



# School Absence Plan

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## Preventative Measures against high absence

The school works to establish a sense of security and respect for differences. The school works to help students develop friendships, a sense of belonging, social skills and self-confidence.

Research by Kearney and Groczyk (2014) claim that the following measures alone will target 80-90% of students:

- Engaging school environment that includes safety, respect for differences, mastery, participation and co-determination
- Positive relationships between students and parents
- Knowledge about school absence and actions are known (school's routines)
- Clear and systematic absence routines: monitored and followed up based on research
- Being present and a sense of belonging is recognized and highlighted
- Common challenges related to school absence is known and addressed by the school

(Kearney, C.A. & Graczyk, P. (2014): A response to intervention model to promote school attendance and decrease school absteneism, Child Youth Care Forum, 43 (1))

## Routines: Recording Attendance and Absence Excusals

### Recording attendance (school)

- 1) The contact teacher is responsible for updating the attendance.
  - a) PYP teachers record attendance at 8.35
  - b) MYP subject teachers record absence at the beginning of their own lessons.
    - i) If a student arrives 20 minutes late for a lesson, they are recorded as absent for that lesson
  - c) In MYP, the office administrator records attendance based on the first lesson's attendance, before 09.00.
- 2) Invalid Absence (No attendance excuse from parents/guardians).
  - a) The contact teachers will call the same day to clarify if there is a valid absence.
  - b) They must inform the contact teacher.
- 3) The Pedagogical Leadership Team goes through the absence protocols and the general attendance/absence regularly.
  - a) The school completes this in accordance with their preventive plan.
  - b) If there are concerns regarding individual students' absence, the school schedules regular meetings between the contact teacher and the Student Support Team to discuss the absence and identify measures. It is crucial that measures are implemented immediately.
  - c) Absence is a separate item on the meeting agenda at the weekly PYP/MYP team meetings when there are concerns.
  - d) In the case of alarmingly high absence and/or suspected school refusal, this is addressed at the first possible Student Support Team meeting.

## Absence Excusal (parents)

- 1) In case of absence (hours or days), the parents/guardians must contact the school on the first day (via learning platform).
- 2) Requesting absence (1-2 days), approved by the teacher.
- 3) Requesting absence (3-10 days), apply online at: <https://www.this.no/rules-and-regulations/>, approval by the Head of School.

## Absence concerns

- 1) More than **three single days per month**. Cause(s) are investigated in dialogue with the student and parents/guardians. If there are concerns regarding the absence, the Head of School must be informed.
- 2) Absence **over 10%** in a semester (half year). The school can consider requiring parents/guardians to present a medical certificate.
- 3) Worrisome absence includes:
  - frequent absence
  - increasing absence
  - absence connected to a specific school day or a specific school subject
  - absence can also be worrisome regardless if there is an Absence Excusal from the parents
  - frequent tardiness (3 times in 2 weeks)
  - if parents/guardians experience their child does not want to go to school
  - if the student is at school, but does not attend classes (invalid absence in single subjects - parents/guardians are informed)

## How to analyze attendance / high absence

Go through the attendance records and consider:

- Is there a pattern in absences or other aspects that stand out?
- Is there a need to be worried?
- Think through what the students experience as safe to be at school.
- Do any students have a high number of excused absences (sports, activities, chronic sickness)?
- What kind of dialogue do you have with parents/guardians.
- Have you spoken to the student about his/her attendance/absence? Evaluate if you should speak with the student first.
- Document your evaluation in the student's file.
- If you determine that there is a need for follow-up, you must follow-up.

## How do you bring up concerns related to student absence?

- If you are unsure or concerned about high absence, you must report to the Head of School / SST

- You can seek guidance from other resources at school through your Coordinator.
- Discuss anonymously if you do not have permission from parents to share this information with other staff members
- Establish a meeting between the contact teacher and the leadership team to discuss the absence and actions to be taken immediately.
- Address attendance / absences in weekly team meetings (MYP and PYP).
- The Leadership goes through Attendance / Absence **three times per year**. The school views this in connection with school environment work.

## Early signs of school refusal / avoidance

- Tardiness
- Sporadic absence, with or without excuses
- Student becomes more withdrawn and avoids contact
- Unexplained physical complains
- Attempts to avoid certain subjects / situations or activities

## Early detection / intervention of high absence

If you are concerned about high absence, speak with the student first (See Appendix A). There can be valid reasons for high absence and often patterns/behaviors can be easily fixed.

