

## Attendance Contracts - Information for Parents

### ***What is an attendance contract?***

An attendance contract is a formal agreement between a parent/carer and a school.

You may be offered an attendance contract if your child's level of attendance at school is causing any concern.

Attendance contracts are NOT a punishment. They are a way for you and the school to work together to help improve attendance and for all to recognise what practical support may best assist your child.

An attendance contract will give you the opportunity to share your child's experiences, feelings and thoughts and discuss what you think may help. Any support that is agreed may be provided directly by someone at the school or by another partner organisation.

### ***Who can be offered an attendance contract?***

Attendance contracts can be offered to any parent, step-parent, or carer that has day to day care of a child or young person, whether they live with the child or not. The school will usually try to contact all of the child's parents or carers to discuss what each of them can do to support their child's attendance and the types of support they might need. Depending on the circumstances, the parents/carers may then work together to enter into a joint attendance contract with the school or may prefer separate attendance contracts.

### ***What does it involve?***

Attendance contracts are intended to give you support and to help your child to get the most out of school. They are also intended to encourage a positive working relationship between the School/Academy and parents/carers so that we can all work together to address any attendance matters and try to resolve any problems. Under the contract, you may be expected to agree to do certain things, for example, ensuring that your child goes to bed at an agreed time to ensure punctuality each morning, or accompanying them to school/making arrangements for them to be accompanied, or signing a weekly attendance record. The attendance contract will equally expect the school to agree to certain actions that will also remove any barriers to best support your child to be able to attend school regularly.

### ***Do I have to enter into an attendance contract if it is offered to me?***

No – attendance contracts are a voluntary arrangement between the school and the parent. You cannot be forced to enter into a contract. However, they do provide you with a chance to get support and to help your child get the most out of their education. If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing with the school how you intend to do this.

If there is no improvement in your child's attendance consideration will have to be given by the school as to what further action may be required. This could include applying for a court order directing you attend parenting classes to support you in managing your child's behaviour or attendance, or, as a last resort considering whether to report the matter to the Local Authority should prosecution considerations be required.

***My child has low attendance and the school has offered me an attendance contract meeting – what happens now?***

The school will invite you to a meeting to discuss the attendance contract. Your child may also be invited to attend depending on their age and understanding.

It is really important that you prioritise attending the meeting.

TRY NOT TO WORRY. Attendance contract meetings are not a punishment and being offered a contract is not a negative reflection on parents in any way. The meeting is for you and the school to discuss your child's attendance or behaviour and for everyone to reflect on what is already working well to support your child and what isn't. You can also use this meeting to discuss more generally any other support that you think may be helpful to you or your family. Before you attend the meeting, it is important to have a think about what you would like to get out of it. In particular:

- What do you think about your child's absence/behaviour and are there any reasons behind it which it would be helpful to discuss at the meeting?
- Are there any practical things which would help you to improve your child's attendance or behaviour e.g. breakfast club/regular phone calls with your child's form teacher or identified peer support for your child etc?
- Are you experiencing any particular difficulties at the moment and, if so, might the school need to be aware of these to be able to help or let you know where you can get help – e.g., benefits advice, parent groups, counselling, etc?
- What might you realistically be able to prioritise in order to support improvements in your child's attendance e.g. travel/walk with them to school, use of breakfast/after school clubs, daily check ins with a relevant member of staff, attendance at online information/support sessions etc etc?

If you are anxious about attending the meeting, ask if you can bring a friend or family member along for moral support. They won't be able to speak for you, but having someone there can often help.