

# Attendance toolkit for schools

To support schools to identify the drivers of absence and adopt effective practice to improve attendance

## Foreword

Attendance remains one of the most pressing educational challenges of our time. Everything you do well in schools – your curriculum and enrichment offer, your approach to teaching and learning, and how you care for pupils and keep them safe – relies on your young people coming through the school gates every day.

The good news is that we are starting to see progress. The 2024/25 academic year saw pupils spend over 5 million more days in the classroom compared to the year before, with 140,000 fewer pupils persistently absent. Of those, 45,000 were young people from deprived backgrounds. These improvements reflect the tireless efforts of everyone working in education and your communities to improve attendance, particularly for the most disadvantaged.

But the legacy of the pandemic is continuing to shape patterns of absence around the world. The data in England continues to tell us two stories. The first is one of **scale and volume**, with a large number of pupils missing occasional days of school. The second is one of **severity and complexity**, with a smaller, but growing, number of pupils missing more than 50% of school.

With these two distinct challenges in mind, we must go further. The positive impacts of attendance – on attainment, on safety and wellbeing, and on future earnings – are too important to ignore.

Our data position indicates that a **twin-track strategy** is needed to address the challenges. First, we need effective systems to identify and support the large number of children missing occasional days as soon as patterns begin to emerge. Second, we must build strong relationships with families to understand the barriers to attendance that pupils and families may be facing, and to co-create actions or interventions to address them. Our ambition is not just to return to pre-pandemic levels, but to build a system where every child feels they belong at school, so they can achieve and thrive.

And it is a sense of belonging which is so central to our mission. The move from primary to secondary should be an exciting and important time in our children's lives. Yet, data shows that in Year 7, and throughout Key Stage 3, regular attendance drops sharply from the levels we see at primary. This is particularly true for pupils

eligible for free school meals. I have worked with primary and secondary schools who have sought to strengthen their focus on transition. These schools have set high expectations for pupils, while also establishing and maintaining a school environment that is inclusive and welcoming, fostering that crucial sense of belonging for pupils and their families.

In this toolkit you will find case studies from a diverse range of schools. Each of the schools included has unique circumstances and different approaches to establishing and maintaining good attendance. What they all have in common is a smart approach to data. The Department for Education's *Monitor Your School Attendance* service makes it possible for your school to achieve this too. Through the service, you can access **banded attendance** data by year group, to see the distribution of absence and thereby target your efforts where they can have the greatest impact. You can also use the **explore your attendance patterns** heatmap function to understand where attendance is higher or lower across the current and previous academic year to help you easily identify trends. Simultaneously, the **similar schools comparison report** can help you benchmark your attendance outcomes against statistically similar schools, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement. Secondary schools can access **Year 6 transition data** for their current and incoming Year 7 cohorts, to identify pupils who may be most vulnerable to drop-off following the "new school effect" on attendance.

Much of the content in this toolkit reflects our broader evolving support offer for schools. Central to this offer is the launch of **Attendance and Behaviour (A&B) Hubs**, which I am delighted to lead. The Hubs programme is designed to provide **focused and intensive support** to the schools who need it most. Each Hub, led by a 'lead school' with demonstrably strong attendance and behaviour practice, provides structured opportunities for bespoke peer-to-peer support, co-created action plans, collaborative problem-solving, and regional capacity building.

The foundations for success on attendance already exist in many schools. Where attendance is strong, leaders have built cultures where children feel safe, valued, and aspirational. They implement simple, consistent systems and work in partnership with families, local authorities, and communities to remove barriers. These practices are both effective and replicable.

This toolkit brings together the insights, strategies, and resources that are making a difference on the ground. It is designed to support you, whatever your phase or context, to strengthen attendance and behaviour in your setting.

I look forward to working with leaders across the country to continue refining and expanding this offer, and to celebrating the impact we achieve together.

Yours sincerely,

**Jayne Lowe OBE**

Attendance and Behaviour Ambassador



## Introduction

This toolkit seeks to make it easier for schools to tackle the absence challenge. It describes approaches for leaders to consider and adopt where they feel these could be helpful in improving their approach to reducing absence, including practical resources to support schools.

The approaches, case studies and resources included in the toolkit have been sourced primarily from England's attendance hubs, and other system leaders supporting attendance improvement.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to responding to absence. However, experience shows us that schools can identify and remove barriers to attendance through strong practice in **eight key areas**:

1. **Data and targeted support**: how to gather, share and use attendance data to put in place action to improve attendance.
2. **Culture**: how to embed a support-first culture to encourage high attendance and make school a place children want to attend.
3. **People**: how to make attendance 'everyone's business' and ensure individuals and teams work together to reduce absence.
4. **Processes and systems**: how to develop and implement strong and rigorous processes to identify and respond quickly and effectively to absence.
5. **Relationships**: how to build strong and positive relationships with pupils and families to understand, then prevent or remove barriers to attendance.
6. **Communication**: how to develop and share strong and inclusive attendance communications that convey messages with impact.
7. **Transition**: how to support pupils through periods of transition – primary to secondary, first to second term, and Year 7 to Year 8 – to foster strong attendance.
8. **Meaningful, manageable changes**: how to improve attendance around specific days where patterned, contextual absence spikes have been noted.

Much of the toolkit's content also exemplifies how schools can meet the seven expectations – and for trust boards, the five expectations – set out in the Department for Education's (DfE) [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#), which became statutory in August 2024.

