H (SNA) Should Not Attend. Only to be used for P1 pupils who attend for part of the day only and for formal/agreed flexi-schooling arrangements on the days when a child or young person is being educated at home.</p>	Authorised	<p>Not counted as absence or attendance This code reduces total number of possible attendances for a</p>

		pupil and must be used with care
(TRA) Transport issues - use when severe weather prevents school transport from running or prevents a pupil from attending due to personal transport issues. This will only apply to a full opening (AM and/or PM). The expectation is that pupils would access work from home via their school iPad. Should only be used in exceptional circumstances.	Authorised	x
Other Unauthorised Absences		
U (UNA) Absence – Reason Unknown – use when no reason has been given for the pupil’s absence. Include all absence for which no adequate explanation has been provided. Use for Truancy.	Unauthorised	√
T (TBC) To be confirmed – Default absence code; should be used in all cases where reason for absence is not known. These codes are temporary and should be updated as soon as possible.	Unauthorised	√
N (OUA) Other Unauthorised Absence - Pupil absence without school approval but with parental/carer knowledge; Include any other reasons for unauthorised absence e.g. where a parent is refusing to send their child to school following a dispute with school.	Unauthorised	√
Exceptional Domestic Circumstances		
Q (DCA) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Authorised – covers <i>short-term</i> exceptional circumstances such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The period immediately after an accident or illness • A period of serious or critical illness of a close relative • A domestic crisis which causes serious disruption to the family home 	Authorised	√
R (DCU) Exceptional Domestic Circumstances Unauthorised – used for all other unauthorised exceptional domestic circumstances. Use when school and other services have put measures in place to support attendance, but pupil has not attended.	Unauthorised	√
Build Up Timetables		
Y (BUX) – Build-up Timetable (exclusion related) – use where a pupil is attending school on a modified timetable to reduce risk of exclusion and build positive engagement as part of a build-up timetable. Note - this code should only be used in the period after an exclusion where a pupil is on a phased return.	Authorised	x
= (BUH) – Build-up Timetable (health related) – use where a pupil is attending school on a modified timetable to support their health.	Authorised	
Other Attendance in and out of School		

O (OAT) Provision Elsewhere - used where a pupil is receiving educational provision at another establishment e.g. pupil attending another school for subjects not available, shared placement, educational trips organised by partner organisations etc. This code should be used when pupils attend Borders College Schools Academy	Attendance	x
~ (SCH) In School but not in Class – used where a pupil is not in their timetabled class but is somewhere else in school e.g. learning support base, attend appointment with partner agency, music instrument lesson or other educational activity based in school.	Attendance	x
S (STY) Study Leave – use from the start of the official exam timetable until the restart of timetabled lessons in school.	Attendance	x
V (VIS) School Visit/Excursion – use for trips out of school arranged or approved by the school, including visits to further or higher education open days	Attendance	x
V (FLD) – Field trip – use for field trips related to school coursework.	Attendance	x
W (WRK) Work Experience – includes work experience or volunteering, arranged, or approved by the school	Attendance	x
M (MIS) - Missing from class - a high school only code which indicates that a pupil has been marked as absent by a class teacher from one or more periods in an opening. This code is automatically generated by Click & Go and only appears on a pupil's attendance summary printout.	Attendance	x
X (EXC) Exclusion – used for temporary exclusions	Exclusion	√
C (CLO) School Closure - Closure due to weather, elections, emergency closure	Attendance	x

Appendix 5: Monitoring and Tracking Procedures for Schools – Flow Chart



Record Keeping

All actions must be recorded on pastoral notes and documents uploaded to seemis wellbeing application.

Safeguarding

If there are child protection concerns, follow CP Procedures. If child is missing from school and no contact from home, contact Children and Families Duty Team on 01896 662787 if there are safeguarding concerns.

Appendix 6: Attendance Support Plan (template)

Guidance for Use

The attendance support plan can be used to formalise improvements to a child/young person's attendance. It is intended as a document for use by school, team around the child, child/young person, and parent/carer, to be completed in conjunction with the child/young person and family. The plan should be completed alongside the creation of any Build—up Timetable.

The plan can sit alongside any Meeting Around the Child (MAC) or Universal Plus paperwork and plans. The plan is useful to set measurable attendance goals and address barriers to attendance, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties. The plan can be used as evidence of improvement or if evidence is required for further interventions or compulsory measures. It is a requirement that a clear attempt to support attendance by the school has been made prior to referring to the Cluster Attendance Panel.

The plan should be updated with each review. Reviews should take place no later than 6 weeks from the previous meeting and it is advised to set review dates at the creation of the plan. If more than one review is required, further sections should be added.

Completed plans should be scanned and uploaded the SEEMiS Wellbeing Application either in isolation or with Universal plus/MAC paperwork. Plans should also be shared with the child/young person and parents/carers.

SBC Attendance Support Plan			
This plan belongs to	[Name of child/ young person]		
My School		My class	
People involved in my plan:	Parents/carers		
	School		
	Partners Agencies		
	Other		
Reason for my plan/ Barriers to attendance:	<input type="checkbox"/> Truancy <input type="checkbox"/> Unexplained Absences <input type="checkbox"/> Refusal to Attend <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health/Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/ill health <input type="checkbox"/> Family Holidays	
Background information to plan:	Current attendance rate _____%		
Start Date for My Plan:			
Agreed Targets (If Secondary, please attach copy of Build-Up Timetable)	1. 2. 3.		

My Plan will be reviewed on	
Main school contact name, designation, and email.	

REVIEW 1

Date of Review:

Current Attendance Level: %

Have any circumstances changed: YES/NO

If yes, what has changed?

Have targets been met: YES/NO

If targets have been met attendance will continue to be monitored.

Details if targets have not been met:

New Agreed Targets:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Date of next review:

REVIEW 2

Date of Review:

Current Attendance Level: %

Have any circumstances changed: YES/NO

If yes, what has changed?

Have targets been met: YES/NO

If targets have been met attendance will continue to be monitored.

Details if targets have not been met:

New Agreed Targets:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Date of next review:

Appendix 7: Absence Letters

Sample Letter 1a – Parent/Carer

Dear (insert parent/carers name)

Child / Young Person's Name

I am writing to advise that (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

Attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on a child or young person's learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support (insert child / young person's name) and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will contact you in the coming days to discuss this further with you.

OR

We would like to invite you and (insert child/young person's name) to a meeting with (insert staff member's name) on (insert date and time of meeting) to discuss this with you and identify appropriate solutions to support (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion / meeting.

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 1b – Young Person over 12 Years

Dear (young person's name)

I am writing to advise that your attendance at school has fallen below 90% in the past four-week period.

We are concerned as attendance levels such as this can impact negatively on your learning and wellbeing. We would like to work with you to support you and address any barriers which there may be to attendance.

I will be contacting your parent/carer to share this concern and a discussion or meeting will follow which you will be invited to be part of. This will help us to identify solutions to support improvements in your attendance.

I have enclosed a recent attendance printout for your information which we can refer to during our discussion / meeting.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 1c – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

Child/Young Person's Name

Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving (child/young person's name) attendance, I write to advise that (child/young person's name) attendance is now XX% in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor (child/young person's names) attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Thank you for working with us to improve (child/young person's names) school attendance. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters arise in the future which might cause an impact on attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 1d – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (young person's name)

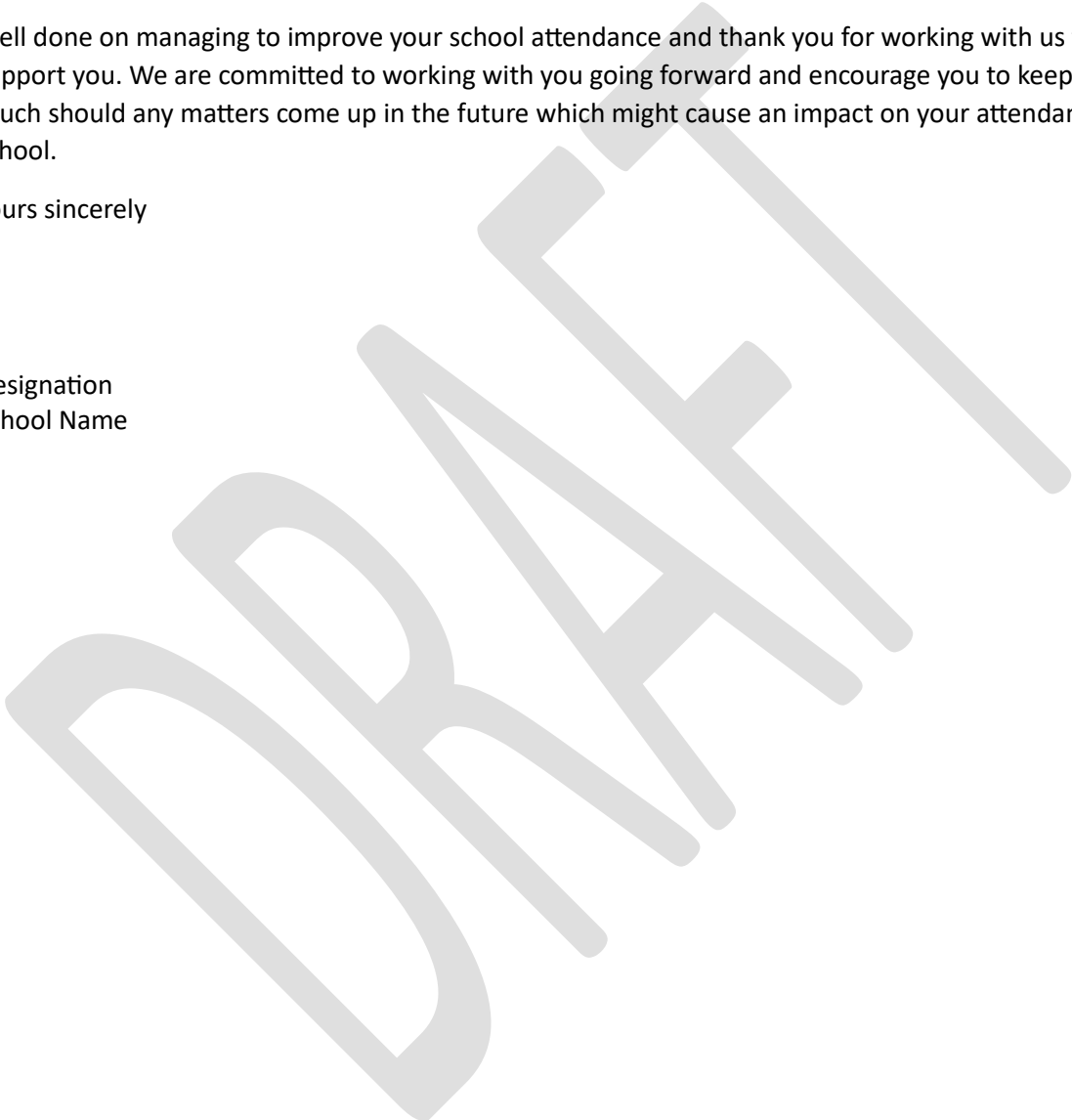
Following our recent meeting to discuss how we can work together to support improving your attendance, I write to advise that your attendnace is now XX% in the last 4 weeks and no longer requires further action. I enclose a recent attendance print out for your information.

We will monitor your attendance over the next 4 weeks to make sure this improvement has continued.

Well done on managing to improve your school attendance and thank you for working with us to support you. We are committed to working with you going forward and encourage you to keep in touch should any matters come up in the future which might cause an impact on your attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name



Sample Letter 2a – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

Child/Young Person's Name

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our subsequent conversation / meeting, I am writing to you as we remain concerned about (insert child / young person's name)'s continued pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you (and insert child / young person's name) to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child / young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 2b – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (insert young person's name)

Further to my letter of (insert date) and our conversation / meeting, I am writing to you as we are concerned about your continued pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past eight-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to attend a meeting on (insert date and time of meeting). This will help us to (identify solutions to support improvements in attendance OR review the supports and targets we put in place at our last child planning meeting.)

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 3a – Parent

Dear (insert parent name)

Child / Young Person's Name

I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about (insert child / young person's name)'s continuing pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, (insert young person's name)'s attendance is now XX% over the past twelve-week period. I have enclosed a printout of (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance record.

I would ask that you (and your child) attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in (insert child / young person's name)'s attendance we may consider a referral to the Cluster Attendance Panel or Scottish Borders Council's Children and Families Social Work for advice and support. Compulsory measures such as an Attendance Order may be sought and/or a referral to the Children's Reporter may be considered in accordance with The Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 allows for an education authority to require a parent to provide an explanation for non-attendance, if it believes there is not a reasonable excuse for non-attendance (section 36)

An appointment has been made for you (and your child) to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

If the above date is not suitable for you, please call us at the school to reschedule the meeting.

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on (insert child / young person's name)'s learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Sample Letter 3b – Young Person over 12 years

Dear (insert young person's name)

I am writing to you to highlight our ongoing concerns about your continuing pattern of low / non-attendance.

According to our records, your attendance is now XX% over the past twelve-week period. I have enclosed a printout of your attendance record.

I would ask that you and your parent attend a meeting to discuss this with you and review the supports and targets we put in place at our last meeting.

We will continue to seek to explore what can we do together to improve the situation and how we can help.

If following this meeting, there is no improvement in your attendance we may consider a referral to other agencies for their advice and support.

An appointment has been made for you and your parent to meet with us on (insert date and time of meeting).

It is important for us to meet to have this discussion so that the situation does not continue to have an impact on your learning and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Designation
School Name

Appendix 8: Consultation with Children, Young People and Parents/Carers

Introduction

As part of the development of the new Scottish Borders Council (SBC) attendance policy, a consultation process was conducted to gather the views and ideas of children, young people, and parents/carers on what helps with school attendance. This consultation aligns with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which emphasizes the right of children to express their views and have them considered in matters that affect them. The consultation aimed to ensure that the perspectives of key stakeholders were considered in shaping the attendance policy.

Overview of Statistics

The consultation involved a total of 247 participants, including children, young people, and parents/carers. Focus groups and individual phone calls were conducted by staff members in schools across the Scottish Borders. Children and young people who struggle to attend school, and their parents, were also included in the consultation. The consultation included:

- 18 schools (10 primary schools and 8 secondary schools)
- 21 focus groups
- 194 children and young people
- 53 parents/carers

Summary of Responses

1. How does your school help you/your child to come to school regularly?

The most common responses were:

- Breakfast clubs (mentioned 8 times)
- Support from staff (mentioned 7 times)
- Regular communication with parents (mentioned 6 times)
- Engaging learning activities (mentioned 5 times)
- Positive relationships with staff and peers (mentioned 5 times)

Schools across the Scottish Borders employ various strategies to encourage regular attendance. Breakfast clubs provide a welcoming start to the day, while supportive staff and engaging learning activities create a positive environment. Regular communication with parents helps to address any concerns and reinforces the importance of attendance.

"The school helps me come to school through learning and support and going on trips." (Primary school pupil)

"I feel well supported, as a working mum I have 2 children to drop off for breakfast club, I am able to drop both children off at the same place. This makes getting to work on time much easier!" (Primary school parent)

"The school sends regular information in the newsletter about attendance, plus I get a monthly letter re attendance and a phone call, though I still find it hard to get my daughter in, school does listen to my problems, and tries to help by finding solutions." (Primary school parent)

2. What else could your school do to help you/your child come to school regularly?

The most common responses were:

- More engaging/fun activities (mentioned 7 times)
- Improved communication with parents (mentioned 4 times)
- Increased support for children with additional needs (mentioned 4 times)
- Flexibility in start times (mentioned 3 times)
- More clubs and extracurricular activities (mentioned 3 times)

Participants suggested that schools could further enhance attendance by offering more engaging and fun activities, improving communication with parents, and providing increased support for children with additional needs. Some also proposed more flexibility in start times and a greater variety of clubs and extracurricular activities.

"Wake up Shake up every day, not just on Tuesdays and Wednesdays" (Primary school pupil).

"More variety of clubs to do; for example a sports club that changes every week (one week basketball; one week football; etc...) and this could be on a Monday because there aren't really any clubs on a Monday." (Secondary school pupil)

3. What helps you/your child come to school every day?

The most common responses were:

- Seeing friends (mentioned 18 times)
- Engaging learning activities/subjects (mentioned 11 times)
- Positive relationships with staff (mentioned 8 times)
- Feeling safe and supported (mentioned 6 times)
- Sense of routine and structure (mentioned 4 times)

Participants identified several key factors that encourage daily attendance, including the opportunity to socialise with friends, engaging learning activities and subjects, positive relationships with staff, feeling safe and supported, and having a sense of routine and structure.

"I look forward to seeing staff (p6) nurture (p4) and spending time with friends (p4)." (Primary school pupils)

"Buses mean that young people have to be organised. The school building is calm and ordered and a good place to be. Nurturing environment and small schools mean young people are known." (Secondary school parent)

4. What makes it harder for you/your child to come to school every day?

The most common responses were:

- Anxiety/mental health issues (mentioned 10 times)
- Difficulty with morning routines (mentioned 9 times)
- Bullying or negative peer interactions (mentioned 8 times)
- Tiredness/lack of sleep (mentioned 7 times)
- Challenges with specific subjects or learning (mentioned 5 times)

Participants identified various barriers to daily attendance, including anxiety and mental health issues, difficulty with morning routines, bullying or negative peer interactions, tiredness or lack of sleep, and challenges with specific subjects or learning.

"My child can be unwell, so health can stop her being in school every day." (Primary school parent)

"I dread the thought of catching up after having fallen behind due to non-attendance. Sometimes feels that I physically can't get out of bed. I dread the thought of coming in which physically prevents me from coming to school. This can cause arguments at home." (Secondary school pupil)

5. How can the school help you/your child come to school regularly?

The most common responses were:

- Improved communication between school and parents (mentioned 8 times)
- More support for children with additional needs (mentioned 5 times)
- Engaging learning activities (mentioned 4 times)
- Addressing bullying and negative peer interactions (mentioned 3 times)
- Flexibility in start times and schedules (mentioned 3 times)

Participants suggested that schools could help improve attendance by enhancing communication with parents, providing more support for children with additional needs, offering engaging learning activities, addressing bullying and negative peer interactions, and allowing some flexibility in start times and schedules.

