

# **MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

## **THREE LETTER SYSTEM**

**(Including the use of Penalty Notices)**

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## 1. Introduction

Early intervention work is essential for schools in order to maintain satisfactory attendance levels. Attendance and attainment are linked. Schools should ensure they develop their strategic approaches to best manage overall attendance and achieve the government persistent absence target of 10% (Sept 2015)

The three-letter system is intended to enable schools and colleges to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor school attendance.

Continuous monitoring is advisable following the recent government change to persistent absence threshold. With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to an Education Welfare Officer and/or the Legal Panel may be necessary. The system is based on model letters which schools can send to parents when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

It is intended to apply essentially to absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification (and appropriate rewording of the letters) it might in certain circumstances be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised but which are beginning to cause concern. Schools should, however, decline to continue to authorise such absences once doubts arise as to their legitimacy.

## 2. Key Features and Potential Benefits of the Three-Letter System

- Heads of year and/or the headteacher can focus on the attendance of all pupils on a regular basis. E.g. weekly – by introducing new excel spreadsheet process that will allow for regular monitoring and immediate action where required. (refer to EWO or Legal Panel)
- The Spreadsheet system will allow for 'ONE STOP Monitoring. This records weekly attendance, when letters have been sent, and up to date accumulative figures at a glance. Can be used for Governor Meetings and Ofsted visits.
- Heads of year and/or the headteacher can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern
- In most cases Letter 1 brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required. (Many parents, on receiving Letter 1, comment that they had been unaware that their child's attendance was causing concern and they often respond positively.)
- The system provides a clear record of the school's own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve an Education Welfare Officer/ or in case of non-buyback academies, the legal panel.

- As the 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent with Letter 2, parents are made aware of the existence and role of the Education Welfare Officer prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary. This leaflet is available on the school portal.
- The system enables Education Welfare Officers/Attendance leads in academies to anticipate to a certain extent the number of referrals they are likely to receive. This facilitates forward planning.

### **3. Managing Attendance: Three Letter system flowchart**

- It essential that schools build up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and are able to ensure that when they do need to refer for a penalty notice and/or involve an Education Welfare Officer they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful. Once the case is formally referred via the Locality Manager for Education Welfare Officer support on a SIF (if CAF has been declined by parent), this needs to be supported by a copy of an up to date Attendance Certificate, school meeting notes and confirmation of school letters sent, attached to it. Please also send a registration certificate showing the last 6 school week's attendance (should be 85% and below with the majority of absences unauthorised). In relation to the application of Penalty Notices all schools and academies should refer via the Penalty Notice email address:

[penalty.notices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:penalty.notices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

- Academies who do not have a linked Education Welfare Officer should refer cases to either the Penalty Notice or Legal Panel email addresses:

[EWO.Prosecutions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:EWO.Prosecutions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

**Should the pupil have been absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns then the school should be initiating enquiries as to the child's whereabouts.**