## Who is the toolkit for?

This toolkit is for school trust CEOs and improvement leads, headteachers, senior attendance champions, attendance leaders, and wider pastoral teams within primary and secondary schools, including special schools and alternative provision settings.

## How to use the toolkit

Each of the [eight key areas](#) of practice includes:

- actions that schools with high or significantly improved attendance have taken to remove barriers to attendance and improve practice
- resources such as tools, templates, videos and guidance from these schools and other credible sources
- case studies and examples of how schools have used the actions and resources in the toolkit to improve attendance practices

## Before you use the toolkit

You might find it useful to review your school's existing attendance practices using the [self-assessment tool](#) in Annex B. You could consider undertaking an analysis of your attendance data in conjunction with this, and as you review the toolkit. This could be via your management information system, your own school's analysis, or using the Monitor your school attendance data [tool](#) via the [View your education data service](#). This will help you to identify attendance challenges specific to your school for you to consider. For example, patterns of absence relating to specific pupil cohorts, lessons or days of the week.

In addition to using the toolkit, we recommend that you refer to the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) supporting school attendance [page](#). This provides emerging evidence around attendance, and evidence-informed recommendations and tools to support attendance.

Introducing changes to systems and processes around attendance can be challenging, and schools will need to carefully consider how they are implementing any new approaches. The EEF's [Guide to Implementation](#) can support schools to maximise the impact of new approaches by considering the behaviours, contextual factors and processes that support good implementation

## Key area 1: Data and targeted support

Gathering and analysing a whole spectrum of attendance data can help you to identify the drivers of absence, emerging patterns, and individual pupils and cohorts that require support. This is key to being able to implement targeted strategies to improve attendance and monitor the impact of these to make changes if needed.

The Monitor your school attendance service provides a range of tools that support different aspects of attendance analysis, including dashboards for identifying pupils requiring support, pattern analysis tools for understanding when attendance changes, and reports to support benchmarking and strategic decision-making.

### Recommended actions

#### Gathering and monitoring data

Implement robust and timely data gathering, monitoring, reporting and sharing processes, ensuring relevant staff are clear on their responsibilities and have the time, skills and capacity to complete them. An example of a [data monitoring schedule](#) is available for you to adapt for your setting.

Gathering data starts from the moment pupils are known to be joining from primary, enabling early information-sharing and continuity of support across phases.

Alternative provision schools receiving referrals from mainstream schools or LAs may wish to use tailored transition passports to ensure no key information is missed.

#### Taking a banded approach to analysis

Review attendance by severity bandings, using existing data tools or the DfE Monitor your school attendance tool, to get a list of pupils and their attendance. Use this to identify any pupils that are persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so.

Look at trends over time and across year groups. You can view the [Absence bandings report user guide](#) for further detail on how to use it and visit the [DfE YouTube channel](#) to watch a webinar demonstrating how to interpret your data.

## Use an attendance tracker

Use an attendance tracker to record all available data and identify attendance trends relating to specific days, lessons, academic attainment or year groups. You can analyse these against different characteristics, including gender, eligibility for free school meals (FSM) and special education needs and disabilities (SEND) status to develop targeted attendance support and strategies.

You can see this [guidance about building an attendance tracker](#) for information about how to develop a tracker to record, monitor and share data effectively.

You can use the [Monitor your school attendance](#) service to help identify trends across pupil groups and track data over time.

## Using visual tools to identify patterns

You can use Explore your attendance patterns in the [Monitor your school attendance](#) service to see your days with higher or lower attendance and identify trends over time for your whole school or specific cohorts.

Explore your attendance patterns can support you to identify recurring patterns – for example by day of the week, time of year, or pupil group – so that you can investigate underlying causes and respond early. It is particularly useful for surfacing trends that may not be visible in summary reports. A [webinar](#) explaining this feature is available.

You can also use the data visualisations in your View your education data school dashboard to compare how attendance varies for different cohorts and combinations of pupils across the year.

## Understand the reasons behind attendance trends

Patterns in attendance data can help you understand where and when attendance changes across the school year, but they do not explain why those patterns occur.

You may find it helpful to:

- spot recurring days or weeks where attendance is relatively higher or lower

- identify patterns at particular points in the year, such as around events or term structures
- compare patterns over time to understand whether issues are isolated or recurring

Once you have identified a pattern, use your local knowledge and engagement with pupils, families and staff to explore possible contributing factors. These might include:

- curriculum structure
- in-school or extra-curricular activities
- local external events
- wider factors affecting families

This stage is about exploration and reflection. It helps you decide what to look at more closely and where to focus your efforts.

You can look at the case study from the Northern Education Trust below to see how the trust identified absence trends through data.

Where patterns relate to short term shocks, **Key area 8** provides examples of how schools have responded to similar situations, supported by national analysis and case studies.

Where patterns suggest that communication with parents or carers may support improvement, the [attendance communications guide](#) provides practical advice, templates and messaging approaches to help you engage families in a supportive and effective way.

## **Provide targeted support to overcome attendance barriers**

When you have identified concerning rates of attendance, understanding what is driving them is key to putting in place targeted support to help pupils to overcome barriers. Support should be agreed with pupils and parents and carers in a meeting, recorded and regularly reviewed for impact. You can see an example [attendance support meeting record](#) for more information about what to discuss.

For more information about the actions that schools can consider taking to improve the attendance of specific pupils and cohorts, you can see a [list of actions](#) and an [interventions flowchart](#).

## **Share data regularly, including evidence of impact**

Share granular data regularly with relevant school staff (for example, senior leads, year group leads, pastoral staff, mental health leads, SENCOs), as well as governors and other stakeholders, including pupils, parents and carers.