"Include everybody when talking about things if things have gone wrong (people hurting others). Mondays are too busy, have something exciting to start the day - Forest Schools, Outdoor Learning, Art, PE, Physical Activity. More science, clubs, technology, physical activity." (Primary school pupil)

"Keep open communication with me about my child's attendance and raise any issues early." (Primary school parent)

6. Is there anything else you want to share about going to school every day?

The most common responses were:

- Concerns about missing learning or activities when absent (mentioned 4 times)
- Importance of school as part of the community (mentioned 2 times)
- Desire for more comfortable uniforms or dress codes (mentioned 2 times)
- Appreciation for school staff and support (mentioned 2 times)

Participants shared additional thoughts on daily school attendance, including concerns about missing learning or activities when absent, the importance of school as part of the community, a desire for more comfortable uniforms or dress codes, and appreciation for school staff and support.

"Sometimes I worry about missing out on things when I'm not there." (Primary school pupil)

"Personally I think children with Autism would thrive if they could attend mainstream but change the curriculum, stop worrying about attainment do more stuff for kids like life skills, car stuff, apprenticeship." (Primary and secondary school parent)

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1 Details of the Proposal

A. Title of Proposal:	Scottish Borders Council Revised School Attendance Policy
B. What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice/Project <input type="checkbox"/> A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)	<p>The revised Attendance Policy sets out the positive approaches, partnerships, and expectations to promote engagement and attendance in Scottish Borders schools. It details the procedures for responding to attendance concerns and provides guidance on flexible attendance arrangements to ensure the council is getting it right for every child. The policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools to build an inclusive and nurturing environment that encourages children and young people to attend school willingly. • Ensure a commitment to maintaining open communication between schools, parents/carers, and children and young people regarding attendance matters. • Ensure that all children and young people attend school regularly. • Provide support to children and young people and their families to improve and maintain good attendance. • Address the potential impact of external factors on attendance, such as transportation issues, health concerns, or socio-economic challenges. • Ensure clarity and consistency for all stakeholders in matters related to school attendance. • Identify and address the reasons why children and young people are absent from school. • Reduce the number of children and young people who are persistently absent from school.

D. Service Area: Department:	People Education and Children's Services
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Scott Watson Equity and Inclusion Lead Officer
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Primary and Secondary Headteachers and Depute Headteachers Pastoral School Leaders Attainment Advisor, Education Scotland Educational Psychologist Home School Link Workers and Attendance Officers Business Support Inclusion and Wellbeing Children and Families Social Work Senior Leaders Early Years Education Team
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	1 st April 2024

Section 2 Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

Yes / No *(please delete as applicable)*

If yes, - please state here:

The revised Attendance Policy is closely linked to and supported by other SBC policies and frameworks, including:

- SBC Child's Planning Manual
- SBC Inclusion Framework and Policy
- SBC Partnership with Parents Framework
- SBC Nurturing Approaches Guidelines
- SBC Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy

There may be impacts on these policies in terms of aligning practices and procedures to support good attendance.

Section 3 Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:

Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010?

(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter “No” and go to Section 3.2.)

Yes

Equality Duty

A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*

Reasoning:

Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. The revised Attendance Policy aims to eliminate discrimination by ensuring a consistent, supportive approach to promoting attendance for all children and young people, with

	particular emphasis on understanding and addressing barriers for vulnerable groups.
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? <i>(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)</i>	The policy promotes equality of opportunity by aiming to ensure all children and young people can access education through regular attendance. It includes guidance on providing additional support and flexible arrangements to meet individual needs.
C. Foster good relations? <i>(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)</i>	The policy emphasises the importance of positive relationships and communication between schools, children and young people, parents/carers, and partners in promoting good attendance. This helps to foster good relations and understanding.

3.2 Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)				
Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.				
	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy applies equally to all school-aged children and young people.
Disability A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This may be visible or invisible, progressive or recurring.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy recognises that children and young people with disabilities or additional support needs may require extra support or flexibilities to maintain good attendance. It includes guidance on providing additional support and modifications.
Gender Reassignment anybody who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.				
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Race: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy recognises the need to consider cultural factors that may impact attendance for some groups, such as Gypsy/Traveller communities. It provides guidance on authorised absences for these purposes.
Religion or Belief: different religious or philosophical beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief) e.g. Christianity, Islam, Hindu, pacifism, vegetarianism, gender critical.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy allows for authorised absences for the purpose of religious or belief observances.
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Sexual Orientation , e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<p>3.3 Fairer Scotland Duty</p> <p>This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.</p>				

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?

Yes / No *(please delete as applicable)*

If No go to Section 4

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Positive Impact The policy recognizes that poverty can be a barrier to attendance. It promotes working with families and partners to address financial challenges and includes guidance on Cost of the School Day.
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		As above, the policy aims to reduce the impact of material deprivation on attendance by promoting supports for affected families.
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport), see rural proofing guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy recognises that socio-economic disadvantage can impact attendance. It promotes a supportive, non-stigmatizing approach to working with affected families.
Care experienced people		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy notes that care experienced children and young people are more at risk of attendance issues. It includes guidance on providing extra support and monitoring during placement changes etc.
Carers paid and unpaid including family members		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy allows for authorised absence for young carers when required.
Homelessness		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy recognises that homelessness and housing issues can severely impact attendance. It promotes working with partners to support affected families maintain attendance where possible.
Addictions and substance use		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The policy notes that substance use issues in the family can impact pupil attendance. It guides working with pupils and families to support attendance and address the underlying issues.
Those involved within the criminal justice system	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty (*Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only*)

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.

This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?

Yes/ No

If “Yes”, please complete below

Covenant Duty	How this has been considered and any specific provision made:
<p>The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;</p> <p>The <u>MOD Statutory Guidance</u> gives the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danger • Geographical Mobility • Separation from Family • Service Law • Unfamiliarity with Civilian Life • Hours of Work • Stress 	<p>The policy allows additional flexibility for families who have a parent employed in armed services in terms of authorising family holidays when taking leave.</p>
<p>The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;</p>	<p>The policy promotes awareness of the additional challenges that children from armed forces families may face in terms of mobility, parental separation, stress etc and the need to provide extra support.</p>

The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

The above consideration of additional flexibilities and supports for armed forces families is an example of special provision made for service families.

Section 4 Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered “No” to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes / No *-(please delete as applicable)*

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

n/a

Signed by Lead Officer:



Designation:	Equity and Inclusion Lead Officer
Date:	1st April 2024
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	



PROPOSAL FOR CLOSURE OF THE WILTON CENTRE, PRINCES STREET, HAWICK

Report by Lesley Munro, Director – Education & Children’s Services

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

23 April 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report proposes the permanent closure of the Wilton Centre, Hawick (currently temporarily closed) due to the relocation of SEBN services to local cluster schools following the Covid pandemic, and the unsuitable condition of the Wilton Centre building precluding it as a viable sustainable asset of the school estate without significant capital investment.**
- 1.2 It aims to set out the proposal to close The Wilton Centre, and to agree the commencement of an informal consultation engagement period of 6 weeks to engage communities to provide views and opinions on the proposal.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Committee approve the Proposal Document and approve the commencement of the informal consultation process to begin by publishing the Proposal Document on Wednesday, 8 May 2024 and to close for views and opinions from community stakeholders on Friday 28 June 2024.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Redesign of SEBN

- a. The Wilton Centre also known colloquially as “The Arches” used to house the SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Service). SEBN is a support service to children and young people across the Scottish Borders region.
- b. The SEBN Service is a responsive service which continues to give support to children today. The current service provides this within children’s existing school settings as the Wilton Centre (The Arches) was not reopened following door closure in the Covid-19 Pandemic. The building was closed after the summer holidays of August 2021.
- c. Historically (pre-Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020) the SEBN Service provided in Reach Placements and Outreach Placements. In Reach Placements were within the building in The Wilton Centre, Hawick on a part-time or full-time placement basis. The Covid-19 Pandemic resulted in The Wilton Centre’s doors being closed and to ensure continuation of service, the SEBN Service was reformatted to provide that SEBN Service within the service users mainstream schools.

3.2 The aim was also to provide a more inclusive service providing children with SEBN support within their existing school set up instead of requiring them to travel (sometimes excessively long distances) across the large Borders region to attend SEBN placements within the Wilton building in Hawick itself. The families of those attending the placements at that time were asked whether they agreed with this reformat proposal and their preference was that they concurred. They advised that they wished a far more inclusive service within their young people’s mainstream clusters schools rather than travelling to The Wilton Centre each day. Reasons for same included an increased demand to have greater and more flexible resources in the young people’s own communities. This was especially the case from the older service users in terms of secondary provision. It was felt that it was a step backwards in terms of the goal to be working inclusively and across Local Authority schools if they continued to be required to be transported to the Wilton Centre. The families of service users expressed a desire to a more localised and wanted a more inclusive approach, from an emotional, educational and peer group point of view. The view was expressed that there were little to no educational benefits from the outdated approach of transporting children great distances to an elderly and out of date building, which was in the main unhelpful to their educational and emotional wellbeing.

3.3 Consideration is given in the proposal document to the impact of on future learners under the SEBN service if the Wilton Centre is permanently closed. The proposal details why it is felt, on balance, that there are little to no drawbacks to future learners to have access to closer SEBN facilities and resources which support their learning and emotional needs in their local mainstream settings more in line with the educational benefits of inclusion and nurture approached in their mainstream schools. The proposal document suggests that this approach sits in line with the Scottish Government directions to continue to promote mainstreaming as a priority and a higher

level of needs, requires prioritising the offering in universal settings rather than in standalone units.

3.4 This new localised approach sat firmly on all fours with the principle of “inclusion for all” commitment from Scottish Borders Council 2015 strategic approach to Inclusion and sat in line with the Standard in Schools Act 2000 which recognised the rights of all children and young people to be in education alongside their peers in mainstream schools alongside the presumption to mainstream in terms of Scottish Government Guidance “ Guidance on Presumption to Provide Education in a Mainstream setting” (March 2029).

3.5 **The Building**

The Wilton Centre had been regularly reviewed for the last 20 years and was deemed to require significant investment to modernise it and make it fit for the modern age as an educational setting for the future. It was reviewed by the architectural lead as part of an Estates Review in 2018, and it was accepted that the building needed significant capital investment for it to be fit as an educational setting meeting reasonable standards for schools in terms of Schools for the Future or in respect of Scottish Government Guidance for school estates. Since doors closed in terms of the pandemic in 2020, maintenance budgets are required to keep it wind, watertight and secure.

3.6 Turner and Townsend for Scottish Borders Council provided a suitability survey dated 29 January 2024 which rated the building as “D”. This is the lowest rating in terms of suitability. “D” means that the building does not support the delivery of services to children and communities and that the school building and grounds seriously impede the delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school.

3.7 Prior to this survey being completed, and whilst the building was in use, SEBN staff also expressed concerns about the building both in terms of the elderly building design giving rise to layout concerns, and safe passage spaces within the building which limited the ability to define safe spaces, as well as concerns re accessibility due to the nature of the design and curricular limitations leading from those.

3.8 There are two buildings within the Wilton Centre. The main building is accessed by a number of stairs and a separate annexe is accessed from the playground with a tarmac playground to the front. There is no accessible entrance. This led to “safety upon entry” concerns for staff and issues regarding safeguarding. The age of the building meant that it does not have the right balance of traditional and/or modern flexible working spaces (although attempts had been made over the years to create a free flow play area for younger children attending placements). Essentially, the older building design meant that safe passage through the building or the ability to create safe spaces was compromised. The age of the building and the design of same also led to curricular limitations, particularly in terms of secondary aged pupils on placements, who were unable to access a more diverse range of curricular offerings. For example, the building offered no access to technology or science or quality Physical Education provision. This in turn meant that staff felt that the children attending placements were not able to gain a more bespoke learning suitable for them. The educational limitations of the older building design and fabric is indubitably clear.

3.9 The Building is Listed. Options for its future will be considered by the Council's Assets/Estate Management Team and reported to Elected Members for consideration. There are suggestions that community interest groups have expressed desire in the Wilton Centre and this is to be welcomed and ongoing dialogue encouraged. This could include community asset transfer provisions once this proposal to permanently close has been considered and a decision made.

4 PROPOSAL

4.1 The aim of this proposal paper is to advise and inform Scottish Borders Council communities across the region about the background to this proposal to close the Centre permanently, due to the reasons explained above and to allow an informed approach to be taken to the proposal and to explain why the proposal has been made in terms of the SEBN service redesign and building fabric unsuitability concerns. The next stage is to invite comment from communities and stakeholders in terms of the informal consultation period to begin on 8th May and to close 28th June 2024, before a decision is made thereafter on whether a formal consultation requires to be undertaken in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (As Amended); and to make a recommendation in terms of same.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

Financial Concerns are below:

There were significant budgetary implications each year when the building was used by the SEBN Service in terms of the transport costs of the service users, cost of staff and the maintenance/upkeep of the Wilton Centre itself as is addressed in the proposal report. Since temporary closure, those costs have reduced substantially – although calculating those savings is difficult to do as SEBN staff were redeployed to local cluster schools and where possible for expansion additional staff were recruited. Whilst it is temporarily closed, the building itself requires upkeep and insurance which are costs which require to be met. The Costs of maintenance for the closed building (2021- today's date) to include the corporate landlord utilities and statutory repairs and maintenance are approximately circa £12,000 per year as per the proposal report. The Building Suitability survey from Turner and Townsend (Appendix 2), demonstrates the significant capital investment which would be required to bring the building up to a standard acceptable for use within the modern era. The redesign of the SEBN Service means that this need to modernise is redundant.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

(a) The proposal report describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this proposal in terms of the impact of the proposal to close the Wilton Building, and no specific additional concerns need to be addressed, although it is important to note that the reason for informally consulting on the proposal to close the building permanently is to obtain wide ranging opinions and views from communities and stakeholders which is it is anticipated may well identify

further areas of risk which need to be considered. The Local Authority will pledge to work with communities affected to identify and overcome any issues which may arise from the proposal to permanently close the building of the Wilton Centre. However, the Local Authority's view is that this is likely to be minimal given the reallocation of the resources to the children's own cluster/catchment schools within the redesign and the fact that the families of those attending children within the service advised that they would prefer this more localised inclusive approach to cut down on commuting and promote inclusion within the mainstream schools. It is anticipated that any issues in terms of this therefore would be minimal as the overwhelming feeling at that time was that this was a better approach for their young people.

- (b) In addition, the building itself is currently closed and lies empty. Upkeep is required to keep it wind and watertight and to ensure it is kept locked and secure. As the building has not been occupied for several years, several areas in the building are in a state of poor disrepair and internally the building is in a poor state of repair, particularly the west side of the building where upon areas of the ceiling and wall lathe plaster are badly crumbling. This information is available within the Suitability Survey (Appendix 2).
- (c) Any positive attempt to re purpose or an adaptive reuse of the building is thought will go some way to redress to some extent, the loss of the building to the local community and to lessen the result of an empty building within the Hawick Community.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

- (a) Implementing and approving the Proposal to close the Wilton Centre and agreeing to an informal consultation period to gauge community and stakeholders opinions and views may raise concerns relating to discrimination, particularly if it inadvertently affects individuals with disabilities. The IIA has been completed and it is felt that under the Equality duty the proposal will help to eliminate discrimination. The permanent closure of the building follows the temporary closure following Covid-19 and the redesign of the SEBN Service to allow children of the service to attend their local cluster schools which has helped to promote inclusion. The building itself was deemed not fit for purpose and failed inspections as to suitability, thus closure will ensure children of the SEBN Service will not be disadvantaged.
- (b) It is felt the proposal will help promotion of equality of opportunity, not hinder it, due to the advancement of integration and inclusion – eg enhanced closer to home learning environments and removal of long taxi rides to and from school advancing the equality of opportunity and advancement of young people in the SEBN Service “belonging in their local community” rather than being removed from it as was what happened when the building was used by the SEBN Service.
- (c) It is felt that the proposal will help foster good relations between those who have different equality characteristics as reformatting from an outreach centre to local community cluster schools can only and encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics sits squarely with promotion of inclusion and any staff, children or parents with restricted mobility in terms of requiring to

attend an unsuitable and inaccessible building will have been removed by the closure of the building.

- (d) It is felt that any negatives in terms of any impact in terms of equality groups would be mitigated with the continuation, promotion and development of more inclusive practices with a focus on universal and more targeted provisions in schools. Crucial that this informal consultation is to be as open as possible regarding communication to address and mitigate any potential concerns or potential discrimination concerns about the proposal.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN sustainable development Goal Checklist has been completed and it has been identified that the Proposal re permanent closure of the Wilton Centre, Hawick and to agree the commencement of an informal pre-consultation engagement review period of 6 weeks to engage communities to provide views and opinions on the proposal would have a positive impact in respect of the 4th UN goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning and opportunities for all. This is in relation to the identification and tackling of barriers in terms of inequality and diversity, and how it assists with the policy and goal of "inclusion" to ensure that access for enhanced opportunities for pupils within the SEBN Service within their own cluster school and not in a separate unit, would promote diversity, and inclusion and a greater educational benefit overall helping to eliminate barriers and disadvantages. The building is in an unsuitable state for a modern fit for purpose school estate and, as such, if such a proposal were to be recommended to close and the building repurposed by a community group who has shown interest, this would go some way to redress to some extent the loss of the building to the local community.

5.5 **Climate Change**

Not applicable

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

Not applicable

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

Not applicable.

6 **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council, the Finance Business Partner and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Children’s Services

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Marina Urie	Solicitor – 01835 824000 (Ext 8606)

Background Papers: Proposal Paper
Suitability Survey Report

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Marina Urie can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA. Tel: 018935 824000.

This page is intentionally left blank

Proposals Paper

PROPOSAL

This Proposal is for the permanent closure of The Wilton Centre (otherwise known as The Arches) 36 Princes Street, Hawick (which is currently temporarily closed). This proposal is due to relocation of the Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Needs Service (SEBN) to local cluster schools following the Covid -19 Pandemic and the unsuitability of the building for continued use within the school estate.

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This proposal paper has been prepared by Scottish Borders Council's Children and Young Peoples Services to consult informally on a proposal to permanently close The Wilton Centre (The Arches) due to relocation of SEBN services to local cluster schools and the unsuitable condition of the building.