Excused absences that are reaching the limit should also be addressed. Speak with the students and the parents regarding the duty to go school, even if they are having a “bad day” or don’t feel 100% healthy. If this is the case, tell them to inform their teacher for support if necessary.

Be honest when you notice a pattern in absences or if you are concerned. Parents know their children best and can provide many important perspectives and insights to their child’s situation. Notify the parents that they can contact the school nurse for support related to school absence.

## Support for students and parents

The school health nurse is part of Trondheim Kommune’s Child and Family Services (Barne- og familietjeneste). The school health services are a low threshold offer with the goal to promote psychological and physical health, prevent sickness and injury, promote good social and environmental relationships. The health nurse works with health-related information, vaccinations and conversations (individual or group).

The school shall inform the school nurse when a student has high absence. The school nurse often participates in meetings with parents/guardians and will meet students to support in mapping absence patterns. Parents can contact the health nurse if they have any concerns or questions related to their child’s health / well-being.

## High Absence: Concerns, Actions and Responsibilities

The school must ensure that all documentation related to actions, checklists and evaluations related to school absence are stored securely in the student's file.

Concerns	Actions	Responsible
Nearing concern	<p><b>Talk with the student first (Appendix A)</b> and inform them the school is concerned about their absence from school.</p> <p><b>Secure the student's perspective</b> before involving other parties.</p> <p><b>Clarify</b> what and how what the student has told can be conveyed further: who will get to know something, when and how. If the student does not want things not to be shared further, explore what it is about. Perhaps you can wait a bit to share the conversation until the student feels a little more ready. Be clear if there are things that need to be told straight away.</p> <p><b>Document</b> and store in the student's file.</p>	Contact Teacher
Need for further mapping	<p><b>Checklist (Appendix B and C)</b> can be used for to help the student map out the situation. The school provides the student with the checklist to fill out or use in meetings.</p> <p><b>MYP contact teachers can send the following form:</b> <a href="#">MYP absence concern form</a>.</p> <p><b>Call in for meeting and inform parents</b> of their responsibility to follow-up their child's education and make adjustments / facilitate for their child to attend school.</p> <p><b>Establish a Working Team</b> for the student related to high absence.</p> <p><b>Map the student's school situation</b> from the student and the parents / guardians (checklists in Appendix B, C, D and E).</p> <p><b>Write an Action Plan (Appendix F)</b> with measures.</p> <p><b>Document</b> and store in the student's file.</p>	<p>Contact Teacher / School Nurse / Head of School</p> <p>MYP teacher</p> <p>Contact Teacher</p> <p>Head of School</p> <p>Contact Teacher</p> <p>Contact Teacher</p>
School refusal / worrisome absence	<p>Two <b>useful links</b> for parents: <a href="#">Ti råd mot skolevegning</a> and <a href="#">Kronikker og innlegg om skolevegning</a>.</p> <p><b>Make arrangements</b> for their child to come to school, on time.</p>	Parents

	<p><b>Collaborate</b> with the school to get their child back to school in line with the Action Plan (Appendix F).</p> <p><b>Discuss the problems / challenges</b> and remain in contact with the school.</p> <p><b>Arrange an appointment</b> with health services to evaluate mental and somatic health of their child. The school appreciates to be informed of the results and how the child is progressing.</p> <p><b>If desired, parents can also contact <a href="#">barne- og familietjenesten (BFT)</a>.</b></p> <p><b>Checklist (Appendix D)</b> (for parents) can be used to help parents outline the situation. The school provides the checklist for the parents to either fill out or to use in meetings with the school.</p>	<p>(provided by school)</p>
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## Involving External Supports

### When Actions have not been successful

If the actions have not been successful, the school must immediately discuss the case with BFT via “fagteam” or the school’s contact person at BFT to evaluate the best approach for further follow-up. This can result in several different outcomes:

- The working team continues as is.
- There is agreement that the working team becomes more involved without sending a formal referral.
- Resources from the school or BFT can be used to support school attendance (always with permission from parents).
- If the working team concludes that the student requires specialist support from BFT related to learning, requires guidance to the parents/guardians or the school, or if the student should be referred to St. Olav’s via BUP or additional supports.

Before the school contacts BFT to discuss the case, the school should complete the checklist (Appendix C) to ensure they have completed and evaluated the necessary steps and requirements.

The school must ensure that all documentation related to actions, checklists and evaluations related to school absence are stored securely in the student’s file.

## Student Support Team (internal) and Fagteam (external)

The school can also discuss cases with the SST (specialist team). The school's internal SST is made up of staff from leadership, special needs coordinator, social pedagogue, the school nurse and teachers (when necessary).