Ensure language and presentation of this data is accessible, easy to understand, and conveys key messages that are relevant to the target audience.

You can access [a list of key information to include in a governor report](#). Primary and secondary schools can find all this information in their attendance summary reports, available to download from [View Your Education Data](#) which can then be shared with governors. Communicating attendance data clearly to governing boards throughout the year - including overall performance, trends and key priorities - allows for challenge and the opportunity to discuss specific areas in more detail. The attendance summary report and similar schools comparison report can support this by providing a clear overview of performance and highlighting areas for focus.

## **Case study: identifying absence trends in data at the Northern Education Trust**

**Northern Education Trust consists of 13 primary and 16 secondary academies across the north-east and north-west of England.**

We use DfE's absence banding feature of the [Monitor your school attendance tool](#). It has helped us to identify that the biggest attendance drop-off point happens during transition from Year 6 into Year 7.

We met with the local authority to raise this as a concern and identified that:

- 63 Year 7 pupils had not selected our school as their first choice
- of this cohort, 28 pupils were persistently absent

This accounts for:

- 23.1% of all absence in Year 7
- 3.3% of absences across the academy
- 10.2% of the whole academy's persistent absence

School leaders and the local authority agreed on a joint approach to supporting this cohort of pupils. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) service delivered a weekly tutor time slot to provide mentoring and intervention around good attendance and any barriers. This has led to a demonstrable improvement in attendance.

To prevent this from happening in the next academic year, the EWO service will support an enhanced Year 6 transition for pupils in a similar position.

## **Case study: identifying concerning attendance and providing targeted support to a pupil with multiple needs.**

### **A state-funded secondary school located in north-west England (setting anonymised to protect the child's identity).**

We regularly use data to identify low or declining levels of pupil attendance and have implemented various strategies to support pupils who need targeted support.

One example of this is a pupil later diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The child had access to free school meals. Other members of the immediate family had physical and mental health needs.

In Year 7, the child had fluctuated around 90% attendance.

In Year 8, attendance data showed signs of decline (in line with wider national trends) and became a cause for concern.

In Year 9, they developed a physical health condition that required specialist medical support. This affected their attendance and, at the end of the first term, their attendance had fallen to around 75%. During this term, the pupil had disclosed to staff that they were questioning their gender identity. The pupil was registered male at birth but wanted to be referred to with she/her pronouns.

Throughout the academic year, their mental health deteriorated, including acting on thoughts of self-harm.

Several interventions were taken, including:

- assigning a lead professional within the school
- working directly with the child and parent to address increased anxiety and mental health needs
- early help meetings, chaired by the school's lead
- an internal pupil support unit
- early pass to allow pupils to leave classes and school early to avoid crowds
- part-time timetable (on a time limited basis, with review points)
- a quiet place to take time out and relax in a space outside the main classroom for targeted support
- regular home visits (fortnightly)
- emotionally based school avoidance work, including identifying the factors that push and pull the pupil to attend or avoid school, and 'what if' cards to help them think through different scenarios

External agency referral:

- School Health
- Thrive (CAMHS)
- CAMHS

With the variety of support and service involvement, the child's attendance improved to 100% in the next academic year. This is a huge achievement for them and testament to the service involvement in place.

## Key area 2: Culture

A supportive school culture helps to create an environment where pupils are listened to, feel they belong, and actively want to be in the classroom. Successfully developing this culture involves the collaboration and efforts of the entire school community including learners, their families and staff.

### Recommended actions

#### Foster a sense of belonging

Foster a sense of belonging, promoting wellbeing and high attendance with a strong and supportive pastoral presence. Create a strategy to thread this through safeguarding, curriculum, special education needs and disabilities (SEND) support, behaviour and transition.

- you can visit the [Delta Academies Trust YouTube channel](#) to see how they have implemented an attendance strategy and an approach to attendance;
- and the [Northern Education Trust's YouTube channel](#) to see how they have implemented a strong pastoral structure

#### Create a supportive school environment

Create a warm, safe, and welcoming 'support first' school environment for pupils that celebrates and rewards good behaviour and high **and** improved attendance.

Including improved attendance is particularly important for pupils who have been ill or who have special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Recognition and rewards can also acknowledge the participation of absent pupils who are learning remotely.

Be 'curious not furious' in response to absence to encourage pupils to discuss any barriers to attendance, and warmly welcome them back to school

You can watch a video from the Northern Education Trust for more information about [creating a culture in which pupils want to attend](#).

## **Identify and understand attendance barriers**

Collect and use pupil voice through questionnaires and open sessions to identify and understand attendance barriers. Visibly act on what you can and where you can't, explain why. You can see an example list of [pupil voice questions](#) for a primary school.

## **Use enrichment and extra-curricular activities**

Encourage wider engagement with school via enrichment and extra-curricular activities that are accessible to all pupils, as well as academic support such as curriculum catch up sessions and homework clubs. Use pupil voice to identify extra-curricular events children would like to see added to the programme.

Get to know your school's community and work with local businesses and faith leaders to develop a diverse and exciting enrichment programme.

## **Get communication right**

Be consistent in attendance communication and make sure everyone is aware of the attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils. Ensure that these consider the circumstances of pupils with established and emerging needs, such as those relating to SEND and caring responsibilities.

See the [communication section](#) of the toolkit for more details.

## **Case study: creating a welcoming, safe and supportive culture at Putteridge High School.**

**Putteridge High School is a state-funded secondary school in an urban area.**

We recognise that the culture of a school is fundamental to attendance. We place a key focus on this area and ensure we have a welcoming, safe, and supportive culture that the pupils enjoy and thrive in.