The paper aims to set out the proposal and to in-gather opinions from Scottish Borders Council Communities on the proposal prior to any formal consultation process taking place.

It also contains the Educational Benefits and any drawbacks in respect of the Proposal.

It is intended to take the form of pre-consultation community engagement review to kick start an open and transparent forum to obtain wide reaching views and opinions on the proposal and thereafter, to determine whether this engagement for views, requires to be followed by a formal Consultation process in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland Act 2010 (As Amended) and to make recommendations in terms of same.

OVERVIEW

The Wilton Centre also known colloquially as "The Arches" housed the SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Service). SEBN was an in-reach and an out-reach support service to children and young people across the Scottish Borders region.

The SEBN service now known as the Inclusion and Wellbeing service is a responsive service which continues to give support to children today. The current service provides this in children's existing school settings as the Wilton Centre (The Arches) was not reopened following door closure in the Covid 19 Pandemic. The building was closed after the summer holidays of August 2021.

Historically (pre- Covid 19 Pandemic in 2020) The SEBN service provided placements within the building in Hawick mainly on a Part time and occasionally on a Full-time placement basis. The Covid 19 Pandemic resulted in the Wilton Building's doors being closed as all educational settings were. To ensure continuation of service the SEBN service was reformatted to provide that SEBN service within the service users mainstream schools. This was to be a more inclusive service providing children with SEBN support within their existing school set up instead of requiring them to travel (sometimes excessively long distances) across the region to attend SEBN placements within the Wilton building in Hawick.

The aim of this Proposal paper is to advise and inform Scottish Borders Communities across the region, about this background and to allow an informed approach to be taken to the proposal to

close the Wilton Centre building permanently following the reformatting of the services provided within to a more inclusive practice providing children with SEBN support within their existing school set up.

The concerns regarding the fabric of the building will be discussed in this proposal paper to explain “why” the closure of the Wilton Centre on a now permanent basis is proposed, and to invite comments from communities and stakeholders accordingly.

DETAIL OF PROPOSAL

The proposal has implications for all Scottish Borders Council primary and secondary school pupils current and future, who may have been in the past or will in the future be referred for SEBN placements. They may wish to have a view on the Proposal Document in so far as the closure of the Wilton Centre Building is concerned. Although the SEBN service has been redesigned, views are encouraged and welcomed to gather thoughts on the Wilton Centre building itself being disbanded. Scottish Borders Council recognises that the closure of this building will mean that placements will not be undertaken in The Wilton Centre and therefore seeks views on this from across the region. Historically, all children across the region may have had access to full time or part time placements by referral by their local mainstream school setting.

This is an informal consultation therefore it does not require to follow the processes of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010, but aims to broadly follow the same principles, to fully engage communities and obtain as far as possible, a wide range of opinions and viewpoints. This is also to inform the decision as to whether it is necessary to proceed to a full consultation in terms of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROPOSAL PAPER

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

PROPOSAL PAPER PUBLISHED

The proposal paper will be available for inspection, free of charge at

1. Council Headquarters, Newton St Boswells, TD6 OSA
2. All SBC primary and secondary schools within the Scottish Borders- upon request.

3. And published on the Scottish Borders Council Website:-

Link to be added when approved and published

4. Copies of the Proposal Paper are also available on request from: -

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal
Children and Young People’s Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 OSA

Telephone: 01893 582 4000

E-mail:

schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Please state that you are looking for the Wilton Centre (The Arches) Closure Proposal Document.

5. This proposal Paper is available in an alternative format or can be translated form for readers whose first language is not English. Please apply to:-

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: 01893 582 4000

E-mail:

schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

6. Formal Notice of the proposal and relevant information will be given and made available, free of charge to

1 Parents/ Carers of *all* Primary and Secondary Schools in Scottish Borders Council (who may have in theory Children who could be referred to the SEBN service)– upon request- notification will be by Group Call notification and on SBC Social Media/ SBC website.

2. The Staff of the current SEBN service

3.Any trade Union which is representative of the SEBN staff

4. The Community Council of Hawick (and any Community Council of any further Borders area upon request)

5. Community Planning Partnership named Partners

6. The constituency member of the Scottish Parliament

7.The constituency member of Parliament

8. The List members of the Scottish Parliament

7. Advertisement in local Media

1. An advert will be placed on Scottish Borders Council website and social media to advise and provide a link to the Proposal Document inviting views and comments on the Proposal Document. A press release will be published in local media outlets.

8. Period for community views to be heard.

The proposal document will be published and therefore the informal consultation will begin on **Wednesday 8th May 2024 and will close on Friday 28th June 2024**. This is to allow a 6 week

consultation period (and therefore in excess of 30 school days) to allow as wide an opportunity as possible for communities to be able to air views and provide comment.

8. Public Meeting

Format of Public Meeting

Anyone wishing to attend the public meeting on Teams digital link is invited to do so. The meeting, which will be convened by Scottish Borders Council will be addressed by the Director Children and Young People's Services, and other Senior Officers of the Council.

A date and Link for the meeting will be published alongside the Proposal paper.

The meeting will provide an opportunity to hear more about the Proposal to close the Wilton Centre.

It will provide an opportunity to ask questions about the Proposal to close the building. The public meeting will let you have your views recorded so that they can be considered as part of the Proposal process.

A note will be taken at the meeting of comments, questions, and officer responses. These notes will be published on the Council website and a copy will be made available on request. These will form part of the Council's decision as to whether to formally consult on the closure of the Building and proceed to a full Consultation in term of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 (as Amended) or proceed to accept the proposal as is.

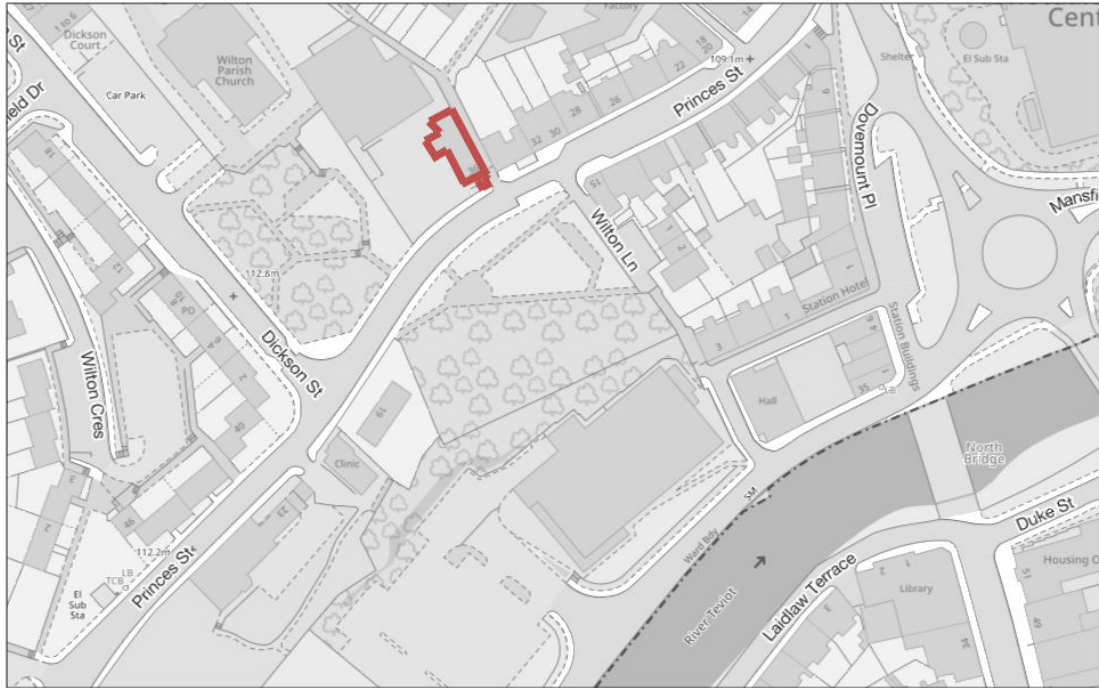
BACKGROUND

LOCATION and GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION



The Wilton Centre “The Arches” (pictured) is located at 36 Princes Street, Hawick.

ArcGIS Web Map



31/01/2024, 14:53:11

Override 1

1:1,323
0 0.01 0.02 0.04 mi
0 0.02 0.04 0.07 km

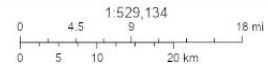
© Crown copyright and database right 2021. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100023423. Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS

See above map in red outlining the building's position within the town on Princes Street, Hawick and further map on page 6, detailing the position of Hawick within the southwestern aspect of the Scottish Borders Region.

ArcGIS Web Map



01/02/2024, 16:42:20



© Crown copyright and database right 2021. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number: 100023423. Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS

OVERVIEW

As advised, the Wilton Centre “The Arches”, Hawick historically housed the SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs Service) which is a support service to children and Young people across the length and breadth of the Scottish Borders. The service continues to be a responsive service to support children within the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service of Scottish Borders Council. It historically housed part time or full time placements within the Wilton Centre itself.

Following the pandemic when schools closed throughout Scotland, the Wilton Centre itself was not reopened due partly to the unsuitable condition of the building, and the fact that the service could be continued in a different re-designed format which did not require utilisation of the building. The Service is still in existence today.

The building was deemed no longer fit for purpose requiring significant capital investment to bring it up to an acceptable standard in terms of the school estate. This will be discussed in the section categorised as Building Suitability.

THE PROVISION AT THE WILTON CENTRE

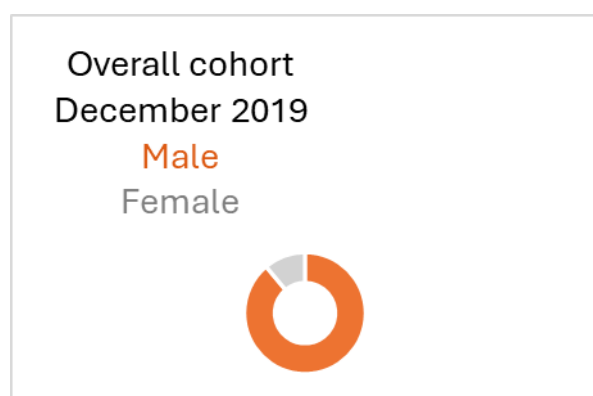
To understand the Service as was provided at the Wilton Centre “The Arches”, it is important to have an understanding of the number of pupils who were under the SEBN Service and in placements within the SEBN service at the building.

In December 2019 the data of the authority shows that there were eighteen pupils attending the SEBN service on placements. This does not include the number of pupils being supported on an outreach basis.

Total	18
--------------	-----------

Gender breakdown

Male	16
Female	2



The Year group break down was as below: -

Year group	Number of pupils
P3	1
P4	3
P5	1
P6	3
P7	3
S3	2
S4	4
S5	1
Total	18

The suggestion from the data available was that the pupil numbers attending placements was reducing over the years.

Many pupils on SEBN placements were in the later stages of their school education. The SEBN staff noticed an increased demand to have greater and more flexible resources to meet the needs of these young people in their *own* communities rather than transporting them to the Wilton Centre as an outreach centre, and that this was becoming the norm. This was especially the case from secondary schools.

Attendance of pupils on placement was at times low, and the SEBN senior management team found it difficult to re allocate staff out to schools effectively at short notice due to the geographical location of the setting within the Borders region, when pupils did not arrive in their transport in the morning.

Hawick is situated within the southwest of the Borders Region. It is approximately ten miles southwest of Jedburgh and just under nine miles southeast of Selkirk. It is therefore in the most southerly section of the Borders region.

Many pupils were on part time placements only. Latterly two days shared placements for almost all primary pupils and secondary pupils attended for up to five days.

A consultation process had begun in 2019 with SEBN attending families along with Staff and Trade Unions where views and opinions were gauged about a remodel of the SEBN service. Post COVID it was suggested that a return to a model of extracting pupils from their cluster schools to travel great distances across the region to attend the standalone SEBN unit at the Wilton Centre would be a step backwards in working inclusively in and across local authority schools. Instead, it aimed to look to establish an intervention-based locality model to support all young people previously attending the SEBN. Optimising engagement in learning in their mainstream schools was felt to be far preferable and attractive to all consultees.

The covid pandemic forced the closure of the Wilton Centre's doors, this was the catalyst to begin this process in accelerating and advancing a new redesign of the SEBN service offered. The families of SEBN service attending children were very clear when they were asked about this and agreed with a new localised approach.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

It is generally accepted that transporting children to and from Hawick was in the main unhelpful to their educational and emotional wellbeing. There are no educational benefits of this outdated system. The feeling from the families was that children on placements in the service would be better served educationally and emotionally by reducing travel times. They did not feel the long commutes of some children were in any way beneficial. The feelings were that the stress on learners of long journeys to and from the centre – some pupils travelling up to two hours each way – was overwhelmingly negative. This was both tiring and distressing for them and this travel was often highly dysregulating. Families of the service users overwhelmingly agreed to a new approach when consulted and welcomed the reallocation of the resources from the service to their children's own cluster / catchment schools.

Staff also reported that the intensity of the commuter journeys made it increasingly difficult to support children and felt the travel was prohibitive to helpful learning. Essentially, leaving their community to travel long distances placed barriers around restorative processes being implemented successfully, essentially counteracting what the service was trying to achieve in the first place.

There was also the challenge of reintegration once the placements had come to an end. Questions were raised such as where did the child identify? Where was the child's community?

The idea what you remove a child for a placement in another unit, to then be reintegrated into their mainstream school (even if part time) does not sit naturally with updated and modern-day principles of inclusivity and integration. The provision in the unit also by its nature and set up, did not support the principle that positive role models are beneficial to learners. There needs to be inclusivity for this to be beneficial. There was also a lack of balanced peer cohort in terms of gender balance as is clear from the data of the attending children. There was a lack of female peers for girls within the unit with the numbers suggesting an overwhelmingly male cohort.

Overall, the new redesign of the SEBN service was felt to fit better to support the young people of the service in maintaining their position within, and accessing the help and support needed in their local community.

This position also sits in line with the Standards in Schools Act 2000, which recognised the rights of all children and young people to be in education alongside their peers in mainstream schools known as the presumption of mainstream. See Scottish Government Guidance *"Guidance on Presumption to Provide education in a mainstream setting"* (March 2019).

A further educational benefit to the SEBN service becoming more localised to children's mainstream schools sat on all fours with the 2018 Scottish Borders Council strategic approach to Inclusion, which led to key messages aimed at delivering high quality inclusion services promoting "Inclusion for all".

The commitment then, which was developed within engagement sessions with Staff and Head teachers, recognised that improving practice and following priorities were identified as part of an "Inclusion for all" commitment: -

These commitments were: -

- a) Create an ethos of achievement for all pupils within a climate of high expectation.
- b) Value a broad range of talents, abilities, and achievements
- c) Promote success and self-esteem by taking action to remove barriers to learning.
- d) Counter conscious and unconscious discrimination/ bias that may prevent individuals, or pupils from any groups, from thriving in their education.
- e) Actively promote understanding and a positive appreciation of the diversity of individuals and groups within society.

To adhere to the above commitment- the key areas for consideration were:

- A) Reduction in transport time for learners.
- B) Ensure flexibility and respond directly to all learners' needs.
- C) A 3-18 approach ensuring effective transitions and progression in learning, with early intervention.
- D) Enhanced provisions which facilitate a broad range of opportunities for learners – for attainment, achievement, and skills for learning. Life and work.
- E) Staff up skilled to meet the needs of learners.
- F) A Responsive model
- G) Holistic view of the child/ young person

Staff of the SEBN service previously based within the Wilton Centre, were to be re allocated to work in the families' mainstream cluster schools. It was felt that their role would be to build on the

success of delivering inclusive practice in localities during lockdown, support the outreach team to work with pupils and their families who were referred to the service previously and continue to build capacity in the mainstream schools and settings so that all learners' needs were met.

The Inclusion and wellbeing service took on a leading role to support nurturing approaches across the Scottish Borders to assist with this goal, ongoing commitment, and strategic approach to inclusion for all in terms of the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service redesign.

This approach sat in line with the significant culture shift generally whereby mainstream schools working collaboratively in their clusters are the focus now and in the future for inclusive practices.

THE WILTON CENTRE (THE ARCHES) BUILDING

The Wilton Centre/ Arches stands in the most southwestern part of the Borders. For over 20 years it was regularly reviewed and deemed to require significant investment to modernise it to make it fit for the modern age. Reviewed by the education architectural lead as part of an Estates Review which began in 2017, continued in April 2018 with a suitability review in May 2018 it was agreed that the building required significant capital investment to be fit as an education setting meeting reasonable standards for schools in terms of Schools for the Future, or in respect of Scottish Government guidance for school estates. Since closing its doors post covid 19 pandemic, maintenance costs are required to facilitate it in terms of maintenance to keep it wind, watertight and secure.

SUITABILITY SURVEY

The building was surveyed by Turner and Townsend for Scottish Borders Council as part of a Suitability Review on 29th January 2024. The report is annexed within **Appendix 1**.

The Suitability Report detailed the overall rating of the building to be a "D". This was the lowest rating in terms of suitability. "D" rated means that the building does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (the school buildings and grounds seriously impede delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)

Staff within the SEBN Service explained that accessibility was a main concern whilst the building was in use. There were two buildings with a tarmac playground to the front. The main building was accessed by several stairs and a separate annexe could be accessed from the playground. There was no accessible entrance. This led to "safety upon entry" concerns and regarding safeguarding also.

Due to the age of the building the building did not have the right balance of traditional and /or modern flexible working spaces although attempts had been made over the years to create a soft play area for younger children attending placements. Safe passage through the building or the ability to define safe spaces was compromised by the older building design. This in turn created curricular limitations according to staff, particularly for the secondary aged pupils on placements whose interest might have been gained better through a more diverse bespoke curricular offering. The building offered no access to Technology/science or quality Physical Education for example.

ALTERNATIVE USE OF WILTON CENTRE

The building is listed. Options for its future will be considered by the Council's Asset/ Estate management team and reported to elected members for consideration. There are suggestions that

community interest groups have expressed desire and interest in the Wilton Centre, and this is to be welcomed and ongoing dialogue encouraged. This could be encouraged in terms of the Community Asset transfer provisions once this proposal to permanently close has been considered and a decision made.