The SST can bring cases further to Fagteam which is represented by the various supports within Barne- og familietjenesten (health station, school health services, pedagogical and psychological services and children and family services). Parents can also participate in Fagteam meetings.

Fagteam is a collaborative forum between the school and child and family services with established meetings throughout the school year. This is a space to discuss cases and groups where school/home/children experience areas that can be challenging or concerning. Cases can be individual or systematic, addressing concerns that are not previously known for BFT. Through Fagteam, BFT works as a support for schools in preventative work, as well as providing space for early intervention for individuals or groups of students with specific challenges, as specific actions that are targeted to the specific concerns.

Fagteam is for form discussion and advice, where together the team works to identify the underlying problem for students, families, groups of students or in the learning environment. In addition, Fagteam discusses actions that can be tested for a period of time between meetings. Fagteam can also suggest parents or the school to make referrals directly to BFT, the health services or other public and state services.

## Referral

If the conclusion of the discussions with BFT results in requiring support from BFT, the school must make the referral to BFT. Parents can also contact themselves to request support. The school must have permission from the parents before a referral can be sent.

### If the case is referred according to The Education Act (Opplæringsloven)

The following attachments must be included with the referral:

- [Referral Form](#)
- Pedagogical report (provided by Special Needs Coordinator)
- Detailed overview of attendance and absences (days, weeks, subjects, etc.)
- Meeting Minutes from the Working Team around the student
- Action Plan that is developed, implemented and evaluated

### If the case is referred according to health related / prevention

The following attachments must be included with the referral:

- [Referral Form](#)
- [Attachment to referral](#)
- Based on the information provided in the referral, the specialists at BFT will decide which areas they will begin their work.

## Child Services (Barnevern)

High absence amongst young students and youth is not a reason in itself to report a concern to child services. All children have the right to be heard in matters that concern them, and their opinions must be given weight in accordance with their age and development (Barnekonvensjonen Art. 12, Grunnloven §104, Barneloven §31, Udir (opplæringsloven)).

## Collaboration with BFT

The school can contact BFT for different concerns. In some cases, it can be related to a specific cause. In other cases, it can be multiple challenges that can be difficult to separate from one another.

Follow up with BFT can include:

- Anonymous support / advice
- Participating in collaborative / multidisciplinary meetings
- Support the school, parents or the student to make agreements or measures for an action plan
- Advice to teachers or other staff members on how to make adaptations (differentiation) in the student's school day
- Guidance to parents/families
- Specific follow-up of students
- Mapping unsolved and continuous factors of high absence
- Evaluate and ensure that relevant resources are involved in cases and in collaboration with the school and parents
- Clarify roles and responsibilities when several parties are involved. It is important to avoid unclear roles and responsibilities in cases dealing with school absence. BFT will be an advisor when it is agreed upon clear responsibility areas amongst the different stakeholders.
- Advice to the school to ensure there is continuity over time, until the student is back at school and has a satisfactory educational experience. BFT participates in follow-up meetings once the student is back at school in order to avoid a repeat in high absence.
- BFT / PPT develop an expert assessment when required (opplæringsloven §5-3). In special cases, an expert assessment may be required when related to exemption / partial exemption from the duty to attend school (opplæringsloven §2-1).

Those involved in follow-up up the case with BFT on a systematic or individual basis must be committed to participate in the school's Working Team for the student as long as necessary.

## Appendix A: Meeting with the student

### Preparation:

- The student should be informed ahead of the meeting: what the concern is related to, where it will take place and who will participate.
- Collect information about the student (attendance/absence records, previous meeting minutes, etc.) if it is relevant for the goal of the meeting.
- Reflect on the questions: what is my experience of the student? Do I require additional support? How shall I record the student's responses? Should I use the checklist (in Appendix B and C) to map the situation, or to lead the discussion?
- Many students require time with a staff member to feel they can safely speak about what might be hard for them. Do not expect that the student will tell you everything at once, but you can plan to have additional meetings together where you build trust over time.

### In the meeting with the student:

#### Establish the relationship:

- The goal is to create a safe and open conversation with the student.
- Take contact if you don't already have a relationship and try to help the student feel safe and relaxed regarding the topic.
- If you already have established a good relationship, it will help to create a safe environment for the student to tell about their situation.
- Get to know one another, let the student talk about what is on their mind.