Establishing clear values and ensuring that these are understood and modelled by pupils and staff is critical to maintaining a strong culture. Our values are citizenship, learning, aspirations, standards, and school of choice (CLASS). These are embedded and regularly revisited through:

- personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education
- form time activities
- assemblies
- our behaviour curriculum

Pupils are taught healthy habits and communication skills to enable them to deal with a variety of situations and provided with a predictable environment in which they can operate.

Pupils are made aware of the school's attendance expectations, and the importance of being in school to achieve the best they can. They are rewarded for both attendance achievements **and** improvements.

Staff greet pupils warmly and pay attention to positive conduct, rather than misconduct, first. There is a strong supervisory presence at the beginning and end of the day, and during lesson transition. Staff wear bright blue 'duty' jackets which the pupil voice says makes them feel safe as they know where to go if they need support.

We set out clear guidelines on professional behaviour standards. Pupils who do not follow standards are held to account, reminded of our policy and protocols and supported to improve their behaviour.

## **Case study: preventing absence during transition at Drayton Manor High School.**

**Drayton Manor High School is a state-funded secondary school in an urban area.**

Smooth and successful transition is key to maintaining a culture of high attendance. We have put the following processes in place to prevent attendance from falling at

the known drop-off points of moving from Year 6 to 7 and Year 7 to 8, and to support mid-year admissions and pupils returning to school after an extended absence:

- gathering feedback and data from the previous school to identify, understand and address any issues
- planning activities and events to help pupils feel safe and welcome and to meet pupils and staff, including:
  - taster days
  - teacher exchanges
  - cross-phase curriculum planning
- identifying any pupil needs (for example, SEND, attendance concerns, medical conditions, caring responsibilities, and safeguarding concerns) to put targeted support in place
- holding welcome (or welcome back) events for pupils and their families at the start of the year to emphasise the importance of attendance, and make them aware of attendance processes, expectations and support, ensuring attendance is covered in parents' evening.
- DfE's webinar '[supporting excellent attendance in the new academic year: Transitioning between year groups](#)' provides more advice on attendance and transition.

## **Case study: maximising attendance with a culture of good behaviour and robust routines at Eden Boys' School, Birmingham.**

**Eden Boys' School is a state-funded secondary school in an urban area of high deprivation.**

Our success in maintaining good attendance for pupils is built on a strong culture of exceptional behaviour and routines to ensure that pupils feel safe, happy and well.

They quickly learn that the STAR values (Service, Teamwork, Ambition and Respect) underpin all aspects of school life and can also be applied to other aspects of their lives. Pupils buy into the values because they enjoy very high-quality teaching, a rich and varied enrichment offer and relationships between peers and staff based on trust

and mutual respect. Many pupils refer to school as their second home and to the school community as family.

The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 is undertaken carefully to ensure all parents/carers have been engaged. In advance of the September start, we hold repeat parent/carer information evenings and make home visits. This ensures that children and parents/carers understand the school's attendance expectations and processes, and that school is aware of any attendance challenges. Our summer school allows pupils with more complex needs to make friends and feel comfortable with staff before the start of the school year, which encourages high attendance

To encourage, incentivise, monitor and intervene where necessary, school colleagues work under the direction of our attendance champion. They complete a daily, weekly and half termly analysis of data, and review information and intelligence about individual pupils. This enables school staff to take timely action to address any emerging trends or concerns.

Heads of year engage with pupils and parents/carers with care, compassion, and consistency. They are supported by SLT who can advise and add capacity when needed. There is clear accountability for each year group's attendance percentage and persistent absence (PA) figure. PA is rare and severe absence (SA) is uncommon, but where specialist support is needed, for example (SEND input) it can be accessed through:

- school-led 'Every Star Matters' meetings or
- escalated to trust-led 'Team Around the Child with Complex Barriers to Attendance' (TACCBA) meeting

Form tutors take a keen interest in the attendance of the pupils and undertake mentoring discussions and information sharing on a weekly basis. They also run friendly competition in the form of a 'Champions' Cup' for form and year groups. This engages pupils, keeps them interested and brings a sense of shared responsibility.

## **Case study: a whole school approach to improving attendance at Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery**

**Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery is a two-form entry primary school in central London.**

We know that improving attendance depends on children feeling that they belong, families understanding our expectations, and staff using evidence and data to keep improving what we do. Our approach is built around knowing pupils and families well, creating a strong sense of community, communicating clearly with parents and reviewing the impact of our actions.

Attendance is discussed regularly across the school. Each Monday, the headteacher meets with the attendance officer to review whole-school attendance, persistent absence, pupils whose attendance is declining and those approaching thresholds for intervention. Later that day, attendance is discussed with senior teachers and year group leads, so that the staff who know pupils best can identify the right response. Attendance is also a standing item in safeguarding meetings, helping us triangulate attendance with behaviour, wellbeing, academic needs and family circumstances.

We have also built early help capacity within the school. Some families are more willing to engage with familiar school staff than with external services, particularly when they do not meet formal thresholds. Having an in-school early help role means we can offer advice, signpost support and work with families before concerns escalate.