WILL CLOSURE OF THE WILTON CENTRE IMPACT FUTURE LEARNERS?

If the Wilton Centre is closed permanently this will mean that future SEBN service users, won't have the opportunity to attend the Wilton Centre in Hawick on placements, however the proposal details the reasons why this is felt to be preferable and, on the balance, more beneficial and inclusive to them in terms of the educational benefits.

The authority deems that there are little to no drawbacks to future learners to have access to much closer SEBN facilities and resources which best support their learning and emotional needs in a decentralised local cluster school, more in line with the educational benefits of inclusion and nurture approaches in their mainstream schools.

The Scottish Government continues to promote mainstreaming as the priority and that higher level of needs, requires prioritising the offering in universal settings rather than in standalone units and thus this approach sits firmly alongside Scottish Government directions.

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached to this Proposal as **Appendix 2**.

IMPACT OF CLOSURE

Has there been any disruption to the learning / teaching of the children referred to the SEBN services, apart from Covid lockdown?

It is felt that there was little to no disruption to families who agreed when consulted with the redesign of the SEBN service to a more localised inclusive service within the children's mainstream schools and although a transition period was required the service continues to operate and maintain high operational standards.

The council will pledge to work with communities affected to identify and overcome any issues which may arise from the proposal to permanently close the building of The Wilton Centre "The Arches" in Hawick. However the authority's view is that this is likely to be minimal given the reallocation of the resources to the referred children's own cluster / catchment schools within the redesign and the fact that the families of attending children within the service when the building was closed post covid, advised that they would prefer this more localised inclusive approach to cut down on commuting and promote inclusion within the mainstream schools. It is anticipated that any issues in terms of this therefore would be minimal as the overwhelming feeling was this was a far better approach.

However, it does need to be appreciated that some families or communities within the Borders region may feel that some children may have benefitted from spending time on a standalone

placement within the Wilton Centre itself, and therefore there could be feeling that the closure of the building on a permanent basis is a negative to those families who will no longer get that opportunity.

If this is the case then the SEBN services will pledge to work alongside those children/ families and communities who feel that they would have benefitted from spending time within the unit in The Wilton building, to continue to focus on developing inclusive practice and to provide appropriate support to those children to try to mitigate(as much as possible) any negatives regarding the loss of the building.

What does Scottish Borders Council intend to do to minimise or avoid adverse effects from permanent closure of the Wilton Centre/ Arches building in Hawick?

The building itself is currently closed and lies empty. Upkeep is required to keep it wind and watertight and to ensure it is kept locked and secure. As the building has not been occupied for several years, several areas in the building are in a state of poor disrepair and internally the building is in a poor state of repair particularly the west side of the building where upon areas of the ceiling and wall lathe plaster are badly crumbling. This information is available within the Suitability Survey in Appendix 2.

Any positive attempt to re purpose or an adaptive reuse of the building is thought will go some way to redress to some extent, the loss of the building to the local community and to lessen the affect of an empty building within the Hawick Community.

STAFF IMPLICATIONS

A benefit of the SEBN service redesign was that there was no reduction in staffing. The redesign looked to redeploy the staff, who were based within the building, to the local cluster schools of the children attending, and where possible for expansion additional staffing was recruited. This resulted in increased capacity of staff for the cluster schools. It was felt that this allowed for improved working environments for the SEBN staff, rationalising and providing clarity of roles across the cluster schools, reducing bureaucracy, providing staff with a sense of belonging with a local team, providing quality professional learning to support staff roles which allowed in turn the allocation of local authority resources more effectively- all with the aim and purpose to develop a better outcome for staff who had historically been based within the Wilton Centre.

All staff in post were allocated to bases in schools to work within a cluster-based model, remaining part of a centrally managed service. Staffing has been adjusted across the authority responsively according to changing need and referrals since the closure of the building.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Transport Costs per child

Scottish Borders Council had a significant outlay in terms of the costs of transport per child attending placements within the Wilton Centre.

The table below gives the breakdown for each child enrolled in the years 218-2020 prior to the Covid and the doors closing on the building along with the service redesign.

The below table provides the costs per child of taxi contracts for child transport to and from the Wilton Centre per year in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Expense of Taxis for each enrolled pupil for travel to and from the Wilton Centre, Hawick.

<u>2018-19</u>	<u>2019-20</u>
£6,001.03	£951.43
£677.77	£0.00
£9,045.89	£564.38
£3,918.90	£616.97
£18,928.98	£7,893.32
£396.04	£0.00
£442.18	£31.85
£2,059.88	£909.35
£9,207.15	£2,917.58
£2,169.40	£1,386.97
£14,618.08	£3,776.50
£141.03	£0.00
£677.75	£0.00
£1,955.45	£1,853.45
£1,600.00	£0.00
£10,834.28	£2,852.68
£3,968.28	£2,392.20
£8,324.94	£6,810.80
£931.61	£1,528.86
£570.80	£2,120.69
£0.00	£284.88
£0.00	£1,263.59
£0.00	£1,879.00
£0.00	£0.00
£0.00	£170.94
<hr/>	
TOTAL	
£96,469.44	£40,205.44

The above table provides the costs per child of taxi contracts for child transport to and from the Wilton Centre. Although the costs were substantially reduced due to the closure of the building during lockdown to £40,205.44 in 2019/20 this was still a substantial cost per year for transporting children to and from the Unit. There are savings therefore in terms of reduced travel costs due to the closure of the building and the redesign of the SEBN service in addition to educational benefits of same.

Revenue Budget Implications

The below tables from Scottish Borders Council Financial Services, shows the costs associated with the Wilton Centre rates and maintenance in the years 2017 to 2023 and demonstrate the costs associated with the building.

Account(T)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Grand Total
Electricity			13,548.66	10,495.55	8,142.52	6,016.06	1,944.55	40,147.34
Gas			6,314.80	6,549.09	3,506.63	4,012.98	2,999.87	23,383.37
Business Rates			16,660.00	16,661.09	16,660.00	16,932.00	-20,835.29	46,077.80
Water Services			1,886.98	1,305.59	1,668.28	1,161.26	1,233.92	7,256.03
Other Hired & Contracted Services		268.10						268.10
Repairs & Maintenance of Buildings					360.00	600.00	1,300.00	2,260.00
Repairs & Maintenance of Buildings	7,739.40	1,184.40	5,168.86	1,861.29	1,188.50	431.78	-122.28	17,451.95
Vandalism Repairs	935.32	3,606.02	1,551.23					6,092.57
Repairs & Maintenance of Buildings	843.29	1,430.30	1,212.13	2,467.00	291.70	76.96		6,321.38
Vandalism Repairs			62.90					62.90
	9,518.01	6,488.82	46,405.56	39,339.61	31,817.63	29,231.04	-13,479.23	149,321.44

The following table provides a more detailed breakdown in terms of the Corporate landlord utilities, property management information and associated costs.

Sum of Amount			Account	Account(T)						Grand Total
Year	Cost Centre	Cost Centre(T)	R.2001 Repairs & Maintenance of Buildings	R.2101 Electricity	R.2102 Gas	R.2301 Business Rates	R.2401 Water Services	R.2002 Vandalism Repairs		
2019	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		13,549	6,315	16,660	1,887			38,410
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	1,212					63		1,275
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	5,189					1,551		6,720
	RY328	Additional Support Needs - SEBN Wilton Centre	47					78		125
2019 Total			6,428	13,549	6,315	16,660	1,887	1,692		46,530
2020	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		10,496	6,549	16,661	1,306			35,011
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	2,467							2,467
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	1,861							1,861
	2020 Total			4,328	10,496	6,549	16,661	1,306		39,340
2021	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		8,143	3,507	12,552	1,668			25,869
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	292							292
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	1,189							1,189
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	360							360
	2021 Total			1,840	8,143	3,507	12,552	1,668		27,710
2022	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		6,016	4,013	205	1,161			11,395
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	77							77
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	432							432
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	600							600
2022 Total			1,109	6,016	4,013	205	1,161		12,504	
2023	RX067	Corporate Landlord Utilities		4,998	3,380		1,694			10,072
	RY276	Property Management - Statutory Repairs & Maintenance	499							499
	RY274	Property Management - Reactive Repairs & Maintenance	(122)							(122)
	RY157	Property Management - Surplus Properties	1,740							1,740
2023 Total			2,116	4,998	3,380		1,694		12,188	
Grand Total			15,821	43,201	23,764	46,078	7,716	1,692		138,272

Whilst it is temporarily closed, the building itself requires upkeep and insurance which are costs which require to be met. The cost of maintenance for the temporarily closed building to 2023, to include the corporate landlord utilities, statutory repairs, maintenance, and the property management surplus properties- approximately circa £12,000- £13,000 per year. Although the costs associated have reduced substantially it is still an outlay that requires to be met.

Staffing Costs

Operational costs of running the building as an educational base for 2018 -2019 was approximately £627 135.12. Within that, we understand that the total staffing cost for 2018 -19 for the Wilton Centre was £539,464 for the 18 pupils on roll which not including janitorial and cleaning services. Since temporary closure, those costs have reduced substantially – although calculating those savings is difficult to do as SEBN staff were redeployed to local cluster schools and where possible for expansion additional staff were recruited.

To summarise, the total costs including staffing, transport, maintenance, and upkeep of maintaining the SEBN service within the building of the Wilton Centre were significant each financial year whilst it was open. There is still a cost which is not insignificant associated with the temporarily closed building.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To seek permanent closure of The Wilton Centre (The Arches),36 Princes Street, Hawick for the reasons above and as summarised below: -

1. The educational benefits of the redesign of SEBN services to children's local cluster schools following the Covid -19 pandemic and the removal of the travel requirement to the standalone unit in Hawick, enables Scottish Borders Council to provide a more inclusive and tailored service within service users' mainstream settings to sit firmly within the overriding principles of inclusion in Education.
2. The unsuitable design and state of the Wilton building for future learning, precluding the continuation of the building as a viable sustainable part of the school estate for the modern age, without significant capital investment and which, on balance, cannot be justified given the redesign of the SEBN service to the local cluster schools model thus removing the requirement to use the Wilton Centre, Hawick.

Options for The Wilton Centre's future to thereafter be considered by the Council's Asset/ Estate management team and reported to elected members for consideration to include any community interest groups expressing interest.

RESPONDING TO THE PROPOSAL

Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposal to close by making written or electronic submissions on the proposal to:

The Wilton Centre Closure Proposal
Children and Young People's Services
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells Melrose
TD6 0SA
Telephone: ADD NUMBER

E-mail:

schoolestates@scotborders.gov.uk

Please state that you are looking to make comment on the Proposal document for permanent closure of the Wilton Centre (The Arches).

Those wishing to respond are invited to state their relationship with The Wilton Centre " The Arches" for example " Parent/ Carer of a child under the SEBN service " or Teacher of SEBN service" etc.

Those sending a response, whether by letter or electronically should be aware that their response could be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. As such, if they do not wish their response to be publicly available, they should clearly make their response “confidential and for access to be restricted to elected members and council officers of Scottish Borders Council only”

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - SUITABILITY REVIEW TURNER AND TOWNSEND REPORT 24.1.24

APPENDIX 2- IIA

This page is intentionally left blank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY : The Arches - Hawick

Description:

The Arches was previously a school that was part of the council’s inclusion and wellbeing team. It has not been occupied, or used for education and learning, for a number of years. There were two buildings with a tarmac playground to the front. The main building was accessed by a number of stairs and a separate annexe could be accessed from the playground.

Suitability Assessment - Overall Rating Matrix

School: Arches - Hawick

Weighting 50% 15% 15% 10% 10% 5.0
 Score out of 20 5 5 5 5 5

Page 109

	General Learning & Teaching	Internal Social Areas	Internal Facilities	External Social Areas	External Facilities	Total:
Functionality	D	D	D	D	D	D
Accessibility	D	D	D	D	D	D
Environmental Conditions	D	D	D	D	D	D
Safety & Security	D	D	D	D	D	D
Fixed Furniture & Fittings	D	D	D	D	D	D
Total:	D	D	D	D	D	D

Overall Suitability Rating = D

- A=Good- performing well and operating efficiently (the school buildings and grounds support the delivery of services to children and community.)
- B=Satisfactory- Performing well but with minor problems (the school buildings and grounds, generally, support the delivery of services to children and community.)
- C=Poor- Showing major problems and/or not operating optimally (the school buildings and grounds impede delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)
- D=Bad- does not support the delivery of services to children and communities (the school buildings and grounds seriously impede delivery of activities that are needed for children and communities in the school)

PRIORITY AREA OF INVESTMENT

- Unable to comment.

Short-term interventions - suitability improvements

- Unable to comment.

Recommendations for occupant comfort upgrades:

- The heating had been turned off and the water drained from the system and the school had not been occupied for a number of years. Therefore, unable to comment on this.

Key Maintenance Actions:

- The school was internally in a poor state of repair, particularly on the West side of the building, where areas of the ceiling and wall lathe plaster were badly crumbling.



Playground

HEADTEACHER INTERVIEWS: The Arches - Hawick

Date – 29th January 2024 @ 10am

Attendees SBC – Steven Drummond (Property)

Attendees T&T / Oberlanders – Rhea Garbe / Katharine Cotter

School Description:

The Arches was previously a school that was part of the council's inclusion and wellbeing team. It has not been occupied, or used for education and learning, for a number of years. There were two buildings with a tarmac playground to the front. The main building was accessed by a number of stairs and a separate annexe could be accessed from the playground.

Key observations from school walk around:

- The school had not been occupied for a number of years and therefore was in a poor state of repair.
- The building did not appear to have a good flow between rooms.



Classroom with new blinds

1. **Are there any barriers to using teaching space and support spaces effectively and is this school suitable for current and anticipated capacity?**
 - Unable to comment on this no pupils at this school.
2. **Do pupils and staff have both the access to and the knowledge to effectively use technology and the digital environments in order to improve personalized learning initiatives, improve access to information and improve the ability for pupils to work flexibly?**
 - There was no WiFi or IT infrastructure in the building.
3. **Are learning spaces and support spaces fully accessible – and have recent amendments been made to improve accessibility?**
 - We did not observe an accessible entrance to the main building.
4. **Does the school estate have outdoor learning zones or the space to provide them?**
 - There was a small tarmac playground to the front of the school.
5. **Does the school estate have the right balance of traditional and modern/flexible working spaces?**
 - No access for P1/P1/2 to outside (and no opportunity due to the design of the school). Have created a free flow play area for the P1/P1/2 by knocking down part of a wall. This space works well.
6. **Do you have suitable futureproofed, comfortable interior learning spaces?**
 - There are areas throughout the school that would benefit from redecoration and new carpets.

HEADTEACHER INTERVIEWS: The Arches - Hawick

7. What are the key building issues that you are aware of regarding maintenance? Are you aware of any planned improvement works that is scheduled to take place?

- The building has not been occupied for a number of years and a number of areas were observed to be in a poor state of repair.
- Particular issues with lathe plaster crumbling off the walls and ceilings in the rooms to the west of the building.

8. If investment was available, what is the one initiative that the school would invest in, to improve the teaching environment for pupils and teachers?

- Unable to comment.

9. Is the security sufficient – CCTV etc?

- No CCTV observed.
- Arches were being used for drinking – and a number of bottles and broken glass observed.

10. How does the community use your school?

- The community does not officially use the school, although beer bottles and broken glass observed.



Classroom with crumbling lathe plaster walls



Deregulation room



Annexe Coffee Lounge



Library



Hall



Kitchen

This page is intentionally left blank

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1 Details of the Proposal

<p>A. Title of Proposal:</p>	<p>Proposal is to permanently close “The Arches”/ The Wilton Centre, 36 Princes Street, Hawick (currently temporarily closed) due to 1. the redesign of SEBN service to children’s local cluster schools following Covid -19 Pandemic which meant the service was no longer using the building and 2. the unsuitability of the building in terms of the school estate and ongoing maintenance costs/ likely required repair costs to enable it to be deemed fit for purpose as a school estate building in the modern age.</p>
<p>B. What is it?</p>	<p>A new Policy/Strategy/Practice/Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)</p>	<p>The proposal document is to widely circulate this proposal- to inform and to consult with Borders wide local communities informally to ingather opinions prior to any formal consultation period. It will also allow council officers to determine whether there is a need to consult formally under the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 (As Amended) on the permanent closure of the building.</p>
<p>D. Service Area:</p>	<p>Education and Lifelong Learning</p>

Department:	
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Marina Urie Solicitor Legal Services
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Christian Robertson- Education -Quality Improvement Manager.
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	February 2024

Section 2 Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?



Yes / No	NO
If yes, - please state here:	




Section 3 Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:
Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010? <i>(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter “No” and go to Section 3.2.)</i>
YES

Equality Duty	Reasoning:
A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. <i>(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)</i>	Help eliminate -The permanent closure of the building follows the temporary closure following covid and the redesign of the SEBN service to allow children of the service to attend their local mainstream schools within their cluster which has helped to promote inclusion. The building itself was deemed not fit for purpose and failed inspections as to suitability thus closure will ensure children of the SEBN service will not be disadvantaged.
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? <i>(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)</i>	Help equality of Opportunity by the advancement of integration and inclusion- enhanced closer to home learning environments and removal of long taxi rides to and from school advancing the equality of opportunity and advancement of “belonging in their local community rather than being removed from it as was what happened when the building was used by the SEBN service.
C. Foster good relations? <i>(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)</i>	Help Foster. Closing a centre and redesign of the service from children attending an outreach service to local community cluster schools can only aid and encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics. Sits squarely with promotion of Inclusion.

