

Improving attendance

The following document is aimed at supporting young people back into education. The document should not be viewed as a tick list of support but rather a menu of options or ideas that a school may wish to explore. This document aims to support schools with general attendance to support young people at risk of permanent exclusion. For detailed advice specifically on Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) schools should refer to the particular part of the toolkit.

Ideas to improve attendance

- The school's attendance policy should clearly show the stages of intervention and support based on the pupil's level of attendance. Consider including this in the school's prospectus.
- View attendance through the lens of the school's values. This can be a useful strategy in communicating attendance concerns to parents.
- Ensure pupils, staff and parents understand that poor attendance and lateness will be viewed as a safeguarding risk.
- Sometimes working with businesses in the local community can support pupils getting to school on time.
- Placing the emphasis clearly on parents, delivering training, school visits, leaflets, Facebook posts to ensure that parents call in to reduce absence is key to reducing workload for staff. Try to remove barriers that some parents may have with regards to informing school about absence.
- Some schools succeed by having clear attendance competitions both individually and in tutor groups. Regularly mentioning attendance at whole school events will raise the profile of attendance.
- Ensure pupils understand the key links between attendance and attainment. The key links between attendance and exclusion should be known to all staff.
- Square peg – support group for parents struggling to get pupils to school. School's may find early referral particularly successful.
- Identify pupils with attendance issues prior to important transitions. These pupils will require enhanced transitions. This requires a close working relationship between secondary and primary schools.
- Regular attendance checks by tutor, head of year, pastoral leader. Many schools have stated that systems where pupils have their attendance written in a planner which is signed by their tutor and the young person parents particularly effective.
- Schools could have an attendance governor who oversees and leads challenge in this area.
- For pupils that have been absent for a period of time reassure them that intervention will be put in place to allow them to catch up when they return. Particularly important for pupils suffering with SEMH issues.
- For key pupils a text home may not be enough. This should, wherever possible, be chased via a phone call or in person to ensure adequate safeguarding of the most at risk.
- Engage local services to support in the routine of getting to school.
- Offer of reduced timetable, soft starts to the day or late starts if appropriate.

- The role of the tutor should be key. Checking attendance data – potentially chasing unexplained absence.
- Issue rewards for good attendance. Ideas like Friday non uniform for pupils with no sanctions and 100% attendance in the week work for some settings.
- Meet and greet at gate of school by key staff to reduce anxiety of pupils has proven to be effective in some schools.
- Offer pupils with high anxiety the chance to come in earlier or even after school to access nurture provision as a transition back to education. This could be alone or with peers depending on the need.
- Gain pupil voice on why they are not attending.
- Ensure a firm but trauma informed approach to punctuality.
- When pupils are late to school ensure this is dealt with in a trauma informed manner. Consider the lateness as a potential cause for concern. Use data to recognise trends and patterns in lateness and attendance.
- Late gates can be helpful. Some schools operate a “pay it back session” at the end of the school day for poor punctuality.
- Review the curriculum on offer to the pupil. Are there changes that could be made to support attendance?
- School should offer home learning via various means if the pupil is absent for any length of time.
- The pupil should be supported with a visual timetable. Aim to carry out any actions that reduce anxiety for the pupil.
- Rewards for hitting attendance levels.
- Morning check ins and afternoon check outs with key pupils to ensure they feel supported by school staff. A “framing” of the day opportunity at the end of the day often encourages attendance the next day.
- School should consider whether an undiagnosed SEND need is stopping pupils from attending. Staff may wish to start a SEND file and initiate the graduate response through starting a APDR cycle. Keep clear records of attendance interventions run and the impact they have had.
- Low attendance is often an antecedent for poor behaviour. Schools may wish to put in place pre-emptive support for pupils with regards to showing positive learning behaviour in school.
- Support pupils with learning appropriate morning routines. Share morning plans with parents so all stakeholders understand the agreed arrangements.
- It could be arranged through school that the pupil in question will travel to school with a friend.
- Parents may be supported through help with organisation and parenting courses. See referral section for ideas on organisations that will offer this kind of support locally.
- In extreme circumstances the school may be able to offer transport support.
- Home visits by school staff are normally helpful in encouraging attendance.
- Highly detailed record of contact with parents regarding encouraging attendance should be kept in case a referral to the CMES is needed at a later date.
- Supporting parents in obtaining medical support if needed for pupils. Schools can sometimes support families with the gaining an understanding of how and when to ask for a doctor's note.
- Referral to various support agencies that may be able to work with the young person. The earlier this can be done the better. Use of school nurse, mentoring or counselling