Alongside targeted support, we focus heavily on making school feel predictable, safe and worthwhile for every child. We make routines consistent across classrooms, from lining up and seating plans to praise and rewards. Small inconsistencies can matter to children, particularly during transition between year groups, so we try to make expectations clear and reliable across the school. To support emotional safety, all pupils are taught strategies to recognise, talk about and regulate emotions. We want children to feel comfortable telling us when they are not okay, and to know that adults in school can help them find strategies that work. Finally, we give every child a

reason to feel part of school life. Through our “greatness award”, pupils build evidence of academic excellence, creativity and social intelligence. We also offer a wide range of free clubs so that every child can take part in something that interests them, rather than only those whose families can afford or access enrichment.

## Key area 3: People

Clear attendance roles and responsibilities enable schools to monitor attendance and tackle absence. Understanding the link between strong practice in this area and successfully embedding a culture of high attendance is key.

Schools have a statutory duty to [appoint a designated senior attendance champion](#) who has overall responsibility for improving attendance. You can watch [the DfE webinar](#) to find out more about the role of the attendance champion.

## Recommended actions for the senior attendance champion

### Regular conversations

Ensure attendance remains a high-status topic across the school, which is regularly discussed at senior leadership team (SLT) meetings. You can watch an [extract from North Shore Academy's SLT attendance meeting](#) to see how individual pupil absence is discussed.

Embed attendance processes into line management conversations, including within the school's safeguarding and wellbeing processes.

Strategically plan opportunities to integrate attendance into all aspects of school life by checking calendars to identify events where attendance can be featured and developing content for communications and reports to school staff, governors and families.

You can see [examples of attendance action plans](#) which set out suggested attendance priorities for the year, and the actions needed to deliver these.

### Provide attendance briefings and coordinate actions

Provide regular attendance briefings to summarise progress and highlight issues, risks, and concerns. Use your similar schools comparison report, published on View Your Education Data (VYED), to support discussions. These reports provide clear headline measures, trends over time, and benchmarking information that can help focus strategic conversations. This could include, for example, flagging to the wider

school workforce the number of pupils with a 5 to 15% absence rate (equivalent to missing up to three school days every four weeks) or those with declining rates of attendance.

Ensure that staff know how to use the information provided in briefings and are aware of any actions they are expected to take to improve attendance.

Hold regular meetings with governors where attendance reports are presented and their content communicated clearly. This provides an opportunity for challenge and to discuss certain aspects in more detail.

Attend targeting support meetings with your local authority to discuss support for persistently and severely absent pupils.

### **Ensure quality practice**

Quality assure attendance practice by observing meetings, providing scripts for staff, listening to phone calls with parents/carers. Systems and processes should be reviewed regularly to look for strengths, impact and areas for improvement. Report your reflections and lessons learned to senior leaders and relevant staff members.

You can view examples of [priority actions for each area of attendance practice](#) and consider whether any of these can be implemented to strengthen your approach.

## **Case study: senior attendance champion at Denbigh High School**

### **Denbigh High School is a state-funded secondary school in the east of England**

Our senior attendance champion leads on attendance data monitoring, developing and implementing robust attendance processes, and ensuring these are consistently applied. Along with other members of SLT, they are responsible for ensuring that:

- the school is a welcoming, exciting and safe place
- attendance is part of every aspect of school life and consistently high on everyone's agenda

- staff are aware of their attendance responsibilities and have the skills to deliver them, providing regular training and development
- attendance procedures and policies are regularly reviewed, quality assured, inclusive, and adapted where there are additional needs such as medical conditions or SEND
- data is used to get a clear understanding of attendance by cohort
- bespoke strategies are developed to improve attendance
- they develop, implement and monitor the school's reward structure
- a calendar of attendance activities is developed and shared
- the PSHE curriculum is adapted to respond to attendance issues, for example, adolescence and GCSE options related issues for Key Stage 3 pupils, and anxieties about starting GCSEs and leaving school for Key Stage 4 pupils
- they lead termly meetings with governors and other stakeholders to discuss attendance data, inviting challenge to continuously improve
- they take decisions about penalty notices, attendance contracts, and education supervision orders when other strategies have failed to improve attendance
- partnerships are established and maintained with local schools, the local authority and external agencies who can support families with attendance issues
- attendance practices and systems are inclusive and adapted where required. For example, sending personalised attendance text messages and letters for pupils with medical conditions or other additional needs

## Other recommended actions

### **Ensure clear roles and responsibilities**

Ensure all staff are clear on their role in attendance, where this sits in the broader structure and how it links to the school's attendance strategy and culture. Staff

should have the right skills and experience to deliver their attendance responsibilities, and these should be reviewed regularly.

Train all relevant staff in tracking attendance, including basic data handling and how to spot trends. This is particularly important for:

- pupils with 5 to 15% absence (missing up to three school days every four weeks)
- severe absence
- pupils with additional needs
- key stages such as EYFS, transition into primary, year 1, 7, 8 or 11

Ensure individual attendance roles and responsibilities are set out explicitly in job descriptions for the senior attendance champion and all teaching, administrative, attendance, pastoral and support staff, including SENCOs, safeguarding team members, and mental health leads. These should be factored into recruitment and induction and discussed in performance management meetings.

You can view an example [attendance officer job description](#)

## **Provide clear staffing structures**

Provide a clear and accessible staffing structure which details everyone's role in relation to attendance (including the headteacher, senior attendance champion, senior leaders, teachers, support and pastoral staff, lunchtime supervisors, and caretakers) and share this regularly, including with pupils and parents and carers. This ensures all attendance-related work is covered and prevents it from being duplicated, making the best use of staff time.

You can view here examples of [staff attendance responsibilities](#) in a secondary setting.