3.2 Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)				
Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.				
	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	

<p>Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping</p>				<p>Younger -With the temporary closure of the building due to covid and the SEBN service redesign – it was hoped it would provide access for enhanced opportunities for pupils within the service to have access to mainstream and the SEBN service within their own cluster school therefore promoting inclusion and diversity.</p> <p>Could have been an initial negative impact – if any children with additional needs had experienced negative impact associated with changes of routine/ change of building/ loss of contact with familiar place/ adults- but all families were in agreement to the SEBN service redesign and enhanced transition hopefully worked to minimise any risks associated with this change/ closure of the building.</p> <p>Older/ Younger/ Early Years/ Potential for the permanent closure of the building to allow for community interest groups to have access to / or look to purchase by way of a Community Asset Transfer for furtherance of community led initiatives which often work to support</p>
--	--	---	---	---

				older or younger groups within society.
<p>Disability A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This may be visible or invisible, progressive or recurring.</p>				<p>Children, Staff and Parents with restricted mobility have benefits from no longer having to attend an unsuitable and inaccessible building. Continues with the promotion and development of inclusive practice with a focus on universal and targeted provision in schools and settings.</p> <p>Could have been an initial negative impact – if any children with additional needs had experienced negative impact associated with changes of routine/ change of building/ loss of contact with familiar place/ adults- but all families were in agreement to the SEBN service redesign and enhanced transition hopefully worked to minimise any risks associated with this change and closure of the building.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment anybody who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the</p>				

person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.				
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Race: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Religion or Belief: different religious or philosophical beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief) e.g. Christianity, Islam, Hindu,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

pacifism, vegetarianism, gender critical.				
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Sexual Orientation , e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
<p>3.3 Fairer Scotland Duty</p> <p>This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.</p> <p>The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.</p>				
<p>Is the proposal strategic? Yes / No NO</p> <p>If No go to Section 4</p>				

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.				
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies				
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport), see rural proofing guidance				
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income				

Care experienced people				
Carers paid and unpaid including family members				
Homelessness				
Addictions and substance use				
Those involved within the criminal justice system				

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty (*Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only*)

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.
This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?

Yes/ No

NO

If "Yes", please complete below

Covenant Duty	How this has been considered and any specific provision made:
<p>The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;</p> <p>The <u>MOD Statutory Guidance</u> gives the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danger • Geographical Mobility • Separation from Family • Service Law • Unfamiliarity with Civilian Life • Hours of Work • Stress 	
<p>The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;</p>	
<p>The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.</p>	

Section 4 Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered “No” to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes / No NO

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

Signed by Lead Officer:	Marina Urie
Designation:	Solicitor, Legal Services
Date:	22.02.24
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

This page is intentionally left blank



SCHOOL DOGS POLICY

Report by Lesley Munro, Director – Education & Children’s Services

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE

23 April 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report proposes the approval of the School Dogs Policy, agreement with the school dog owner/handler and model Risk Assessment for mandatory use and guidance within Scottish Borders Council schools settings when the school setting is considering a school dog.**
- 1.2 There is a growing body of thought that specially selected and highly trained dogs can be of great benefit to children, especially within academic environments. Within Scottish Borders Council schools, there are currently three “school dogs” already in place in Scottish Borders Council school settings, which bring great joy, along with emotional and academic support to children in those school settings.
- 1.3 This Policy provides important guidance and measures to balance the benefits and the risks of school dogs within the Local Authority’s school provision, in order to set documented standards and controls to be adhered to at all times. Current school dogs have Risk Assessments in place, but there is no guidance or Policy for schools to follow. It is important to have parity across all school settings and it is proposed that this framework would be mandatory for all Council school settings considering the introduction of a school dog to the school setting or with a school dog already in place.
- 1.4 This report also highlights the requirement for adequate insurance for Scottish Borders Council school dogs. It is imperative for a school dog to have adequate public liability/third party insurance for when it is on the school estate, which covers the use of the school dog for training and providing services/assistance with pupils and any interaction on site with any staff or visitors on the school estate. This is a clear requirement within the Policy. At the time of writing the Policy and associated documents, clarity was sought about the insurance cover in place already and whether Zurich Insurance would provide indemnity cover within the existing insurance provision for school dogs whilst in the school setting. Zurich Insurance has clarified that if risk assessments are undertaken and the School Dogs Policy and controls are clearly followed, then indemnity will be

met within the current Policy arrangements to ensure cover for the public liability/third party liability of school dogs within Scottish Borders Council school settings. If cover had not been clear or adequate, Scottish Borders Council would have been required to meet any legal claim and thus, in effect, self-insure the school dogs. This is not the situation. Cover has been advised is currently effective, assuming controls and risk assessments are all in place. The adoption of the Policy and the Model Risk Assessment, along with the agreement with the owner/handler, strengthens the existing risk assessment provisions and brings clarity, guidance and parity to all school settings to ensure clear uniformity across all education settings.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Committee approve the School Dogs Policy, associated Agreement with the school dog owner/handler and model Risk Assessment, for use and guidance within all Scottish Borders Council schools.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The human/dog bond is a unique and profound connection that has evolved over thousands of years of shared history. Dogs are often referred to as "man's or a human's best friend" and have engrained themselves into the human experience, providing companionship, loyalty, and affection. This bond is rooted in mutual understanding, as dogs are highly attuned to human emotions and body language. The ability to empathise is innate for dogs, and they can offer non-judgemental support which fosters a deep sense of trust and companionship. Studies have shown that interactions with dogs can trigger the release of the happiness hormone "oxytocin" in both humans and dogs and further strengthens this emotional connection with canine friends. Beyond the emotional aspect, the human/dog bond exists to practical areas such as disability assistance and service roles, which highlight the versatility and depth of this remarkable relationship.
- 3.2 There is a growing body of thought that specially selected dogs, who are highly trained, can be of great benefit to children especially within academic environments. Within Scottish Borders Council schools, there are currently three "school dogs" already in place in school settings, which bring great joy, emotional and academic support to children in those schools.
- 3.3 Given these dogs already in place and the trend for "schools dogs" to be used more Scotland/UK wide, it was identified that guidance and clear regulatory policy was required to assist Scottish Borders Council school management teams who may wish to consider a role for a school dog for their educational setting. It is also crucial for parents and carers to understand that, as a Local Authority, Scottish Borders Council have clear policies and procedures in place to protect and safeguard children, staff and visitors within the school setting and to also ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of the dogs themselves. The School Dogs Policy was deemed essential to provide this level of guidance and instruction. It was drafted, taking close cognisance of the Welfare of Dogs: Code of Practice Guidance published by the Scottish Government on 4 March 2010, as a best practice guide to help those responsible for dogs in our school settings, meet the duty of care under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. It was also drafted closely following the Dogs Trust guidance in relation to dogs in school settings.
- 3.4 There are obvious risks of allowing even highly trained and selected dogs into our school settings and, as such, the risks require to be carefully assessed and managed. The School Dogs Policy (Appendix 1) aims to address this and set clearly documented standards to be adhered to and relied upon at all times in our school settings.

4 POLICY

- 4.1 The Schools Dogs Policy defines a "school dog" as one which has undergone significant training and independent assessment to a satisfactory standard of behaviour and training through an appropriate and identified body such as Canine Concern Scotland/Kennel Club/Dogs Trust, or some other such equivalent body, to be agreed with Council Officers, to then become a

certified and cleared for use, Scottish Borders Council "School Dog". The Policy only applies to certified Scottish Borders Council "School Dogs". It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property. It is Scottish Borders Council policy that dogs are not allowed on school property unless authorised by the Headteacher. For example, a service dog such as a guide dog for the blind for an educational visit or required as a service dog. This Policy only outlines measures put in place to allow an authorised and accredited "school dog" only to be present on the school premises.

- 4.2 It is anticipated that the school dog will likely be resident within the school each day for the majority, if not the whole of the school day. A school dog spends most of their time in the classroom or elsewhere in the school environment, on a consistent ongoing basis. However, attendance in school each day, although "likely", should not however be seen as a "given". Care should be taken to assess and identify should the school dog not wish to attend. The school dog's wishes in attendance each day should be assessed on an ongoing daily basis to ensure that its health, safety, and wellbeing are being monitored and maintained. School dogs who have become accustomed to their role in school will, and should, provide "consent" to their role in school by behaving in such a way to show whether they wish to enter the school each day and it is crucial that due cognisance is taken of those wishes.
- 4.3 The school dog will belong to an owner which will be a member of the teaching staff senior management of the school with whom they form an important bond and live as a member of the owner's family. The owner will also be the specific member of staff assigned to the dog as the handler. The school dog will go home to the owner/handler's home every day after school and overnight along with weekends and school holidays. The school dog owner/handler will be responsible for the overall well-being and safety of the school dog. A school dog will never be left in the school overnight and priority for the school dog will be an integral part of all risk assessments undertaken. The owner/handler will sign an Agreement (see Appendix 2) which not only underlines the owner/handler's responsibilities, but also Scottish Borders Council's responsibilities to ensure adherence to policy and expected standards in order to safeguard the health, wellbeing and safety of the school dog and all children, staff and visitors who may have contact with the school dog.
- 4.4 Scottish Borders Council will have the responsibility to ensure that all schools have the written Policy and generic Risk Assessment (see Appendix 3) for school dogs in their schools.
- 4.5 The Headteacher has overall responsibility for implementing the School Dogs Policy and asking the school dog owner and handler to undertake any further specific risk assessments (for example for any visitors to the school who intimate they have allergies to dogs) as required.
- 4.6 Scottish Borders Council must have an appropriate third-party liability policy in place to cover the school dog on school premises. The owner/handler will have responsibility for obtaining adequate pet insurance for the school dog, which will be distinct from the third-party liability insurance for the use of a school dog on Local Authority premises.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

Financial concerns will be as below:

- (a) The school dog will be insured by the owner/handler in terms of domestic pet insurance. Adequate insurance is in place for third party liability of the school dog when on school premises. This needs to cover the school dog for providing a service or training within the school premises. This third-party liability policy will need to be renewed and paid for each year by Scottish Borders Council. Zurich Insurance have advised that the current policy covers school dogs in place in school settings, assuming that risk assessments are undertaken, but this will need to be renewed and updated yearly to ensure that adequate cover remains in place.
- (b) The school dog will need to be adequately trained and have undergone an independent assessment to a satisfactory standard of behaviour and training before being certified as a school dog. This training will be undertaken by the owner/handler of the school dog. Funding for this training will be agreed by mutual negotiation between owner/hander and Scottish Borders Council Officers.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) Introducing dogs into school settings can offer numerous benefits, such as promoting a positive atmosphere and reducing stress, as well as the educational and emotional benefit to children by increasing their understanding of responsibility and developing empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a school dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a school dog, where studies have shown that school dogs can benefit reluctant readers, also providing huge academic benefit also.
- (b) Section 4 of the School Dogs Policy goes into more detail about the perceived benefits of a school dog which sits well with the ethos of the Education Authority with regards to nurture and inclusion. The value of the development of children's well-being and moral and social education is seen to be as important as academic education, and achievement.
- (c) Potential downsides and side effects of school dogs need to be identified and mitigated. Risks may include allergies among staff, pupils and visitors and fear in some individuals and/or disruptions due to the school dog, along with risk of injury from the dog such as biting, knocking over of pupils/staff and dog fouling. We believe that to mitigate such risks, the adoption of a clear policy with associated and thorough risk assessments and responsible training and behavioural strategies for both canine and humans in school can go a long way to reduce these risks.

- (d) Establishment of documented standards and controls which are clearly structured and adhered to can minimise any risks and ensure a safe environment for the dog and children, staff, and children alike. Regular monitoring and open communication channels can further contribute to the successful integration of a school dog, while addressing and managing potential side effects. The School Dogs Policy details the risks and how to reduce those to a level which is acceptable to strike a balance that ensures the benefits outweigh the drawbacks and risks associated with this Policy.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

Implementing and approving the School Dog Policy may raise concerns related to discrimination, particularly if it affects individuals inadvertently with disabilities. An IIA has been completed and it is crucial for the Policy to be as inclusive as possible and considerate of all needs, ensuring that no person is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged due to allergies, fears, or other conditions. Schools should engage the school community through thoughtful engagement and planning for a school dog, maintaining open communication to address and mitigate any potential concerns or potential discrimination concerns about introducing a dog into a school educational environment.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN Sustainable Development Goal's checklist has been completed and it has been identified that the Schools Dogs Policy recommendation would have a positive impact in respect of the goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning and opportunities for all. This is in relation to the identification and tackling of barriers to school attendance. A school dog has been identified as a method which is helpful in some settings to tackle non-attendance so to encourage children to school with a meet and greet system. It can be seen as a major positive incentive to attend and interact with the school dog on an emotional and social level to alleviate stress and anxiety.

5.5 **Climate Change**

Not applicable.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

Not applicable.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

Not applicable.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council, the Finance Business Partner and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Children’s Services

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Marina Urie	Solicitor – 01835 824000 (Ext 8606)

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 Proposed School Dogs Policy

Appendix 2 Proposed Agreement between SBC and Owner/Handler of School Dog

Appendix 3 Proposed Generic Risk Assessment School Dogs

Previous Minute Reference: Not applicable

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Marina Urie can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA. Tel: 01835 824000.

This page is intentionally left blank

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

POLICY ON SCHOOL DOGS

1. Introduction

School Dogs are becoming an ever popular and worthwhile addition to schools across Scotland.

There is a growing body of thought that children can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility, and develop empathy and nurturing skills through contact with a school dog. In addition to these benefits, children take great enjoyment from interaction with a school dog. Scottish Borders Council value the development of children's well-being, their moral and social education as highly as academic attainment. We believe a "school dog" will be a unique way to enrich all areas of the children's wider education, skills, and well-being within the Scottish Borders.

What must be discussed and identified is whether there are risks or concerns in bringing a dog into a school environment. Of course, there are risks and concerns with bringing a School Dog into School and therefore, these require to be carefully assessed and managed.

A school dog is a live animal which must be cared for, nurtured, and safeguarded in terms of its welfare and the important dog freedoms or rights which are a cornerstone of the Scottish Government Code of Practice Guidance for the welfare of dogs. This should be paramount and a therefore a cornerstone of any Policy on School Dogs.

Those Five Freedoms are: -

1. its needs for a suitable environment
2. its need for a suitable diet
3. its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns.
4. any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals.
5. its needs to be protected from suffering, injury, and disease.

This Policy aims to address the risks, concerns and the importance of dogs rights or freedoms, and therefore set documented standards and controls to be adhered to at all times.

2. Policy

1. This policy applies to designated Scottish Borders Council "school dogs" only. It does not affect the school's right to prohibit other dogs on school property. Scottish Borders Council's policy is that dogs are not allowed anywhere on the school estate site at any

time unless specifically authorised by the Head Teacher. This policy outlines measures put in place to allow an authorised school dog to be present on the school premises only.

2. A "school dog" is defined for the purposes of this policy, as a dog which has undergone the required mandatory training and independent certified assessment. Training should be to a satisfactory standard through Canine Concern Scotland/ Kennel Club/ Dogs Trust or some other such equivalent body assessed by Scottish Borders Council as the appropriate standard to be met. Independent Certified Assessment shall be from a Clinical Animal Behaviourist who will be able to work on the skills and attitude that will help the dog feel safe and confident and able to relax within the school environment. Consideration should be given to the appropriate expert to assess the training and behaviour. The Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) is a regulatory body which represents and maintains a register of animal trainers and behaviourists fulfilling accreditation criteria and belonging to approved member associations. Abtcouncil.org.uk. In addition, The Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) is an independent organisation which accredits Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourists. Asab.org. In addition, veterinarians who hold Advanced Practitioner or specialist status in Animal Behaviour can be found via the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons-findavet.rcvs.org.uk. Consideration must be given to the fact that dogs behaviours continuously change and develop. Thus, independent certification should be reviewed annually or sooner where there have been any changes that may affect the dog, or there have been changes noted in the dog's temperament.
3. Only when such assessment and satisfactory training has been obtained, reviewed, and approved by an officer of the Council will the dog become a certified school dog for the purposes of this policy and cleared for use in a Scottish Borders Council school.
4. Following approval, the dog will be gradually introduced to the school, it is preferable for the dog to first visit the school during the holidays, or over several weekends, giving them the chance to explore the environment gradually, slowly, and calmly on a loose lead without children being present. For the first few months the dog should attend school only for short periods and meet only small groups of children in controlled situations, and any physical interaction should only involve one child at a time, If possible.
5. At no point should the dog be brought into the school with children as a puppy. Exposure to a school environment might interfere with a puppy's natural sleeping patterns, which could have a detrimental impact on their behaviour and wellbeing.
6. The school dog will belong to an owner which will be a member of the teaching staff/ senior management of the school with whom they form an important bond and live as part of that owner's family. The owner will also be the specific member of staff assigned to the school dog as the handler of the school dog.
7. The school dog will go home to the owner/handler's home every day after school and overnight along with weekends and holidays. The school dog handler/ owner will be responsible for the well-being and safety of the school dog. A school dog will never be left in school or on the school premises overnight. Priority for the well-being of the school dog will be an integral part of all risk assessments undertaken. Upholding of the Five Freedoms or rights of the school dog will be the responsibility of the owner/ handler.

8. It is anticipated that a school dog will likely be resident within the school each day for a large part, if not the whole, of the school day. A school dog is by definition a dog that spends much of their time in the classroom or elsewhere in the school environment, on a consistent ongoing basis. However, as per Kennel Club guidance each active session should be no longer than one hour, and dogs should work for no longer than three active hours during the day. They should have access to a quiet, safe, and comfortable place to rest for a proportionate break between sessions. During this time, only the owner/ handler should be allowed access to the dog. The Dog's welfare will always be paramount.
9. Attendance in school each day, although likely, should not however be seen as a "given". Care should be taken to assess and identify should the school dog not wish to attend. The school dog's wishes in attendance each day should be assessed on an ongoing daily basis to ensure that its health, safety and wellbeing are being monitored and maintained. School dogs who have become accustomed to their role in school will and should therefore provide "consent" to their role in school by behaving in such a way to show whether they wish to enter the school each day and it is crucial that due cognisance is taken of those wishes. For example, Priorsford Primary's School Dog "Peggy" lets her owner/ handler (Mrs Sharp), know each day whether she wishes to attend school. Sometimes she does not wish to come out of the car when the door is opened at the school entrance and her wishes are always respected. She is never made to attend. It is vital part of this policy that the dog's needs and wants are catered for as much as possible including providing consent to attendance each day.
10. It is the intention of the Policy that Parents and Carers will be consulted about the intention to receive a school dog before it is welcomed into the school and becomes a school dog. Parent and Carers will receive copies of the School Dogs Policy and the Risk Assessment relating to the school dog concerned. Parents and Carers should be advised that the mandatory training and certificates including insurance documents are available to them to view and receive copies of, on request.
11. Parents/carers have the right to withhold consent for their child to have any direct contact with the school dog. Any such wishes will be respected and upheld by the school.
12. Any visitors who have allergy to dogs or the specific breed of the school dog, and who have made this known to the school management team, should not be permitted to have any contact with the dog and should be strongly advised that they do not approach the "school dog" when in school. Procedures should be put in place to undertake a further specific and therefore individual risk assessment to assess the level of the risk or allergy to them, and such risk managed accordingly to reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.
13. Any staff member or pupil who has allergy to dogs or possible allergy to dogs or the specific breed of the school dog, and who has made this known to the school management team, should have a specific or individual risk assessment carried out to assess the level of the risk or allergy to them, and such risk managed accordingly to reduce the risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.
14. Any pupil with a fear of dogs will be respected and never be forced to interact with the school dog. They can receive coaching in a controlled environment with the school dog to help them overcome their fears only if they so wish and this is discussed, and risk

assessed as appropriate and in conjunction with, and with the relevant consent of, the pupil's parent/carer.

