

AIM

What is the purpose of an AIM?

An Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM) is the beginning of the legal process. AIMs follow the school's efforts to support a pupil's declining attendance.

Schools should refer to the 'Steps to Take Before Initiating Legal Intervention' document to evidence what measures they have taken to support the pupil and their family, and what engagement has been made with these measures.

The first stage in the legal process is to write to parents informing them that they may be at risk of prosecution, and inviting them to attend an Attendance Improvement Meeting.

Keeping clear records

- Keep clear, digital, centralised notes for all staff to contribute their interactions with pupils
- Refer to parents using their first and last name
- Contact parents individually via post or email
- Note the date, time and mode of interactions with parents
- Record the letters sent to parents; the minutes of the meeting (if held) and a copy of the cover letter sent to parents
- Capture the voice of the parent and the pupil, attempting to capture direct quotes for what is said

How is an AIM organised?

The date, time and venue should be set by the school, but the letter should also invite parents to say if they cannot attend at that time. Schools should also make reasonable adjustments for the parents, and say that if they would prefer to meet at their own home, or at a neutral setting for the meeting, then this can be arranged. The letter should show pragmatism and kindness, understanding and appreciation that the family may be facing multiple reasons that is making their child's attendance problematic.

Who should be present at the AIM?

- The pupil – if the pupil is considered an appropriate age to understand the implications of the meeting)
- The parents/carers of the pupil – schools should investigate into the family's dynamics, and consider who has day-to-day responsibility of the pupil
- Two members of school staff – the member of staff responsible for attendance and who has been working with the pupil, and a member of SLT who can make decisions about timetabling etc.
- Outside agencies working with the family if appropriate e.g., a social worker or CAHMS representative etc.

When should the AIM proceed?

- Proceed – pupil and parents present
- Proceed – pupil (age-dependent) present but parents not present, i.e., a child of secondary school age
- **Do not** proceed – pupil (age-dependent) not present but parents present, i.e., a child of secondary school age
- **Do not** proceed – pupil and parents not present

Further questions?

Refer to Schoolsnet for additional information, or email attendance@gloucestershire

Key information about AIMs

- Information captured in the pupil's My Plan/My Plan+/My Assessment can be transferred to the AIM document
- It is crucial that the child's voice be captured; schools may consider meeting with the pupil separately
- The meeting's focus should be on how to improve attendance and prevent further legal proceedings
- Note what has worked well or had a positive influence; share ideas about anything else that might help, including any new strategies or interventions to improve attendance
- The documentation should evidence the next steps for all parties; all parties should have reasonable targets to execute that can be documented and reviewed at the next meeting

Schools should set realistic targets for the period of attendance between the AIM and the review meeting. The target should be achievable for the pupil and parents. Schools may choose to word it as: "No further unauthorised absences".

Ideally, when the pupil and parents begin to engage with the process, the school can include further expectations that demonstrate the school's acknowledgement of what improvements have been made, and their expectations for the next steps.

After the AIM

A 4-week review period between each meeting is recommended. This will allow schools to monitor the impact of any new interventions or strategies that have been tried during the AIM process.

There is no set number of meetings that need to have taken place before the case is presented to the legal team of the local authority.

It is important to note that Attendance Improvement Meetings should continue alongside the legal involvement. Following any legal involvement, Attendance Improvement Meetings should continue to be held to monitor the improvement of attendance.

Still no engagement?

Should there be no engagement from the family with the AIM process, schools should speak with their Inclusion officer about the appropriateness of considering legal action.

The Inclusion Officer will contact the Lead Officer for Legal Intervention in Education (Attendance) and arrange a meeting (usually via Teams) to discuss the case, the path and timescales that will need to be followed to have the case laid before court. At this point, the school will complete the 'Request to Initiate Legal Proceedings' form. This will also include preparing the evidence the school have collated for the pupil and family.

Legal Considerations

Before submitting a case for prosecution, the Local Authority will need to consider a range of factors. These include, but are not limited to:

- the requirements in the Attorney-General's Guidelines for Crown Prosecutors
- appropriate use of PACE cautioning
- consideration of an Education Supervision Order
- the age of the pupil (where a pupil is reaching their final academic year, it is unlikely the case will be sent to court)

Further information

Inclusion Officers do not typically attend AIMs, however, they can offer further information and advice.

Further questions?

Refer to Schoolsnet for additional information, or email attendance@gloucestershire