Provide all relevant staff and stakeholders, for example, governors and trust leaders, with the school's attendance strategy at the start of each term and store them in a readily accessible place. This can include school values, absence response, internal and external support available, and escalation processes. Ensure attendance is

included in the role description and responsibilities of governors, to ensure they are engaging with and reviewing attendance data and practices.

## **Case study: staff roles and responsibilities at Denbigh High School**

We have collaborated with leaders, staff, and stakeholders to develop our attendance expectations, which are set out in our attendance policy on our website.

The importance of attendance is emphasised by the headteacher, along with the senior attendance champion. They ensure that attendance is a high-status topic and is discussed at leadership meetings. They drill down into the data to look for any specific trends, issues, or concerns at cohort and individual pupil level.

We have ensured that everyone's attendance roles and responsibilities are clear, including pupils, families, school staff, and governors. All teaching, support, and pastoral staff have responsibilities linked to attendance included in their job descriptions. We provide training to help staff review attendance data, both at induction and through continuous professional development.

We encourage accountability by referring to agreed roles and responsibilities in staff meetings to ensure everyone is fully aware of attendance ambitions. Staff can also use staff meetings to share best practice.

## Key area 4: Processes and systems

Simple but robust attendance systems and processes enable schools to track, follow up and tackle absence by supporting pupils quickly and effectively. They should be shared with all staff, reviewed regularly for impact, and sensitive to pupils with additional needs, such as medical needs, or those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND), whether formally diagnosed or not.

### Recommended actions

#### Ensure key systems are in place

Ensure key systems are in place around register completion, including using the correct attendance codes to enable accurate daily data collection. A list of the required DfE attendance and absence codes are available in Chapter 8 of the [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance. DfE has recorded webinars that you can watch about [attendance and absence codes](#) and [attendance and punctuality](#).

Put in place systems to respond to absence (including who does what, how, and when) and clear escalation procedures (including actions to take when absence reaches specific thresholds). Ensure you regularly review the effectiveness of these, and check that they are applied consistently.

You can view an example [primary school absence response workflow](#) and a [secondary school absence response workflow](#) that can be adapted to the context of your setting.

#### Have clear processes in place

Have clear flowcharts, checklists, guidance scripts and templates to support consistent delivery of the school's systems on a daily and weekly basis. Ensure these are accessible to all the relevant people. Where changes are made to these, explain the reasons behind this. [A School's Guide to Implementation | EEF](#) contains evidence-based guidance about successfully implementing changes.

You can view an example [checklist of daily attendance tasks](#) and a [checklist of end of week attendance tasks](#) to see if they would be appropriate for you to use or adapt for your setting.

### **Use the ‘golden hour’**

Use the ‘golden hour’ (the first hour of the school day) to conduct pre-emptive and supportive telephone calls to encourage school attendance for target pupils. Where possible it is preferable to assign a child or family a member of staff who regularly contacts the family as required, to maintain consistency and build relationships.

You can access example [scripts](#) and [questions](#) to use when having conversations with parents and carers about pupil absence. These resources are designed to help relevant staff explore the reasons behind why a pupil isn’t attending school.

### **Implement a triage system**

Implement a triage system to assess pupil absence, and graduated responses. This can include taking no action if appropriate, setting up a ‘return to school meeting,’ making a referral to the school’s SENCO, mental health lead, safeguarding lead or local authority services and agencies, including legal intervention where appropriate.

You can access an example of [graduated responses to attendance](#).

### **Use bespoke letters**

Avoid blanket communication with families and instead deploy adaptable, bespoke letters that ensure the communication reflects the context and situation of individual pupils.

It can be particularly effective to provide the number of days and lessons the child has been absent rather than a percentage, to provide ‘real world’ context and to clearly communicate the scale of the issue. Access example [attendance email and letter templates](#) that you can adapt for your setting.

## Case study: processes and systems at Lift Schools (formerly AET)

**Lift Schools is a multi-academy trust comprised of fifty-seven schools across England.**

We use an attendance workflow document which identifies daily, weekly, fortnightly, half termly and termly attendance tasks. It shows us what checks, tasks and meetings are needed, when they should be done (including a specified time for daily tasks) and who should do them. These are time-stamped when completed for monitoring.

Our live weekly attendance dashboard shows:

- attendance and persistent absence by pupils and groups
- trends for pupils, including if attendance has improved or declined compared with the previous week
- colour-coded 'flags' to identify where action is needed
- formal meetings led by the trust to challenge and support school leaders and extra support for pupils who need it

The dashboard shows the next steps for each pupil. This can include:

- verbal recognition where attendance remains strong or is improving
- exploring reasons why attendance has declined
- identifying immediate support and actions
- referring actions to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), senior attendance champion, SENCO or through the Local Authority

To monitor systems and support teams across the trust we:

- provide an attendance playbook to outline attendance strategies and resources, including scripts for conversations with parents and carers workflow decision maps and templates
- update national, regional and school meetings to ensure that the whole team is aware of current rates of attendance and pupils who need support

- attend a national attendance network meeting each half-term to share best practice
- participate in a live online community
- support our schools to implement attendance monitoring activities, for example, attendance and absence code monitoring and tracking pupils with severe and persistent absence
- review and share attendance data statistics each term and provide national and local benchmarks, to inform school action planning

## Key area 5: Relationships

Strong, cooperative relationships with families can help to prevent absence problems from becoming entrenched and enable schools to provide pupils with the support they need to attend school.