15. All vaccinations, worming treatments and vet checks will be kept up to date by the designated school dog handler and owner. If the school dog is ill, he/she will not be allowed into school.
16. The school dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of the handler/ owner/ appropriate adult.
17. Children will never be left alone with the school dog and there must always be appropriate adult supervision, when the school dog is present with pupils.
18. Notices will be displayed in school to inform children, staff, and visitors to the school of the school dog's presence. Pupils should be taught and frequently reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the school dog.
19. Children should be taught to remain calm around the school dog. They should not make sudden movements and must never stare into the school dog's eyes as this could be threatening for the dog.
20. Children should be taught to never put their face near any dog and should always approach it standing up. Children should never go near or disturb the school dog that is sleeping or eating. Children must not be allowed to play too roughly with the school dog. If the school dog is surrounded by many children, the school dog could become nervous and agitated. Therefore, the appropriate adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor the situation and continually assess risk.
21. Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Each dog is different. Growling or baring of teeth indicate that the dog is not happy, and it is feeling angry or threatened or stressed. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining, or growling could be signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. It is important to recognise that each dog is different, and it is important to recognise that if the school dog is displaying any of these warning signs or signals, then the school dog should be immediately removed from that situation or environment.
22. Balanced with the above stressor behaviour indications, the school dog should however have the freedom to exhibit its "normal canine behaviour", and this is to be cherished. This is a crucial right of the school dog. This should have an impact on the school's expectation of the dog's role within the school. Normal behaviour can vary from dog to dog and therefore every school dog will have its own character traits and quirks which the owner/ handler and pupils, staff and frequent visitors to the school will recognise and appreciate. Dogs generally convey contentment through looking calm and relaxed. It is expected that the owner/ handler will be responsible for ensuring that the school dog is importantly allowed the freedom to exhibit "its" normal behaviour patterns within the school environment to allow the school dog to flourish and be happy within its role as a school dog.
23. Children should not feed or eat close to the school dog. The school dog will not be allowed to enter the school kitchen or go into the hall during mealtimes to ensure strict hygiene controls and infection control measure are maintained.

24. Children should always wash their hands after handling / or stroking a school dog.
25. Dog faeces represent a severe risk to human health. Parasitic infections, as well as gastrointestinal illnesses such as norovirus and salmonella can be transmitted from dogs to humans, amongst other diseases. Any school dog foul must be cleaned immediately and disposed of appropriately by an adult. The school dog will be trained to use a designated and suitably segregated (agreement on appropriate location and segregation should be made with Property Management and Health and Safety Teams), external toileting area that is out-of-bounds to the children. If any 'accidents' occur in areas where children have access to, appropriate measures will be taken to disinfect the affected site so that appropriate infection control measures are always in place as per generic risk assessment.

3. Roles, Responsibilities and Insurance

1. Scottish Borders Council has a responsibility to ensure that all schools have the written policy and risk assessment for "school dogs" in their schools.
2. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for implementing this policy and asking the owner and school dog handler to undertake the risk assessment and any further individual specific risk assessments, as is required for visitors/pupils with allergy who are made known to the school.
3. The Headteacher may delegate this overall responsibility for policy implementation and oversee of risk assessment requirements to the Deputy Head teacher or some other staff member within the senior leadership team, if required. Teachers and staff are required to always abide by this policy.
4. The Health and Safety Team of Scottish Borders Council is responsible for providing any further information, advice, and guidance, as and when required.
5. Scottish Borders Council will have third party insurance cover for the public liability of the school dog when on school premises. This must cover the school dog providing a service or training within the school premises and Scottish Borders Council will have responsibility that cover remains in place and renewed appropriately.
6. The owner/ handler will have responsibility for obtaining adequate domestic pet insurance for the school dog which will be distinct from the third-party liability insurance cover obtained for the school dog within the school premises obtained by and for Scottish Borders Council.
7. Scottish Borders Council retains the right to undertake a full review of the School Dogs Policy and the decision allowing the school dog within school. For example, should a considerable proportion of the School Parent/ Carer community be in opposition to the introduction of a school dog or opinions change within the school community following the use of a school dog then it is deemed that a review should take place.
8. Scottish Borders Council retains the right to immediately revoke access to the school dog within school and ask the owner/handler to remove it from school if it is deemed disruptive, unsafe or the health or wellbeing of the dog is questioned. A full review to include a comprehensive Health and Safety audit must always be carried out before the reintroduction of the school dog on the school premises in such circumstances.

4. Certification of School Dogs

1. Dogs will be considered a Certified School Dog for use in a Scottish Borders Council school only following final sign off by an approved officer of the Council who has confirmed the following is satisfactory:
 - a. The Risk Assessment for the dog in the specific school setting has been reviewed and approved by the Health and Safety Team and Protective Services Dog Officer
 - b. The dog has completed recognised training.
 - c. The dog has been assessed by a Clinical Animal Behaviourist as suitable for work in the school.
 - d. An appropriate segregated toileting area agreed with Property and H&S is in place.
 - e. All other requirements detailed in this policy have been implemented by the school.

5. Benefits of School Dogs

1. Scottish Borders Council believes that a school dog enables children to put school values into practice: from friendship to patience, respect, love, and happiness; each one of these important values can be developed through and alongside a dog.
2. Children with low attendance can be encouraged to come to school with the incentive of a meet and greet from the school dog.
3. With the UK dog population reaching 8.5 million, children and adults are bound to come in to contact with dogs at various points in their lives. Children without pet dogs can learn valuable life skills at school about how to safely interact with dogs when they are out with the home.
4. With a school dog to care for, children are more mindful of their behaviour. Incidents of running in corridors and shouting unnecessarily can be reduced; they are more aware of the impact of their behaviour and choices.
5. One of Scottish Borders Council current school priorities is to help children to develop a growth mindset, to be resilient learners who are not afraid to make mistakes and persevere to acquire new skills. A school dog is an excellent role model for this as training dogs takes time and repetition and can assist children with the growth mindset.
6. Reading programmes with school dogs are doing wonders for some pupils. Children who might be embarrassed to read aloud to the class or even adults are likely to be less scared to read to a dog. It might be less stressful for a child to read aloud to a dog than to a teacher or a peer. A dog will not judge or correct you. School Dogs can be used to encourage struggling readers to practise reading aloud and reluctant writers

to read aloud what they have written. With the presence of a calm and well-trained school dog, pupils find social support and peer interaction.

7. As a focus or context for learning, the school dog can provide an excellent resource and tangible motivation for children in all subject areas.
8. School dogs can provide confidence to children as they can make attentive listeners, providing the children with a sense of comfort and love. School Dogs can work with pupils on a one-to-one basis and will especially help those pupils who are feeling vulnerable, going through upsetting/challenging times or even those pupils who may be scared/phobic of dogs. The school dog can bring much joy and help to pupils they meet. Pupils who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a school dog.
9. School Dogs offer an opportunity for improving social development. They are especially useful for teaching social skills and responsibility. Researchers report that pupils who can identify with animals, and have empathy for the dog, can better understand how classmates may feel. Specifically, schools are using dogs to help pupils build self-esteem; learn about positive and negative reinforcement, responsibility, and boundaries. Schools can use dogs to help communicate, teach kindness, and empowerment.
10. With a school dog, pupils can learn how to care for the animal. This includes walking and grooming. Researchers report that involving pupils in the daily care of school dogs is a positive experience, promoting their own daily care. The pupils also learn about responsibility, caring and sharing when helping each other take care of a dog at school.
11. School dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the pupils. Walking, grooming, playing, and training are some of the responsibilities that pupils may be allowed to undertake. There is a growing body of thought that working and playing with a school dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.
12. Although there are risks and concerns associated with school dogs, if these can be identified, controlled, and mitigated as per policy and by the appropriate risk assessments and control methods outlined above then the educational benefits to pupils of having a school dog are clear, comprehensive, and enduring enough to make the role of a school dog worthwhile.
13. This Policy should be seen in conjunction with Appendix 1 (Model Risk Assessment) and Appendix 2 Agreement with School Dog Owner/ Handler (to be signed by SBC Officer of the council and school dog owner/handler)

Appendix 1.

Risk Assessment – “School Dogs”

Appendix 2.

Agreement with School Dog Owner/Handler- to be signed by all parties as above.

DRAFT

Agreement Scottish Borders Council and School Dog Owner/ Handler

This agreement is entered into on (*Insert Date*) by, and between, Scottish Borders Council (*insert name of Head Teacher or Officer of Council to include designation*) hereinafter referred to as “Scottish Borders Council” and (*Insert Dog Owner/ Staff Member/ dog Handler name and designation within the school*) the owner/ handler of school dog, hereinafter referred to the “owner/handler.”

This agreement relates to the school dog named (*insert name of school dog*) hereinafter referred to as the “school dog” for (*insert name and address of Scottish Borders Council school/ education setting*)

1. Purpose of the Agreement.

The Purpose of this Agreement is to acknowledge that the handler of the school dog is also the owner of the school dog as per Scottish Borders Council School Dogs Policy.

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the terms and conditions for the presence of, and the activities of, the school dog within the school premises.

It aims to provide an agreed framework for the role and responsibilities of the owner/ handler and the Council in terms of the introduction of school dogs within all or any, Scottish Borders Council Schools which wish to consider and look to receive a school dog within the school setting.

2. Certification and Health

- a) The owner/ handler as designed above agrees to undertake all training and assessment with regards to handling and caring for the school dog as required as per School Dogs Policy. Agreement is to be reached by mutual negotiation for funding for such training and assessment with the headteacher, as required.
- b) The Owner/ Handler as designed above, agrees to provide documentation upon request, of the school dog’s certification as a suitably trained and independently assessed to a satisfactory behaviour standard through Canine Concern Scotland/ Kennel Club/ Dogs Trust or some other such equivalent body as per School Dogs Policy. Scottish Borders Council reserves the right to make the final determination as to whether the school dog is suitably trained to the reasonable standard expected to become a certified school dog, to be allowed in school as per The School Dogs Policy. Scottish Borders Council reserves the right to request updated training /

documentation as needed to continue to provide certification for the purposes of the dog being a school dog.

- c) The owner and Handler agrees to provide documentation upon request of all vaccination records, and any health certificates, as necessary and provide updates when requested.

3.Responsibilities of the Owner/Handler

The Owner/Handler agrees to: -

- (a) Ensure the School dog is appropriately covered by a domestic pet insurance policy and that this is renewed and updated, as required. Scottish Borders Council reserves the right to request updated documentation, as needed.
- (b) Ensure the school dog is supervised during its presence in school and always adhere to Scottish Borders Council's School Dogs Policy with regards to responsibilities of the school dog owner/ handler.
- (c) Ensure the school dog is always appropriately behaved, and under control, as far as reasonably practicable, and to always follow Scottish Borders Council's School Dogs Policy.
- (d) Ensure the health and well being of the school dog is prioritised and safeguarded as per the Scottish Government Guidance on Welfare of Dogs as referenced in School Dogs Policy.
- (e) Notify Scottish Borders Council immediately in the event of any change in circumstance in the school dogs health, welfare, certification, or vaccination status.

4.Responsibilities of Scottish Borders Council.

Scottish Borders Council agrees to: -

- a) Ensure the owner/handler is fully supported and trained in the use of the School Dog within school as per the School Dogs Policy to include a mutual agreement with owner/ handler and head teacher as regards training courses/ updates etc and in terms of safeguarding the health and welfare of the school dog.
- b) Ensure that the School Dog is appropriately insured in term of third-party liability insurance cover and that such a policy covers the use of the school dog on Scottish Borders Council premises for training and providing services with pupils.
- c) Ensure that such a third-party liability policy cover is maintained and renewed as per Scottish Borders Council's School Dogs Policy and agrees to provide evidence of such insurance upon request.

5.Reviews and Termination

Scottish Borders Council retains the right to undertake a full review of the School Dogs Policy and the decision allowing the school dog within school. For example, should a considerable proportion of the School Parent/ Carer community be in opposition to the introduction of a school dog or opinions change within the school community following the use of a current in place school dog then it is deemed that a review must take place.

Scottish Borders Council retains the right to immediately revoke access to the school dog within school and ask the owner/handler to remove it from school setting if it is deemed disruptive, unsafe or the health or wellbeing of the dog is questioned. A full review to include a comprehensive Health and Safety audit must always be carried out before the reintroduction of the school dog on the school premises as per School Dogs Policy.

Either party to this agreement may terminate this Agreement with written notice if the terms and conditions outlined herein are not adhered to.

Should the owner/ handler provide notice of employment contract termination or the owner/ handler has their employment contract terminated by notice provided by Scottish Borders Council, the school dog shall be deemed to have been given simultaneous notice on the same date (for the purposes of the school dog's presence in school) and as such the dog's presence in school shall also cease on the last date of the owner/handler's employment. This is to allow for the removal of a school dog at the same time as the owner/ handler ceases employment and to ensure that a smooth transition period/ acclimatisation period for removal of the school dog from the school, and for the news of the school dog removal to be conveyed to staff and pupils at the school in a timely and considerate manner.

Print School Name

Print School Dog Name.....

Signed for and on behalf of Scottish Borders Council(Signature)

Printed Name

Designation with SBC

Date.....

Signed by Owner/ Handler(Signature)

Printed name

Designation within SBC.....

Date.....

This page is intentionally left blank

- Activity Risk Assessment
- SSOW / Method Statement

Assessment Details

- Org Unit Health & Safety
- Reference 6368
- Is This Confidential No
- Publish To Portal Yes
- Risk Assessment Category General
- Project Risk Assessment Reference
- Assessment Title School Dog
- Location *Add School here*
- Assessor Reference
- Assessment Team Members *add names here of all persons involved with reviewing assessment and making specific to the school*
- Assessment Date 15/12/2023
- Activity Description Presence of an appropriately trained dog in the school as part of the school community for therapeutic purposes and aid to learning, behaviour & attainment.
- Number Of People Exposed
- People Exposed
 - Teaching staff
 - Non Teaching staff
 - Pupils
 - Visitors
 - Contractors

Hazards And Control Measures

-



Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
Animals	The dog could become excited when working with children	Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	They may be nipped, scratched, knocked over by the dog. Potential for injuries as a result of falls or contracting diseases from bites or scratches.	SBC Policy	9 Medium	The dog will have had recognised training as per SBC Dogs in School Policy and will have been assessed and signed off by a qualified dog behaviouralist before being allowed to work in the school. Training will include not jumping up, biting or mouthing people. Pupils will be taught about the impact of their actions and behaviours around the dog in order to minimise occasions when the dog becomes too excited. Continual monitoring of the dog as it ages for changes in behaviour and retraining as required to combat risk of scratching, mouthing, biting and getting overly excited. As per SBC policy the dog will be familiarised with the school environment and loud school sounds (period bell/ fire alarm etc.)with no pupils present in the building, followed by gradual introduction to operational school. The dog will be on its lead at all times when moving around the school or working in the school.	3 Low
Allergies	Children or adults may be allergic to the dog/dog hair	Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	They may have an allergic reaction making them feel unwell.	SBC Policy	9 Medium	School dog breed will be chosen that has lower levels of shedding of hair and dander skin/dust. Parents and Staff will be consulted on the proposal to have a school dog or if there is already a dog in school parents, staff, visitors and contractors will be notified of its presence and will be asked to notify school of any known allergies that may	3 Low

Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
Biological	People contract disease directly from the dog, scratches, nips, bites or from its faeces.	Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	Contracting canine borne diseases leading to illness	SBC Policy	9 Medium	<p>be relevant (dog specific allergy may not have manifested). Specific risk assessment will be carried out for the individual(s) at risk. \Any person with allergies will not have direct contact with the dog. The children will be made to wash their hands after any contact with the dog. Monitoring for any contact allergies from naturally excreted oils, saliva etc manifesting in persons as a result of working with the dog. Action take as appropriate. Dog excluded from communal areas and rooms used by persons with allergies. Everybody is instructed and reminded of the need for good hygiene practices during and after interaction with the dog. Suitable cleanup protocols following accidents/ dog being in restricted spaces.</p> <p>The dog's owner is responsible for ensuring the dog is fully vaccinated against common canine diseases and any additional vaccinations or treatments recommended by a qualified vet and receives regular veterinary check ups. The dog's owner will ensure that vaccinations and treatments (e.g. fleas, ticks, and worms) are kept up to date. vaccinations are kept up to date and this will be monitored by the Head teacher. A specific toileting location will identified and agreed with relevant officers and appropriately segregated from access for</p>	3 Low

Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
						pupils and others as per SBC policy. Procedures for toileting the dog will be made and those involved instructed in them. Procedures will include adequate supervision, how to safely remove and dispose of faecal matter, removing and disposing of faecal matter immediately and cleansing the area. The dog will be toilet trained before being introduced to working in the school environment. The dog will be trained to signal that it needs to toilet. Suitable antibacterial cleaning products agreed with cleaning services and COSHH assessed by the H&S Team will be available in the school in case of accident. The dog will not be allowed in kitchens, staff rooms, or dining halls.	
Animals	Loud noises, new situations, new people, environment changes, behavioural changes in people, changes in the dog and its temperament as it ages.	The Dog Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	The dog may become distressed/ unhappy/ upset/ frightened leading to changes in its behaviour and injury to itself or others	SBC Policy	12 High	Appropriate safe places will be identified for the dogs and appropriately provisioned in agreement with property management and health and safety team. The dog will be able to go to its safe places when it is feeling stressed or worried, all persons in school will be instructed in the signs for this need. The dog will always be under the direct supervision of an adults who will take measures to support the dog and move it to one of its safe places if it becomes stressed or worried. The dog will kept out of circulation spaces during busy times (e.g. break/ lunch when pupils are leaving/returning) All pupils and staff	6 Medium

Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
						will be instructed in how to behave around the dog including no feeding it, no raised voices, no crowding it, action to take if the dog slips its lead or escapes its safe place. Familiarisation for dog with school environment, period bells and fire alarm before coming into school with the pupils. Gradual introduction to the school with pupils and working with pupils. The dog will be regularly assessed with regards any changes to its temperament as it ages that may affect its placement in the school.	
Animals	The dog gets loose from its lead/cage / poor recall	Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	Some individuals may be scared or alarmed by the dog leading to upset or fear. Injuries sustained whilst trying to retrieve the dog.	SBC Policy	6 Medium	The dog will be trained and assessed for having good recall before being introduced to the school environment. The dog will always wear its lead when outwith its safe areas. If the dog is loose, named staff will be contacted to retrieve it. Children will be taught not to tease/chase the dog but to let an adult know the dog is loose.	4 Medium
Animals	Injuries to the dog leading to temporary change in temperament	The Dog Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	The dog may have a temporary change in temperament or sudden reaction if it has an injury which is touched / knocked by others.	SBC Policy	12 High	An assessment will be made by the dog's owner on whether it can be in the school environment or not. Close monitoring for any signs of distress in the dog. All staff and pupils should be made aware of the potential for change in behaviour and normal ways of being with the dog may not be suitable / how to interact with the dog during healing time.	6 Medium

Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
Animals	The Dog	Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	Individuals may have a fear of dogs and may become distressed.	SBC Policy	4 Medium	Wishes of parents/staff/pupils who have a fear of dogs will be respected. If agreed to careful work will be done to reduce fear and allow interaction. Dog will be excluded from areas the scared person will be in until they are comfortable. All visitors and contractors will be made aware of the presence of the school dog and if they have a fear of dogs, the dog will be kept in other areas when they are in the building.	2 Low
Animals	Dog not wanting to be in school	The Dog Teaching staff, non teaching staff, pupils, visitors, contractors	The dog may have a temporary change in temperament or sudden reaction if it doesn't want to be in school.	SBC Policy	9 Medium	If the dog indicates it doesn't want to go to school it will be left at its alternate day place. If the dog indicates it doesn't want to work with pupils or doesn't want to be in school during the day it will be allowed to go to its safe place and if necessary collected to be taken home or other off site safe place.	1 Low
Animals	Adverse impact on the development of the dog in its early development stages due to the school environment and interaction with pupils.	The Dog	Exposure to a school environment might interfere with a puppy's natural sleeping patterns, which could have a detrimental impact on their behaviour and wellbeing	SBC Policy	9 Medium	The dog shouldn't be exposed to the school environment at a very young age, while they are becoming used to the sights, sounds, smells and interactions within their home environment and local community. When the owner and dog behaviourist is confident that the dog is ready to attend school with pupils in the building, you will need to plan a gradual introduction process. For the first few months the dog should attend school only for short periods and meet only small groups of children in controlled	3 Low

Hazard Category	Hazard Description	Persons At Risk	How Is Person At Risk	Control Measures Currently In Place	Current Risk Factor	Additional Control Measures	Residual Risk Factor
						situations, and any physical interaction should only involve one child at a time	

Conclusion

- Is This An Acceptable Risk?No
- Assessment Conclusion
- When a decision is made to have a dog in school, before any other action is taken, a specific assessment should be made using this assessment (contact H&S Team for a copy) as a guide with actions assigned to specific persons to put in place the identified "Additional Control Measures" and any others required before the dog is allowed in school.
- Once the controls are in place then it would be considered that suitable controls are all in place and the risk is acceptable.
- If other controls are identified not on this assessment, they should be notified to the Health and Safety Team for consideration and possible inclusion on this template for the benefit of other schools

Page 151

Attachments

-

File / Link Description File Size Date Record Created

Record Approval

-

Stage	Date	By	Assigned	Submission Due Date	Approver	Approved?	Comments
Auto Assigned	09/01/2024	Stuart Ford	healthandsafety	30/01/2024		No	
Assigned	11/01/2024	Simon Astin	Stuart Ford	30/01/2024		No	
In Progress	12/01/2024	Stuart Ford				No	

Stage	Date	By	Assigned	Submission Due Date	Approver	Approved?	Comments
Submitted	12/01/2024	Stuart Ford			Stuart Ford	No	This record was submitted and approved at the same time.
Approved (Current)	12/01/2024	Stuart Ford			Stuart Ford	Yes	

-
- [Back](#)
- Expand

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1 Details of the Proposal

<p>A. Title of Proposal:</p>	<p>Proposal to approve the School Dog Policy, Agreement between Owner/ handler of the School dog and Risk Assessment- all for use and guidance within Scottish Borders Council School Settings.</p>
<p>B. What is it?</p>	<p>A new Policy/Strategy/Practice/Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)</p>	<p>1. The proposal is to adopt clear guidance, a Policy and a clear regulatory framework of standards and controls, for having designated school dogs within our school settings. This is to assist schools to mitigate the risks inherent with having a live dog within a school setting. Although there are risks and concerns associated with school dogs, if these can be identified, controlled, and mitigated as per the policy and by the appropriate methods in terms of guidelines which must be strictly adhered to, then the educational benefits to pupils of having a school dog are</p>

	comprehensive, and enduring enough to make the role of a school dog very worthwhile.
D. Service Area: Department:	Education and Lifelong Learning
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Lesley Munro
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Marina Urie Solicitor, Legal Services
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	March 2024

Section 2 Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

Yes / No	NO
If yes, - please state here:	

Section 3 Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:
Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010? NO






(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter “No” and go to Section 3.2.)


Equality Duty	Reasoning:
<p>A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. <i>(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)</i></p>	<p>Potential consideration to discriminate against those who have an allergy or fear of dogs and who could be sidelined/ left out of any time with the school dog. Due cognisance should be given to ensure that any concerns about this are addressed and eliminated or reduced to nil or negligible.</p>
<p>B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? <i>(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)</i></p>	<p>Help equality of opportunity- Adoption of the School Dogs policy aims to increase (amongst other things) attendance in school settings and help bridge the attainment gap through more novel ways to increase learning opportunities. This can only serve to aid inclusion and good relations within school settings amongst children and foster good relations between those who have different equality characteristics in terms of working together and nurturing developing empathy etc. Positive impact in terms of allowing school children to have contact with a school dog to foster care and nurturing behaviour/ promote positive relationships with animals, assist with learning environments and to help promote inclusive practices consistent with the growth mindset, safety and wellbeing approach in schools.</p>
<p>C. Foster good relations? <i>(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)</i></p>	<p>As above</p>

**3.2 Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal?
(You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)**

Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.

	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Positive impact in terms of allowing school children to have contact with a school dog to foster care and nurturing behaviour/ promote positive inclusive relationships with animals and with each other, assist with learning environments and to help promote attendance.
Disability A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This may be visible or invisible, progressive or recurring.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Positive impact in terms of encouraging school children to have contact with a school dog to foster care and nurturing behaviour/ promote positive inclusive relationships with animals and with each other to help with inclusion.
Gender Reassignment anybody who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

<p>Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership</p>				
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),</p>				
<p>Race: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)</p>				
<p>Religion or Belief: different religious or philosophical beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief) e.g. Christianity, Islam, Hindu, pacifism, vegetarianism, gender critical.</p>				
<p>Sex women and men (girls and boys)</p>				

Sexual Orientation , e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual				
<p>3.3 Fairer Scotland Duty</p> <p>This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.</p> <p>The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.</p>				
Is the proposal strategic? Yes / No (<i>please delete as applicable</i>) If No go to Section 4	NO			
If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:				
	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.				

Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies				
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport), see rural proofing guidance				
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income				
Care experienced people				
Carers paid and unpaid including family members				
Homelessness				
Addictions and substance use				
Those involved within the criminal justice system				

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty (*Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only*)

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.

This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?

Yes/ No

NO

If “Yes”, please complete below

Covenant Duty	How this has been considered and any specific provision made:
<p>The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;</p> <p>The <u>MOD Statutory Guidance</u> gives the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danger • Geographical Mobility • Separation from Family • Service Law • Unfamiliarity with Civilian Life • Hours of Work • Stress 	
<p>The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;</p>	

<p>The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.</p>	
--	--

Section 4 Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered “No” to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes / No NO

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

<p>School Dogs Policy can impact school settings in a mostly positive way- although there maybe concerns with risks inherent with having a live animal in a school setting, as long as those are identified and reduced to the lowest level reasonably practicable via adequate training and following the rules set down, then any drawbacks can be mitigated with the benefits outweighing the risks. There will be some staff, children and visitors who may not be able to engage with a school dog due to allergies/ fear or other health conditions and these staff/ children visitors could perhaps fall into the category of falling within the protected characteristics in terms of the Equality Act, however this could be perceived to be low risk, with such consideration being given to same on an individual risk assessment basis to mitigate any negative impacts and to ensure that the positive effects of having a school dog significantly outweigh the drawbacks.</p>
--

Signed by Lead Officer:	
Designation:	Marina Urie
Date:	6.3.24
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

23 January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

In October 2023, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Peebles High School. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- Almost all members of the school community continue to show resilience in responding to the ongoing challenges caused by previous periods of significant disruption.
- Strong relationships between almost all staff and young people result in positive learning experiences. Staff are working well together to improve learning, teaching and assessment. Almost all young people are polite and eager to learn.
- Staff in the enhanced provision have developed a caring and positive learning environment. They support young people well to make effective progress in their learning.
- Staff have maintained high levels of attainment for the majority of young people in the senior phase. Senior leaders and staff are beginning to implement approaches designed to raise the attainment of all learners.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Scottish Borders Council.

- Senior leaders and staff need to improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment in the Broad General Education. They need to develop approaches to ensure that all young people make appropriate progress in their learning.
- Staff should develop a clear understanding of how to identify and respond to all young people's individual learning needs.
- The strategic leadership of the school requires improvement. Senior leaders should monitor and evaluate the work of the school more effectively to identify priorities for improvement. They then need to evaluate how well these priorities are making a difference to improving outcomes for young people. This is especially important for the safeguarding of and raising the attainment and achievement of all learners.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Peebles High School

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
Raising attainment and achievement	satisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale.	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

[Details](#) | [Find an inspection report](#) | [Find an inspection report](#) | [Inspection and Review](#) | [Education Scotland](#).

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings, we think that the school needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. We will liaise with Scottish Borders Council regarding the school's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the school within twelve months of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Scottish Borders Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents/carers informing you of the progress the school has made.

Patricia Cameron
HM Inspector

PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT REPORT – SCHOOLS (PEEBLES HIGH SCHOOL)

Report by Director – Education & Children’s Services

EDUCATION PERFORMANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

23 April 2024

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report proposes that the Committee considers His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) Reports for Peebles High School and the Improvement Plan developed by the Headteacher to address the key recommendations.**
- 1.2 Peebles High School was inspected in the week commencing 23 October 2023, using a ‘short’ inspection model. This means that 2 key quality indicators were inspected in the Secondary School over a 3 day period.
- 1.3 The HMIE Report evaluated the Secondary provision with 2 gradings of Satisfactory for the Quality Indicators 2.3 “Learning, Teaching and Assessment” and 3.2 “Raising Attainment and Achievement”. The evaluation gradings range given by HMIE on school inspections can range over a 6 point scale from ‘unsatisfactory’ to ‘excellent’. An evaluation of Satisfactory means that the strengths within this aspect of the setting’s work just outweigh the weaknesses. It indicates that children have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on children’s experiences. While the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of learners’ experiences, therefore the school needs to take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.
- 1.4 The Quality Improvement Team will continue to work alongside the Headteacher to ensure continued progress towards excellence. The Team will ensure that areas of very good practice are shared across the Local Authority.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Committee agree to:

- 2.1 The School Improvement Plan for Peebles High School which addresses areas for improvement as outlined in the HMIE Inspection Report (Published on 23 January 2024).**
- 2.2 The Quality Improvement Team's plan for support and showcasing of the work of Peebles High School following the inspection.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) are part of Education Scotland, a national body who carry out scrutiny activities in all schools and settings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all inspection activity ceased so there has been a time delay in the scrutiny activities carried out across Scotland. HMIE are now in a stable timeline for visiting schools across Scotland.

3.2 Scottish Borders Council Quality Improvement Framework

- (a) The Education (Scotland) Act 2016, The Standard's in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 (amended to include the National Improvement Framework) place direct responsibility on Local Authorities to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of school education which is provided by the schools managed by it.
- (b) The Quality Improvement Team has a relentless focus on supporting and challenging continuous improvement in schools and settings to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people.

4 REPORT EVIDENCE FROM HMIE AND LOCAL AUTHORITY

4.1 In October 2023, a team of Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Peebles High School. During their visit, the team talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the Headteacher and staff.

4.2 The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work:

- i. Almost all members of the school community continue to show resilience in responding to the ongoing challenges caused by previous periods of significant disruption.
- ii. Strong relationships between almost all staff and young people result in positive learning experiences. Staff are working well together to improve learning, teaching and assessment. Almost all young people are polite and eager to learn.
- iii. Staff in the enhanced provision have developed a caring and positive learning environment. They support young people well to make effective progress in their learning.
- iv. Staff have maintained high levels of attainment for the majority of young people in the senior phase. Senior leaders and staff are beginning to implement approaches designed to raise the attainment of all learners.

4.3 The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the Headteacher and a representative from Scottish Borders Council:

- i. Senior leaders and staff need to improve the planning of learning, teaching and assessment in the Broad General Education. They need to develop approaches to ensure that all young people make appropriate progress in their learning.
- ii. Staff should develop a clear understanding of how to identify and respond to all young people's individual learning needs.
- iii. The strategic leadership of the school requires improvement. Senior leaders should monitor and evaluate the work of the school more effectively to identify priorities for improvement. They then need to evaluate how well these priorities are making a difference to improving outcomes for young people. This is especially important for the safeguarding of and raising the attainment and achievement of all learners.

4.4 The HMIE inspection team have indicated that, as a result of their Inspection findings, the school requires additional support and time to make improvements. HMIE will return within one year from the original publication date of 23 January 2024 and Scottish Borders Council will be kept informed with details of the follow up Inspection.

4.5 Local Authority support, in accordance with Scottish Borders Council's Quality Improvement Framework, will ensure that a Quality Improvement Officer will continue to work alongside the School, offering support, to ensure continuous improvement.

4.6 The School will report progress in their annual Standards and Quality Report.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The report fully describes all the elements of risk that have been identified in relation to this project and no specific additional concerns need to be addressed.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and there is no requirement for a full IIA to be completed in relation this this report.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There is no impact/difference to sustainable development goals.

5.5 Rural Proofing

Not applicable.

5.6 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Delegation which need to be made following the recommendations of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council, the Finance Business Partner and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Lesley Munro

Director – Education & Children’s Services

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Catherine Thomson	Quality Improvement Manager – 01835 824000 Extension No.5888

Background Papers:

HMIE Inspection Report (Published 23 January 2024)

HMIE Summarised Inspection Findings Report - School (Published 23 January 2024)

HMIE Pre-Inspection Additional Inspection Evidence (Published 23 January 2024)

Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. The Senior Management Support Admin Team can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Senior Management Support, Children & Young People’s Services, People Department, Scottish Borders Council, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA. Tel 01835 824000 SeniorMgtSupport@scotborders.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Summarised inspection findings

Peebles High School

Scottish Borders Council

23 January 2024

Key contextual information

School Name: Peebles High School
Council: Scottish Borders Council
SEED number: 5601932
Roll: 1387

Attendance is generally in line with the national average. This was 91.2% in 2020/21.

Exclusions are significantly below the national average.

In September 2022, 6.9% of young people were registered for free school meals. This is significantly below the national average of 17.8%.

In September 2022, a few young people lived in the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2022, the school reported that 35% of young people had additional support needs.

The school serves the large Tweeddale area of the Scottish Borders which includes the town of Peebles and a rural locale. In recent years, the school has faced significant challenges. Following a lengthy period of instability within the senior leadership team, the school building was severely damaged as a result of a substantial fire in November 2019. This continues to impact on learning provision. Space is restricted because many areas of the current building remain unsafe to use. The school community is working within a campus where a new school is currently being built, due to open in 2025.

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Positive relationships between staff and young people are evident in almost all classes. This results in a calm learning environment. Almost all young people are polite and respectful, demonstrating a willingness to learn and succeed.
- The majority of young people participate and interact well during lessons. However, the majority of lessons are overly teacher-led, lacking appropriate pace and challenge to meet the needs of individual learners. This results in a minority of young people being passive in their learning. At times, the low-level behaviour of a minority of young people is impacting on learners' experiences. Young people would benefit from more opportunities to engage actively in leading their own learning.
- In almost all lessons, teachers use the Peebles High School 'Learning Structure'. This is beginning to ensure that young people experience a consistent approach to learning and teaching. The "daily review" is leading to regular routines in lessons which is helping young people to settle quickly and be ready to learn.
- In most lessons, teachers deliver clear explanations and instructions which help most young people to understand how to complete the planned activities. In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of new learning and the measures of success effectively. Staff should consider how they can support young people to understand the relevance of their learning. They should develop approaches to help learners apply their knowledge and skills to other contexts across the curriculum. In most lessons, young people are able to reflect on what they have learned and identify success in completing set tasks.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers use questioning well to help young people to recall prior learning and to check understanding. In a few lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to promote deeper thinking and to extend young people's learning. Most young people demonstrate confidence in volunteering answers. As a next step, staff should continue their focus on improving questioning, building on the best examples. This will ensure all young people experience greater levels of challenge in their learning.
- Staff use digital technology well in most lessons to enhance young people's learning. In most subject areas, there are a few examples of highly effective practice. Young people speak positively about the impact of using digital platforms to support their learning in class and at home.
- Most young people in the senior phase understand their progress in learning through helpful feedback from teachers in class. A key next step is for teachers to improve the quality of feedback. This will ensure that all young people understand their strengths and next steps in

their learning, especially in the Broad General Education (BGE). Staff should continue to review approaches to sharing information to parents so that they understand better their child's progress in learning.