**If they still have concerns they should contact the Education Welfare Officer.**

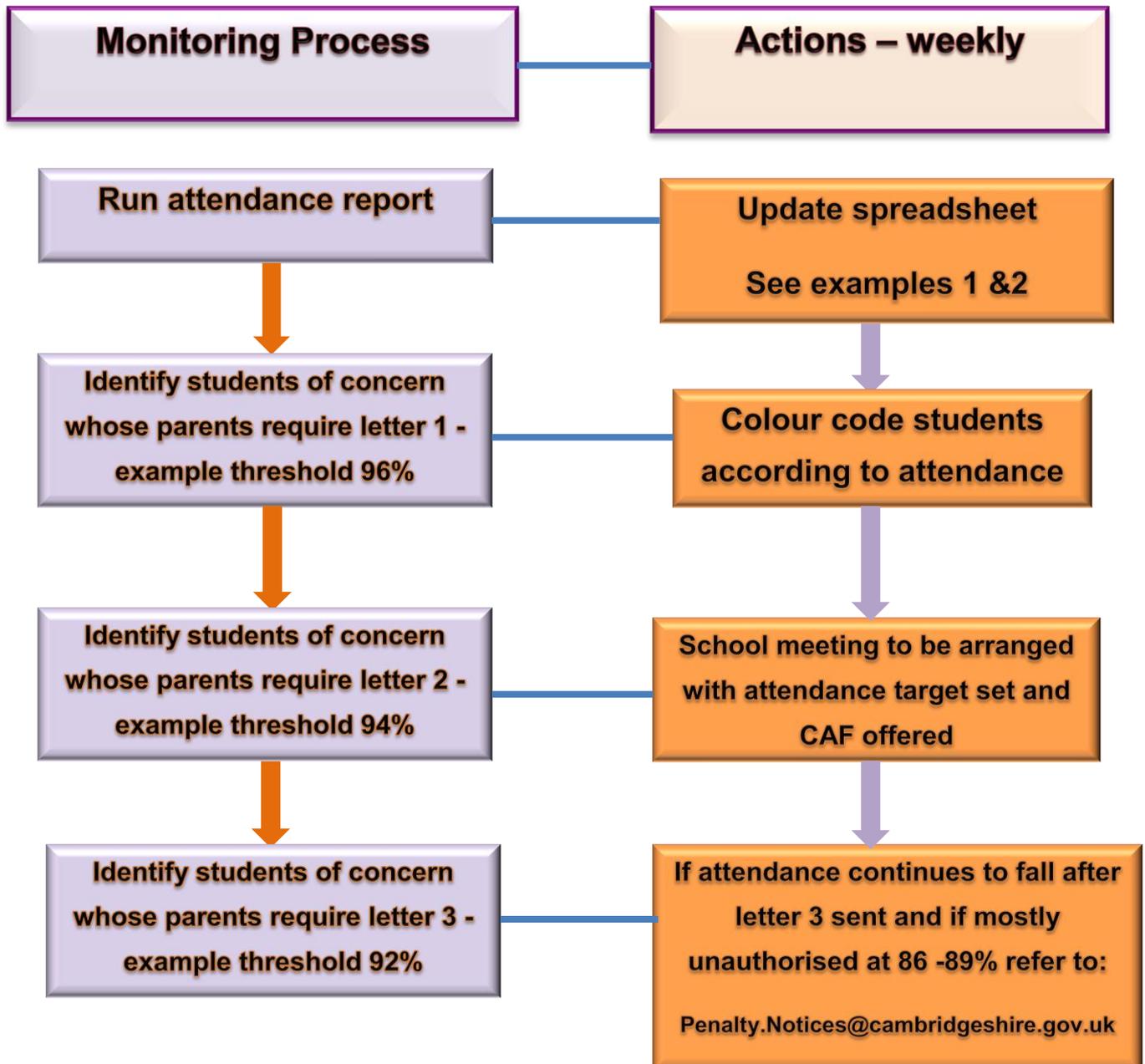
**Should the child be subject of a Child Protection Plan, the child's social worker should be notified immediately.**

**Children Missing Education guidance can be found:**

**Learntogether.org.uk**

# Managing Attendance – three letter system

Monitoring procedures for schools & academies to improve attendance and when appropriate refer for a Penalty Notice and Education Welfare Officer Involvement – excluding term time holiday\*



Attendance at 85% and below, mostly unauthorised over previous 6 weeks requires a referral for an Education Welfare Officer to follow formal processes

*Academies not buying back should refer to the Legal Panel for PACE interview at the required threshold*

\*for term time holidays please refer to separate guidance



## IT ALL ADDS UP!

Descriptor	Threshold Attendance	Actual Attendance	Whole Days Absent	Learning Hours Lost	
<i>An approach to help schools target non-attendance methodically – it is intended to apply to absence that is mostly unauthorised!</i>					P R E V E N T A T I V E
<b>Excellent</b>	100%	190	0	0	
	99%	188 days	2	10	
<b>Good</b>	98%	186 days	4	20	
	97%	184 days	6	30	
Identify students of concern and send <b>Letter One</b>	96%	182.5 days	7.5	37.5	
<b>Becoming Unsatisfactory</b>	95%	180.5 days	9.5	47.5	
Identify students of concern and send <b>Letter Two</b> . Meet with parents to discuss concerns and identify support – complete CAF	94%	177 days	13	65	
<b>Cause For Concern</b>	90%	171 days	19	95	
After identifying students of concerns at 90 - 92% attendance and having sent <b>Letter Three</b> , monitor attendance over a four week period and refer for PN when attendance falls between 86 to 89%	89%	169 days`	21	105	
	88%	167 days	23	115	
	87%	165	25	125	
Over previous 6 weeks attendance recorded as mostly unauthorised prepare referral to Education Welfare. Non buying back academies progress to formal Parent Contract Meeting	86%	163	27	135	
<b>Serious Cause For Concern</b>	85%	161.5	28.5	142.6	
Academies to refer to Legal Panel	84%	159.5	30.5	152.5	C O U R T
	83%	158	32	160	
	82%	156	34	170	
	81%	154	36	180	
<b>Critical</b>	80%			190	