Schools that build close relationships with families can work together to:

- identify and overcome complex barriers to attendance
- ensure the school is welcoming to all pupils
- support parents to recognise the value of their child being in school

## Recommended actions

### Get to know families

Get to know families and actively seek their views about attendance including via drop-in sessions, phone calls and targeted questionnaires ahead of the start of term for children identified as having attendance issues. View an [example questionnaire](#) that can be sent to families after a break from school.

You can view suggested actions to [build positive relationships with families](#).

Run parent/carer workshops on topics requested by them or offer the opportunity to meet away from school, for example, in other local community settings. You can use these [top tips for planning a parent workshop](#).

Offer wider school-based activities that families can engage with such as gardening clubs and outdoor activities in the spring and summer.

### Understand family circumstances

Where issues emerge, listen to parents/carers sensitively, and without judgement to understand the family's circumstances, and any barriers to attendance, to explore how these could be overcome.

Focus conversations on motivating parents, carers and pupils, by discussing the links between good attendance and wellbeing, friendships, building good habits for

life, attainment and the support school can offer. You can access attendance [advice for parents and carers](#) to see if it would be suitable to use with families in your setting.

Use information provided by pupils and parents/carers to review and improve your whole school approach to attendance by removing any barriers they identify.

## **Celebrate success**

Praise children where attendance has improved and/or progress has been made in engaging in school life. Create a sense of celebration with parents and carers to show that the school is proud of the child and family for overcoming barriers to attendance. Contact parents and carers with positive messages about seeing their child in school and engage in their interests in lessons or extracurricular activities.

## **Support families with access to resources**

Consider how you can provide families with access to resources that might otherwise be a barrier to attendance. This could include introductions to local partners and charities to support with:

- school uniform
- access to alarm clocks
- sanitary products
- food parcels
- SIM cards for parents/carers
- access to school mental health first aiders

You can also make parents/carers of children with SEND aware of the support available from the local authority as part of their Local Offer.

## **Case study: building relationships with families at St Bede's Catholic Academy.**

**St Bede's Catholic Academy is a state-funded primary school located in North-East England.**

We pride ourselves on developing strong relationships with families and work hard to understand the barriers to attendance. We work collaboratively with families (and other agencies, when required) to overcome them.

We worked closely with a particular family when a pupil had poor attendance of 85%. When we looked at the child's attendance data, there was no noticeable pattern of absence.

Our parent support advisor contacted the family. After careful discussion, they established that the child's parent was concerned that they were showing signs of sensory processing difficulties, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

As a school, we worked closely with the child's parent to understand why she felt they had these difficulties. We listened and provided her with reassurance that we were taking her concerns seriously. Together we agreed to refer the child to the relevant agencies for diagnostic assessments.

There was a long waiting time for this, so the child received in-school support for the issues they were experiencing, and we referred them for an educational psychologist's assessment. The child's parent was also referred to an NHS sensory support course for parents.

By building a strong relationship with the child and their parent, listening carefully to her concerns, and providing a support-first approach, the child's attendance improved, reaching 97.25% in the following academic year.

## **Case study: inclusive provision to support attendance at Beacon Church of England Primary School**

**Beacon Church of England Primary School is a primary school in Liverpool and part of Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust.**

We focus on drawing pupils into school by making attendance feel personal, relational and achievable. Our inclusive provision approach starts with the individual child: what will help this pupil come in today, and what might encourage others to come in too?

We monitor banded attendance data closely, particularly pupils in the 5-10% and 10-15% absence bands, so that we can intervene before pupils become persistently absent. We also use our attendance action plan to identify strengths, areas for focus and the next actions we need to take. Where a child is absent, we prioritise speaking to families directly, rather than relying only on written messages. We want to understand why a child is not in school, remind families that we miss them and make clear that we want them back in the next day. Relationships sit at the centre of our approach. Staff focus on warm welcomes, using pupils' names, noticing small details and connecting before correcting. For pupils who find arrival difficult, emotionally available adults, including senior leaders, the SENCO and our support staff learning mentors, are visible at the gate and ready to offer support. We also use practical tools to help children communicate what may be getting in the way of attendance. For example, "I wish my teacher knew" gives pupils a safe way to share worries or experiences that adults might not otherwise know about. This helps us understand the root of a concern rather than responding only to the behaviour we see. Our inclusive spaces are used flexibly so that pupils can access learning even when the classroom feels overwhelming. Some pupils use these spaces for a nurture breakfast or morning regulation; others use them for targeted intervention, small-group teaching or remote access to a classroom lesson through Teams. This means pupils can still be in school, learning and connected to their class, while receiving the support they need to feel safe and regulated. We also support families with simple, practical resources. These include guidance on routines, preparing for the return to

school after half-term, sleep and low-key approaches to managing difficult mornings. We investigate barriers rather than assuming we know what is happening, whether the issue is family resilience, mental health, financial pressure, weather, sleep or anxiety.

## Key area 6: Communication with families

Clear, regular communication with parents and carers on absence is key to embedding attendance expectations and processes across the entire school community and making families aware of the support available and how to access it.

DfE have published a dedicated [guide for schools on communicating with parents about attendance](#). It includes a range of practical advice, messaging, templates and resources (including a new NHS poster on illness absence and new attendance animations to share with parents) to support your school.

Attendance pattern analysis (see Key area 1: Data and targeted support) can help you identify key points in the year where communication with families may have the greatest impact. Where patterns indicate that engagement with parents or carers may support improvement, schools should use clear, supportive and targeted communication to build trust and encourage positive change.