#### Bring up the concern:

- Be direct, clear and open.
- Difficult topics can be discussed in a good way with warmth and a genuine wish to try to understand the student and his/her situation
- Speak honestly about what the concern is.
- Talk with the student that you want to understand their absence patterns and how it has developed
- Be curious about the answers, ask follow-up questions and go into depth where you need more information
- Use open questions: "tell me about...", "how was it for you?"
- You can use mapping checklists (Appendix B and C)

#### Summarize:

- Summarize what the student has told you. "My understanding of what you have told me is..."
- Address any misunderstandings

#### Ending:

- Tell the student about the plan going forward. Explain that "what" and "how" the student has told you can be shared further: who gets to know something, when and how.
- If the student does not want you to share things further, inquire as to what it is related to. Maybe you can wait before sharing parts of the conversation until the student feels more prepared.
- Be clear if something needs to be shared immediately.
- Document the conversation. It is good practice to let the student know what was written down during the meeting.

#### Mapping of Absence:

Mapping factors related to school absence is an important part of describing the case. However, it should be broad and systematic. Mapping tools can not replace collaborative work between the school and the home. Mapping should help to build the relationship between the student, parents/guardians and the school. Always check, "Have I understood you correctly?"

## Appendix B: Checklist for mapping high school absence - Student

This checklist is developed to support the school to ensure the child's voice and perspective of their situation. The checklist can be used as a starting point for a conversation with the student, or the child's voice can have emerged in different situations. The checklist is meant to help ensure that the school has a holistic impression of the child's own perception of his/her situation. Documentation of measures and evaluations that have been completed must be stored in the student's folder. This can include a variety of documents, but should provide an overall clear record of the school's activities and evaluations related to the student.

Checklist for information from student	Completed?	Documented?
What subjects, situations or activities at school does the student like?		
Are there activities, subjects or situations that the student experiences as difficult or unpleasant? (Reading out loud, answering questions, taking tests, participating in physical education, group exposure, talking to adults, asking for help, using the toilet, eating in class, leaving home in the morning, going to/from school, going on excursions, having substitute teachers, etc.)		
Does the student have any negative feelings associated with any of the situations above or more generally towards their school situation? What kind of feelings? (sad, embarrassed, afraid, nervous, anxious, angry)		
Does the student have other concerns or has the student experienced something outside of the school situation that he/she is concerned with?		
Is the student being harassed or bullied at school, on the way to/from school, or during their free time? Has this happened before?		
Are there situations or activities outside the school that make it tempting for the student not to attend school? (computer games, meeting friends, shopping, doing something meaningful at home)		
Which teachers or other adults at school does the student have a good relationship with or possibly a negative relationship with?		
Situations where the student manages to attend school or participate in activities that he/she usually has difficulty joining. What made it go well?		
Is the school day organized, structured and predictable for the student? (overview of school week, which teachers have the different lessons, who the student can go to if there is a need for a conversation, etc.)		
Does the student have good friends?		
Does the student use social media? If yes, how do they describe their experiences?		

## Appendix C: Plus / Minus form 5th - 10th grade students

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Area			Comment
Your school			
To/from school			
Instruction in class			
Support from teacher			
Working alone			
Working in groups			
Trips / Excursions			
Reading			
Writing			
Speaking aloud in class			
Raise your hand			
English			
Math			
Norwegian			
Science			
Social Studies			
Art			
Music			
Gym / Swimming			
Food and Health			
Homework			
Free Days from school / Holiday			
Free time / Breaks			

Your class			
Boys			
Girls			
Bullying			
Classroom / hallway areas			
Contact Teacher			
Substitute Teachers			
Other teachers			
Social Pedagogue/School Nurse			
Lunch for school			
Movies			
News			
Games			
Fighting			
Social Media			
Books			
Watching TV			
Listening to music			
Singing			
Playing an instrument			
Playing sports			
Cleaning your room			
Helping at home			
Care of siblings?			
Being with friends			
Animals at home			

Freetime activities			
Bedtime			
This interview / form			

**8th-10th grade only**

Written exams			
Oral presentations			
Advisor / Head of School			
Individual instruction			
Contact with older students			
Political/Community engagement			
Tobacco			
Alcohol			
Other drugs			
Parents			
Work			

Your three wishes for your school day:

- 1
- 2
- 3

## Appendix D: Checklist for mapping high school absence - Parents

This checklist is developed to support collaboration between the school/home when there are concerns related to high school absence. Parents know their own child best and their descriptions and evaluations concerning their child are extremely important and necessary to have a holistic understanding of the child's situation. The checklist can be printed for parents to fill out or to use as guide in dialogue with the school. Information can also be found in other documentation, and should provide a clear impression of the parents descriptions and evaluations concerning their child. Documentation of measures and evaluations that have been completed must be stored in the student's folder.