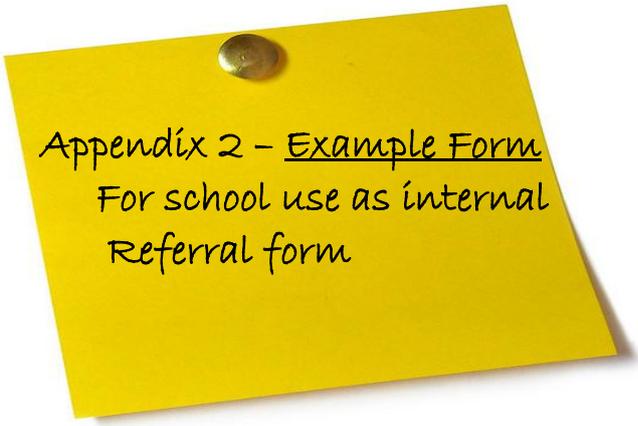
## EXAMPLE 1: EXCEL SPREADSHEET SIMS

Name	Class	04/04/2014	25/04/2014	02/05/2014	09/05/2014	16/05/2014	23/05/2014	06/06/2014	13/06/2014	20/06/2014
	WRENS	93.85	93.98	94.2	94.37	94.56	94.74	94.27	94.44	94.35
	WRENS	96.92	96.99	96.38	96.48	96.6	96.71	96.82	96.91	96.89
	WRENS	99.62	99.62	99.64	99.65	99.66	99.01	97.77	97.84	98.02
	WRENS	95.38	95.49	94.2	91.55	90.48	90.79	91.08	91.36	92.09
	WRENS	93.46	93.61	93.84	94.01	94.22	94.41	93.95	94.14	94.63
	WRENS	96.15	96.24	96.38	96.48	96.6	96.71	95.54	95.68	95.2
	WRENS	97.69	97.74	97.83	97.89	97.96	98.03	95.86	95.99	96.33
	WRENS	95.38	95.49	94.57	94.72	94.9	95.07	95.22	95.37	94.35
	WRENS	96.54	96.62	96.74	96.83	96.94	97.04	96.5	96.6	96.61
	WRENS	97.69	97.74	97.83	97.89	97.96	96.71	96.82	96.91	96.05
	WRENS	95.77	95.86	95.29	95.42	94.9	95.07	95.22	95.37	95.76
	WRENS	98.46	98.5	98.55	98.59	98.64	98.68	98.73	98.77	98.59
	WRENS	91.15	91.35	91.67	91.9	92.18	92.43	92.68	92.9	93.5
	WRENS	95.77	95.86	96.01	96.13	96.26	96.38	96.5	96.6	96.89
	WRENS	88.85	86.84	87.32	87.32	87.76	88.16	87.9	88.27	84.85
	WRENS	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	WRENS	97.69	97.74	97.83	97.89	97.96	98.03	98.09	98.15	98.31
	WRENS	98.85	98.87	98.91	98.94	98.98	98.36	98.41	98.46	98.02

KEY:

Letter 1
Letter 2
Non stat/medical
Letter 3 penalty notice warning
EWO Referral
Penalty Notice request





**REQUEST FOR A  
PUPIL NON-ATTENDANCE LETTER**

To be submitted by Head of Year or Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel to the school administrator for processing.

Pupil's Name: .....

Date of Birth: .....

Tutor/Class Group: .....

Letter to be sent (please tick):    1                      2                      3

The following text should be added to the standard letter. (This additional information will include reference to any contact the Head of Year/Headteacher/school has had with the parent).

.....  
.....  
.....

Signed: ..... Name: .....

Date: ...../.../.....

Appendix 3 - Letter  
One

example threshold 96%

## LETTER ONE

Date

Name and address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Name of pupil                      Dob:                                      School:

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage\_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning. I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

I will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If possible, and again if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

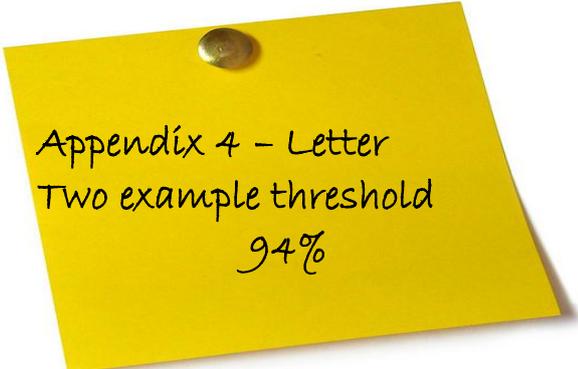
If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact me. However, it does no harm in speaking with the teacher or attendance team, because together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer – (*for information only and to be available on request*)

Enc Record of attendance  
School Attendance Leaflet



Appendix 4 - Letter  
Two example threshold  
94%

## LETTER TWO

Date

Name and address of parent

Re: Name of pupil          Dob:                  School:

Dear Parent

I am writing to inform you that «forename»'s Attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting «forename»'s progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meeting with a member of the Attendance Team to discuss this matter further at the date and time below.