- Teachers use a range of summative assessment strategies to determine young people's levels of attainment, progression routes in the senior phase and to report progress to parents. In a few subject areas, teachers use a range of assessment information effectively to plan learning and interventions for young people. This is helping learners who are not on track to achieve at the appropriate level in the senior phase. In a majority of subject areas, teachers are over-reliant on summative assessments. Staff need to use assessment evidence more effectively to support young people to understand clearly their progress and next steps in learning.
- Teachers have a well-developed understanding of standards in the senior phase. This has resulted from collaborating with colleagues in school and across the local authority to verify their assessment judgments. Senior leaders need to support middle leaders and teachers to develop robust practices in the BGE to ensure the reliability of assessment data. They should use this information to plan and support young people's attainment across and throughout all stages.
- Almost all subject departments have individual approaches to tracking and monitoring young people's progress. These systems are variable in quality and are used inconsistently to inform the planning of learning. A few departments use tracking information well to support young people's learning in class. Senior leaders are beginning to develop approaches to ensure a greater consistency in how departments track young people's progress. They recognise the need to develop an overview of young people's progress so that staff can work together to support all young people to make appropriate progress in their learning.
- Teachers plan courses and learning appropriately in the senior phase. Middle leaders have revisited their BGE course design and are beginning to plan courses using national benchmarks. A clear next step is for staff to develop planning approaches to learning, teaching and assessment more closely aligned to all aspects of the moderation cycle. Building on the few examples of strong practice, senior leaders should now support teachers to plan learning activities and experiences matched to the individual needs of all learners. This is required particularly for those young people who have additional support needs.
- Staff are improving the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment. Senior leaders and key staff who lead in this area are at an early stage of developing a shared understanding of high-quality provision. Staff engage in regular opportunities to share effective practice including learning visits, feedback sessions, and planning for further improvement. Senior leaders should support staff to build on aspects where practice is strong to ensure that all young people experience high quality learning, teaching and assessment.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Senior leaders report that recent declines in young people's attendance as well as the school's current operational context are impacting negatively on attainment.

Senior leaders have introduced very recently a whole school system to measure young people's progress and attainment over time. They plan to use this data to identify gaps in attainment, determine interventions and measure the impact of actions in improving outcomes for young people. Senior leaders and staff need to work together to understand better their attainment data so that they can identify and understand gaps in young people's attainment. They recognise the need to ensure that data to measure young people's progress and attainment is used systematically to inform the whole school raising attainment strategy.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Senior leaders recognise that literacy and numeracy require greater focus as an improvement priority. Staff who lead on literacy and numeracy require support to understand their role in developing a clear strategy. They need to ensure all young people leave school with the highest level of literacy and numeracy qualifications.

BGE

- Most young people achieved Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) third level in literacy and numeracy by the end of S3 in 2022/23. The majority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy and most achieved fourth level in numeracy by the end of S3 in 2022/23. Achievement of these levels has declined over the latest five year period. Senior leaders shared data that shows the number of young people who achieved CfE fourth level in numeracy by the end of S3 has increased in the latest year.
- Teachers now need to consider approaches to moderation to improve the quality and reliability of their assessment judgements regarding literacy and numeracy. They should work with colleagues in other secondary schools and in cluster primary schools to moderate their work and to promote consistency of approach. It is important that this work is guided by senior leaders with a strong understanding of the purpose of moderation activities. They need to ensure activities are focused on the improvement of reliability of judgements to support young people in progressing in their learning. Staff need to use more reliable assessment information to identify and plan for all young people to attain the highest level of literacy and numeracy qualifications in the senior phase. This includes identifying as early as possible in the BGE those young people who are at risk of leaving school without the appropriate level of literacy and numeracy qualification. Senior leaders are aware that curriculum areas other than English and mathematics should also contribute to improvement in these areas.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Almost all young people who left school from 2017/18 to 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Since 2017/18, the majority of young people who left school achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy, in line with the VC.
- Most young people who left school between 2017/18 and 2021/22 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 numeracy. Apart from 2019/20 when performance at this level was significantly higher than the VC, this measure has been showing a pattern of decline since 2017/18, although it remains in line with the VC.

Cohorts

- At S4, between 2018/19 and 2021/22, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 3 or better or level 4 or better in literacy. In the latest year, 2022/23, this has declined to most young people achieving this level. Since 2018/19, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the VC. Young people's performance at SCQF level 3 or better to SCQF level 5 or better shows no consistent pattern of improvement and has declined in the latest year, 2022/23. By S5, based on the S4 roll, most young people achieve SCQF level 5 or better. Although this is in line with the VC, almost all young people achieved this level from 2018/19 until 2021/22, with the exception of 2020/21. The majority of young people by S5 achieved SCQF level 6 between 2018/19 to 2022/23. Since 2018/19, performance at this level is showing a pattern of decline. By S6, based on the S4 roll, almost all young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and this is improving across the latest five year period. The majority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy since 2018/19. This has been in line with the VC since 2019/20.
- At S4, most young people achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy in 2022/23. Although this is in line with the VC, this has declined from almost all young people achieving this level from 2019/20 to 2021/22. Most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy since 2018/19. This is in line with the VC for 2022/23 having been significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and 2021/22. By S5, based on the S4 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy over the last five years. This is in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve SCQF level 6 in numeracy. Although this is in line with the VC, the percentage of young people achieving this measure has been declining since 2018/19 when it was significantly higher than the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, most young people achieved SCQF level 5 or better since 2019/20. A minority of young people have achieved SCQF level 6 in the latest five years, in line with the VC. Although performance for S6 is in line with the VC, there is no identifiable pattern of improvement for SCQF levels 5 and 6.
- Young people's attainment in National Qualifications (NQs) in English is very strong. At both SCQF levels 5 and 6, entries and young people's attainment is significantly above national data.
- Young people's attainment in NQs in mathematics is very strong. At SCQF level 5, for both mathematics and applications of mathematics, entries and young people's attainment is significantly above the national average. At SCQF levels 6 and 7, entries have been above the national average since 2019 and attainment is generally in line with national data.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Senior leaders do not have an overview of young people's progress and attainment over time in the BGE. A variety of individual tracking and monitoring systems are in place in almost all

subject areas. At present, the quality of these systems is variable and subject areas are inconsistent in their approaches to ensuring the reliability of the data they currently use to measure young people's progress. Senior leaders acknowledge that this is an urgent area for improvement. They have implemented processes recently to improve attainment outcomes for young people. This includes recently employing additional middle leaders to take forward improvements in this area. It is important that this work happens at pace.

Senior phase

- In some areas of the senior phase, staff have maintained high levels of attainment. In a number of areas, aspects of attainment have declined, particularly in the latest year. Senior leaders highlight that the different approaches to certification in response to COVID-19 have presented challenges in terms of sustaining previous patterns of increased attainment. Although many measures are in line with the VC, these are not showing consistent signs of improvement. Senior leaders need to analyse more rigorously the reasons for declines in attainment. They need to support staff to use data more effectively to plan appropriate interventions to prevent further declines.

Improving attainment for all

Leavers

- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers was in line with the VC between 2018/19 and 2021/22, when using complementary tariff points. Since 2017/18, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of leavers has been significantly higher than the VC for the latest two years, 2020/21 and 2021/22. The attainment of the highest attaining 20% of leavers has been significantly much higher than the VC since 2019/20 and significantly higher than the VC since 2017/18. Although there is no consistent pattern of improvement for the lowest attaining leavers, attainment for the highest 20% of leavers has shown a pattern of improvement since 2018/19.
- Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of leavers with additional support needs has generally improved since 2017/18 and is broadly in line with the VC. Attainment for the middle attaining 60% of leavers with additional support needs has improved significantly and consistently since 2017/18 and was broadly in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2020/21 and above the VC for the latest year. Attainment for the highest attaining 20% of leavers with additional support needs has also consistently improved and is above the VC in the latest year, 2021/22, having been in line with the VC since 2017/18.

Cohorts

- At S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC from 2018/19 until the latest year, 2022/23 where it is significantly much lower than the VC. By S5, based on the S4 roll, and by S6 based on the S4 roll, the attainment of these learners is in line with the VC.
- At S4, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people has been in line with the VC since 2020/21. Prior to this, attainment for these young people was significantly higher than the VC since 2018/19. By S5, based on the S4 roll, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people has been in line with the VC since 2021/22, having been significantly higher than the VC in 2019/20 and 2020/21. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people for the latest year, 2022/23 is in line with the VC, having been significantly higher than the VC since 2020/21.
- In S4, and by S5, based on the S4 roll, the attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the attainment of the highest

attaining 20% of young people in the latest year, 2022/23, is significantly higher than the VC, having been significantly much higher than the VC for the previous three years.

- There is no identifiable pattern of improvement for the lowest attaining 20%, the middle attaining 20% and the highest attaining 20% of learners.

Breadth and depth

- Senior leaders should review their curriculum offer to young people. They should continue to explore approaches to ensure aspirational coursing for all young people in the senior phase to maximise their time and potential.
- At S4, a majority of young people achieved seven or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better from 2018/19 to 2022/23, in line with the VC. The number of young people gaining one or more to six or more qualifications at SCQF level 4 or better has declined in the latest year, 2022/23 and does not show a consistent pattern of improvement. The number of young people gaining one or more qualifications has declined in the latest year and is significantly below the VC. Apart from 2019/20, the number of young people gaining four or more awards to six or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better has been declining since 2018/19. Since 2021/22, the majority of young people achieved six or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better which is in line with the VC, having been significantly higher than the VC the previous session. A minority of young people achieved seven or more qualifications at SCQF level 5C or better since 2019/20. This is in line with the VC in the latest year, 2022/23, having been significantly higher than the VC in 2019/20 and 2021/22. A minority of young people achieved six or more qualifications at SCQF level 5A or better since 2019/20. This is generally significantly higher than the VC.
- By S5, a majority of young people achieved seven or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in 2022/23. This has increased from being a minority of young people achieving at this level in 2021/22. Performance at this level shows patterns of improvement and was significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21 and in the latest year, 2022/23. Performance of young people attaining top quality passes at A grade is strong and generally significantly higher than the VC. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, a minority of young people achieved five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or above. This has been in line with the VC since 2021/22, having been significantly higher than the VC since 2018/19. The percentages of young people attaining SCQF level 6A or better is strong although in the last two years is in line with the VC having previously been significantly higher.
- By S6, and since 2019/20, the percentage of young people gaining one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better is showing a pattern of improvement. Performance at SCQF level 6A or better is in line with the VC for the latest year, however in 2020/21 and 2021/22, performance at this level was significantly higher than the VC for young people attaining three or more to six at more awards at SCQF level 6A. Since 2018/19, young people's achievement at SCQF level 7C or better remains strong. Although performance is generally in line or higher than the VC, performance at this level has declined in the latest year, 2022/23.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people participate in a variety of highly promoted activities designed to support young people's achievement beyond the classroom. At present, staff do not track young people's participation in activities to sufficiently inform the quality and quantity of all young people's achievements. Senior leaders have very recently implemented a system to capture young people's participation in activities. They need to consider further these approaches to ensure that they are able to measure the quality of all young people's achievements. Staff also need to use this information to ensure all young people are supported to achieve well.

- Young people can influence the offer of achievement activities. A few young people take part in activities which support them to develop leadership skills. This includes a few young people from all year groups participating in the Model United Nations and in the school parliament. A minority of young people in the senior phase are developing confidence, interpersonal and organisational skills through their roles as members of the senior school council, as prefects and as sports leaders. Young people enjoy the responsibility of these roles. They feel that they are able to share their views with staff regarding changes that could be made to improve young people's experiences at school. Young people would like greater opportunities to enhance their leadership skills through greater involvement in school improvement actions. A few of the young people undertaking leadership roles are working towards NQ leadership qualifications at SCQF levels 5 and 6. There is scope to explore accreditation of achievements for a greater number of young people.
- In a few examples, staff leading achievement activities are at the early stages of helping young people to identify the skills they are developing through participation in clubs. Senior leaders are beginning to consider approaches to measure the skills that young people develop through their achievements. A helpful next step in this process will be for staff to help young people to understand the skills they are developing through their achievements. They should consider how to support young people to apply these in a range of contexts across the curriculum.
- Staff celebrate young people's achievements effectively in a number of ways. They share achievements through whole school communications such as regular newsletters and through assemblies and awards ceremonies.

Equity for all learners

- Staff use their knowledge of young people's socio-economic circumstances to support their participation in experiences such as excursions.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of using the recently introduced whole school tracking and monitoring system to identify young people who require interventions to ensure equity of provision in learning. Staff are increasing their awareness of young people who face additional challenges as a result of poverty, such as those entitled to free school meals. Senior leaders recognise that these learners require greater focus and interventions to close the poverty related attainment gap.
- Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used to improve attendance of young people who are at risk of underachieving. This targeted support has led to improved attendance for a few learners. PEF has also been used to employ staff who have been very recently appointed to their post. These staff plan to improve the attendance and attainment of identified cohorts of young people.
- Senior leaders are at the early stages of considering the cost of the school day and how they can support all young people to benefit from their learning experiences. They should consider how to involve stakeholders to have a greater role in contributing to and leading aspects of this development.
- Almost all young people progress to a positive destination on leaving school. This is in line with the VC. The majority of young people go to higher or further education, with a minority going to employment. These destinations are broadly in line with the VC.

Context

Peebles High School hosts an enhanced provision. This is a local authority service for secondary-aged young people with additional learning needs. The provision offers full-time education with dedicated small group support. There are three dedicated teaching areas which include a recently added sensory room. There are currently ten young people who access this provision. They also benefit from a few learning opportunities within the mainstream provision.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

- Staff create a nurturing, supportive environment for all young people who access this resource. Teachers and Additional Needs Assistants (ANAs) are caring and sensitive. This enables young people to engage well in their learning and access the curriculum with appropriate support. Young people are highly engaged in learning activities which are well designed and matched to their needs and interests. Teachers structure lessons well and create appropriate opportunities for young people to experience a choice of activities within the planned learning context. Staff focus on developing life skills for these learners well. Young people work well independently. They collaborate successfully with others under the direction of staff in a number of subjects in the mainstream provision, including Drama, Music and Art.
- Staff and ANAs have developed a caring, learner-centred ethos which is resulting in a positive learning environment for young people. Staff respond sensitively to young people's needs and ensure effective progress in their learning. Staff are proactive and skilled in identifying and responding to distressed behaviours. This ensures all young people remain on task and that learning and teaching time is used effectively. Staff have established procedures to monitor, record and reflect on distressed behaviour and use this to inform future practice.
- Young people benefit from a few opportunities to learn within the broader context of the school. A particularly successful example is the introduction of the 'Sunflower café'. This develops young people's communication skills and they experience learning in unfamiliar contexts. This is developing their independence as well as their organisational skills. Senior leaders and key staff should now consider how to develop these opportunities further. They should take steps to broaden the current curriculum for learners.
- The recently appointed Principal Teacher of Enhanced Provision has introduced appropriate plans with individualised targets which are accessible for learners. Staff are beginning to track the progress of learners and the newly developed planning framework provides a clearer focus on their individual needs and next steps. Staff who lead the provision should now consider how to develop systems to record and monitor the progress of young people over time. Staff should use this information to set robust personalised targets, identify gaps in learning and develop personalised planning. This will ensure progression in planning young people's learning. Senior leaders should begin to develop structures to enable them to have an overview of the progress being made by learners who access the enhanced provision.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Young people are working at an appropriate level and are learning through practical activities in line with development milestones. Learners are supported to develop their attainment in literacy and numeracy through visual and concrete materials, experiential play and appropriate communication approaches.

- Young people are developing numeracy skills in a range of different contexts. They can collect and organise objects for a specific purpose, use schedules to navigate the day and for specific purposes within the lesson.
- Learners develop literacy skills through active learning. They enhance these skills by participating in social games, responding to songs and rhymes and by communicating with both familiar and less familiar supportive adults.

Attainment over time

- Key staff who lead the provision have recently created a framework to record progress. This is at a very early stage of development. Staff and senior leaders recognise the need to implement this at pace to record the progress that young people have made over time, particularly in the BGE. An important next step is for young people in the senior phase to be considered for presentation in national qualifications, in line with their abilities and needs. Staff who lead the provision should now focus on developing curricular and course structures. These should broaden learners' experiences and maximise opportunities in as wide a range of accreditation opportunities as appropriate.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- Young people benefit from a few experiences in a broader context, such as work experience with partners agencies. Staff are well-placed to expand outdoor learning experiences. Staff who lead the provision should continue to build on these positive developments to ensure young people experience a greater range and quality of achievements.

Equity for all learners

- Young people who access the provision have been supported effectively to move on to positive post-school destinations. Young people learn well in the wider community as a result of participation in work-based learning opportunities. Staff deliver carefully considered enhanced transition programmes to support young people to move successfully on to their individual pathway when leaving school.
- S6 mentors from the mainstream setting are being used to support the staff and peers who work in the enhanced provision. This is developing a more inclusive environment and senior leaders should continue to build on this effective practice.

Other relevant evidence

- The school community continues to operate within a challenging context. The school building suffered significant fire damage in November 2019. Senior leaders and staff continue to manage this situation well. In particular, there is limited provision in terms of space and the ongoing building work for the new school causes additional restrictions and challenges.
- Senior leaders need to review their approaches to communication at all levels. They need to ensure that communication is regular, clear and effective.
- The strategic leadership of the school requires improvement. There needs to be clear direction of school priorities, identified through rigorous self-evaluation. Senior leaders need to develop effective processes to monitor the impact of improvement actions so that this results in improved outcomes for all learners.
- Young people experience their entitlement to study all curricular areas to the end of the BGE. Young people benefit from quality PE in line with national expectations. Senior leaders need to ensure all young people experience their full curricular entitlements in line with national expectations. This includes modern languages in the BGE and religious education in the senior phase.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Several areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.