1. Parents'/guardians' experience of the child's general wellbeing at school and during his/her free time:
2. Parents'/Guardians' description and understanding of the student's challenges. Do the parents think it could be caused by a conflict at school or are there any other explanations?
3. Is the student being harassed or bullied at school, on the way to/from school or during his/her free time? Has this happened before?
4. Description of the student's refusal behavior at home (is it challenging to get the student to get ready to go to school in the morning, does the student have any physical challenges in relation to going to school, but is otherwise healthy?)
5. What happens when the student is absent? (computer games, visiting family members, extra attention from parents, meeting friends outside of school, completing school work, etc.)
6. Health conditions of importance to the student's functioning and absence (possible illness history, sleep rhythm, appetite)
7. Have there been any sudden changes or challenges in the home that could be connected with the student's struggles at school? (divorce, moving homes, siblings, illness, etc.)

8. Situations where the student manages to attend school or participate in activities that he/she usually has difficulty joining. What made it go well?
9. The parents' allocation of responsibility in terms of following up on school and school attendance
10. Any other agencies involved in the family
11. Any other supporters in the family network
12. What measures have been attempted at home and how did these work? (morning routines, change of role between parents, conversation with the student)
13. Does the student use social media? If yes, how do the parents describe their child's experiences?
14. Parents' wishes and goals for the student's future functioning
15. Any additional comments the parents think are work mentioning

## Appendix E: Checklist for mapping high school absence - School

The checklist is designed to support the school in the tasks to be done if there is concern about individual student absence from school. Documentation of measures and evaluations that have been completed must be stored in the student's folder. This can include a variety of documents, but should provide an overall clear record of the school's activities and evaluations related to the student.

Area for evaluation	Completed?	Documented?
Absence and patterns of absence (duration, frequency, patterns, whole days / single lessons, connected to a subject, situations, person, activities, health related issues). Attendance patterns without absence (attempts to avoid a subject, situation, person or activity).		
Does the school suspect that the student is being bullied at school, on the way to/from school or during his/her free time?		
Assessment of academic achievement, subjects/areas where the student demonstrates positive well-being and mastery of learning. Subjects/areas where the student struggles.		
Assessment of social competence.		
What important adult relationships does the student have at school and how do they work?		
What important relationships does the student have with his/her peers at school?		
How is the school day organized, structured and predictable for the student?		
Are there social and/or academic adjustments for the student at school?		
What measures have been implemented at school and how did they work?		
Contact with the School Nurse, Social Pedagogue, BFT, BUP, others.		
What measures have been taken for school-home collaboration and how did they work?		
What contact does the school have with the student and the guardians during and after absences?		
Does the school have its own internal support system? How are tasks and responsibilities distributed at school?		

## Appendix F: School Absence Action Plan

Date of Birth	Grade Level	Start Date and duration	Date Updated
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<b>CASE DESCRIPTION</b> What was reported?					
<b>STUDENT'S OWN PERSPECTIVE OF THE SITUATION</b> Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: The right of the child to be heard					
<b>SCHOOL'S EVALUATION OF THE CASE REPORTED</b> Briefly summarize what the school is already familiar with and what the school has already done					
<b>MAIN GOAL</b> The Main Goal must describe the desired situation.					
<b>SUBGOALS</b> Make an overview of all of the sub-goals at different levels. Add more rows as necessary.					
<b>Subgoal</b> Use keywords in the problem description	<b>What will the measure solve?</b> Enter the relevant problem to be solved with help of the measure.	<b>Measure / Action</b> Use research-based actions. Examples can be found at <a href="http://Udir.no">Udir.no</a>	<b>Responsible</b> Specifically who is responsible	<b>Timeframe</b> Set a time: week, month or date	<b>Evaluation</b> Who evaluates when? How will it be evaluated? (conversations, class meetings, student surveys, scale 1-10)
Subgoal on Individual Level	What will the measure solve?	Measure / Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Evaluation
Subgoal on Group Level	What will the measure solve?	Measure / Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Evaluation
Subgoal on Systematic Level	What will the measure solve?	Measure / Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Evaluation
Subgoal on Health (if desired)	What will the measure solve?	Measure / Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Evaluation
<b>ARTICLE 12 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: The Right of the Child to be Heard</b> Describe how the student has been heard in this case.					
<b>ARTICLE 3 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: Best interest of the child</b> Describe how the school has assessed the best interest of the child in this case.					
<b>SIGNATURES</b> Place and Date			Signature Student		
Signature Parent(s)			Signature Head of School		