Date:

Time:

Should «forename»'s attendance remain irregular; the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under **Section 444 Education Act 1996**, and a fine of up to **£2500 and/or 3 months in prison**.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve «forename»'s attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc      Education Welfare Officer -  
Encs    Record of Attendance  
          School Attendance Leaflet



**MEETING RECORD**

Title/Reason	Attendance/Punctuality	Date:	Time:
Present/Involved:	Name:	Year Group:	Dob:
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>	
<b>Total Lates:</b>		<b>Unexplained abs:</b>	

	<b>Record</b>	
	ANY PROBLEMS AT HOME/SCHOOL I.E. BULLYING ETC THAT MAY AFFECT ATTENDANCE/NEED SUPPORT?	
	Medical:	
	School:	
	Bullying:	
	Community:	
	Home:	
	Transport:	
	Planned Holidays	



Appendix 5 - letter  
Three example  
threshold 92%

## LETTER THREE – PENALTY NOTICE WARNING

Dear xxx

Re: Child Name: xxx DOB: xxx School:

As the Attendance Officer for xxx, it has been brought to my attention that xxx has been absent from school for xxx sessions this school year/over the previous xxx weeks. I enclose a record of XXX's attendance.

As parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually.

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

This means that if a child/young person has an overall attendance of 90% or less over a given period, they will be classified as a persistent absentee pupil.

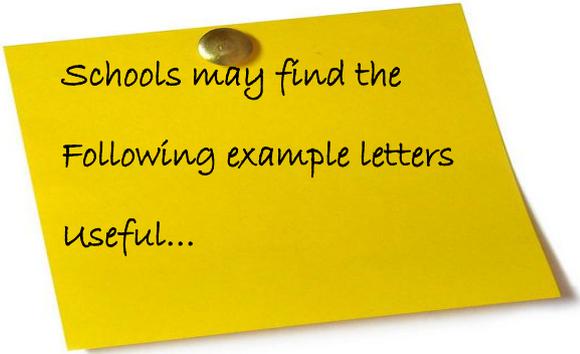
I am therefore writing to inform you that if attendance fails to improve during the next (4) weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued.

Yours sincerely

Enc. Record of Attendance

Attendance Leaflet (delete if not appropriate)

Schools need to continue to monitor after the application of a PN and if attendance fails to improve then refer to linked EWO. Non buy back academies refer to the Legal Panel



Schools may find the  
Following example letters  
Useful...

## APPENDIX 6

### REFERAL TO EWO LETTER FOR MAINTAINED AND ACADEMIES BUYING BACK

Date

Name and address of parent

School ref

Re: Name of pupil

Dob:

School:

Dear Parent

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance has not significantly improved since I last contacted you.

I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

I am now formally requesting the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer who will contact you in due course to arrange a meeting.

I will continue to be available to discuss this matter with you. Please telephone me on the number above should you require an appointment.

.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

**LATE LETTER**

Date

Name and address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.

.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Head teacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

## SUSPECTED HOLIDAY LETTER

Date

Name and Address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

I am writing about «forename»'s absence from school from <<date>> to <<date>>.

From information received from other sources we believe that this was due to a family holiday. You have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, «forename»'s absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/care in respect of each child who is absent from school. However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Head teacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

**NON-STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE / AUTHORISED ABSENCE LETTER**

Date

Name and Address of parent

Dear Parent

**Re: Child Name:** xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

This letter is for your information so you do not need to take any action.

I would like to thank you for following the school procedure regarding Attendance. We understand that «forename» has had authorised absence recently and that you called the school every day to keep us informed. We would just like to let you know how this has affected «forename»'s attendance which is currently at «percentage\_attendance»%. As you know, if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

*School share a vital part in ensuring that children who are absent from school because of their medical needs maintain their education.*

*If you child is absent from school for over 10 days it may be necessary for school to seek support for your child.*

*Please ensure that school is fully aware of any medical issues that may affect your child's attendance.*

Please continue to work with us. You are more than welcome to contact *school* to discuss any queries or concerns you may have.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Head teacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

**Parental request to remove their child/children from the school roll**

**Name of child/children :**

**Dob (s):**

**Reason**

I have registered my child/children at another school.	Name of school:  Start date:
We are moving	Date:  New address/contact:
We are moving abroad	Date  Country and contact address
I am going to educate my child/children at home and have informed the school in writing	Start date:
Other:	

**Name:**

**Relationship to child:**

**Signed**

**Date:**

**School**

Date taken off roll	
Has pupil's CTF been placed on S2S website? Code?	