services, the local mental health support team, education psychologist or consider referral to mental health charities or allowing pupils access to online therapies. Refer to the section on referrals for a full list of agencies working locally.

- Schools should send a formal recorded letter of concern to parents, where attendance hasn't improved after initial attendance interventions have not been successful.
- Organisation of school action attendance meeting – minutes should be taken and targets set on the pupils plan. Identify barriers to attendance and offer solutions. Templates for attendance plans can be obtained from the CMES.
- Review the attendance plan every 3 weeks. Sooner if attendance doesn't improve.
- Referral to CMES and facilitation of LASI (local authority statutory interview) if attendance doesn't improve despite an attendance plan being in place.
- Even if a referral for a LASI is made the school can still pursue a penalty notice by completing a penalty notice request form.
- Schools may wish to refer to the BANES behaviour and attendance panel for additional support. This may lead to the pupil being discussed at COOEP (children outside of education panel).
- In the event of poor health the school should support parents in gaining medical evidence if possible. The school should action a medical attendance plan to highlight barriers to attendance and it should identify how the school can make reasonable adjustments to allow the pupil to start attending again.
- In the event of poor health, the pupil could be referred to the BANES single point of access panel as support could be gained from the hospital reintegration service. This must happen if the pupil has been absent for more than consecutive 15 days.
- Schools may wish to consider home tuition for pupils. This could be provided utilising existing school staff or commissioning specialist tuition agencies to work with pupils for agreed periods of time.
- If a pupil is absent without contact for 10 consecutive days, then the school should complete a pupil tracking referral to the CMES.
- If there is a non-urgent safeguarding concern, then the school should refer to social care for an early help assessment.
- The CMES may choose to issue a formal warning to parents or carers if attendance does not improve over time.
- The CMES may apply to the Family proceedings court for an education supervision order (ESO). Parents will be invited to a planning meeting. The plan will be reviewed after 6 weeks. If there is no improvement the CMES may apply to court for ESO. If an ESO is issued the pupils provision cannot be changed for the duration of the ESO (this will last at least 12 months). If the ESO is not working, then the order will be discharged, and social care proceedings will commence.

Groups more likely to be absent

- Pupils that have never started school
- Pupils who have been FTE'd or PEX'd.
- Pupils removed from school with no named provision (school have been unable to source the name of an establishment to send common transfer file.
- Pupils transitioning between key stages
- Pupils new to the area
- Pupils with part time timetables.

- Pupils who may not have a place at an specialist establishment or are on a waiting list.
- Gypsy or roma pupils
- Pupils from armed forces backgrounds
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Missing children/runaways
- Children in care
- Children with CP or CIN plans
- Young people returning from custody
- Children new to the country
- Young carers
- Teenage parents

Reasons for removal from the school role

1. Pupils provision has changed
2. Elective home education – refer to guidance.
3. Custodial sentence of more than 4 months with no plan to return.
4. Leaving nursery and going to a different primary provision
5. Change of address not within reasonable distance of the school.
6. Leaving independent school
7. Pupil is dual coded and leaves one of the schools.
8. Death of the pupil.
9. Pupil too ill to attend school.
10. Pupil above compulsory school age.
11. Pupil has been permanently excluded.