### Recommended actions

#### **Ensure clear communication using a range of communication methods**

Ensure communications are clear, concise, accessible, jargon-free, consider language barriers and are meaningful and inclusive of families in all circumstances. Work with parent/carer groups to co-construct messaging that contains the right level of information, using the appropriate tone. You can seek regular feedback from parents/carers about the effectiveness of these, making improvements if necessary.

Use a range of communication methods including social media, letters, videos, newsletters, the school website and text messages to ensure key information reaches all pupils, their families and the wider community. You can see examples within the dedicated [parent communications guide](#).

You can also use home visits, phone calls, and check-ins at the school gates to create an opportunity to probe into the underlying reasons for absence and make personal connections with families.

## **Ensure staff are trained to have supportive but challenging conversations**

Ensure staff are trained and have the skills they need to hold supportive but sometimes difficult conversations with parents and carers about their child's attendance. This should include careful and sensitive reminders about:

- the school's expectations
- the support available
- the potential consequences of them not engaging with the support school provides

## **Case study: strong attendance communication at Bedford Academy.**

**Bedford Academy is a state-funded secondary school part of Heart Academies Trust in east England.**

We re-vamped our approach to attendance after data indicated we were not moving in the right direction, post pandemic. We had taken the same approach to attendance for years and this simply wasn't working anymore. We saw the same absence patterns across year groups and had some inconsistencies in our response to this across the school.

We decided to model a new approach at senior leadership team (SLT) level initially, to demonstrate the impact. A senior leader made daily phone calls to absent pupils over a trial period of four weeks. The aim was to check if pupils were okay and build relationships with parents/carers by offering support to get their child back into school. We used our [tutor attendance conversation structure and prompts](#) resource when making these calls.

During the trial, we saw the number of days of absence reduce. We identified attendance patterns for individual pupils and referred them to wellbeing and pastoral staff where appropriate.

We extended the trial to focus on year 9. To do this, we:

- trained tutors to make the calls

- explained the importance of building stronger relationships with families
- highlighted the impact of attendance on attainment

We agreed that calls would be recorded on the school's management information system (MIS). They follow the escalation route for each day of absence:

- day 1 – tutor calls
- day 2 – head of year calls
- day 3 – senior leader calls

The extended trial saw an increase in attendance and the strategy was rolled out across the whole school.

## **Case study: Lealands High School's robust and supportive approach to communicating with parents**

### **Lealands High School is a local authority-maintained secondary school in Luton.**

At Lealands High School we start communicating about attendance with parents and carers (including those of pupils transitioning from Year 6) at the start of June. We send them a letter about the importance of high attendance, which includes our expectations, policies and procedures. We ensure these letters, and all our attendance communications, are sensitive to individual circumstances. We share our attendance information with parents regularly by including it in our half termly newsletter.

We encourage parents/carers to monitor their child's attendance via our school app which updates daily. This enables them to see the number of days their child has missed, and any emerging patterns. Our communications include the amount of 'lost learning' to emphasise the impact of absence. Pupil reports include their attendance rates, benchmarking these against national and school averages. We also send letters to parents/carers to recognise and praise their child's improved attendance.

The tone of our communications is clear and direct but also supportive and welcoming, encouraging parents/carers to work with us in the best interests of their child.

Routine communication with individual parents/carers is made by our attendance officer. Having a single and consistent point of contact has helped to build strong relationships. Where absence is a concern, our attendance and pastoral support managers offer parents/carers support and may also invite them to a meeting to:

- discuss strategies to overcome barriers to attendance
- discuss any in- school adjustments that can be made
- offer parenting advice where appropriate
- discuss in-school and external support available

Parents/carers of disadvantaged pupils with poor attendance may receive extra support from our disadvantage champion. They build strong relationships with families via regular phone calls and face-to-face meetings.

During exam periods, pupils with a history of poor attendance receive calls home to support good attendance, and a staffed study space is provided to support pupils who are nervous about exams.

Our approach to communicating with parents and carers breaks down barriers and builds positive relationships. This enables us to get to know individual families, understand the difficulties they face and support their children to attend school.

## **Case study: engaging with families and effective communication on attendance at Evelyn Street Primary School**

### **Evelyn Street Primary School is part of Warrington Primary Academy Trust.**

We have learned that attendance improves when parents feel connected, understood and part of the solution, not just when they are on the receiving end of information.

Our school community has high mobility, changing demographics and an increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language. Families join us with

different experiences of school, different routines and sometimes different levels of trust in education.

We focus on building relationships early, especially at points of transition. We know that attendance patterns form early and are reinforced at home, so our aim is to build trust before problems become entrenched. Leaders are visible at the school gate each day, staff are approachable, and families are invited into school through toddler groups, open days, assemblies and stay-and-play sessions. We use these moments to share our ethos and explain that we want every child to be happy, safe, thriving and in school every day.

For children joining Reception, we begin transition as soon as places are confirmed. We gather information early, share welcome booklets and parent handbooks, and use two-way communication with families to understand any barriers before children start school. We changed our staggered start arrangements after listening to parents, moving from a transition over several weeks to a shorter period over days. This helped children establish routines more quickly and made attendance expectations clearer from the outset.

We have also developed the way we talk to families about attendance. Our expectations remain high, but we train staff to use language that invites partnership. Instead of saying “you need to ensure”, we might ask “can we support you to...?”. We provide staff with [scripts](#), modelled language and training so that conversations feel consistent, supportive and clear.

Families have one named adult for attendance conversations, so they do not have to repeat their story to different members of staff.

This approach has helped us build stronger relationships with families, identify barriers earlier and prevent some attendance issues from escalating quickly into formal processes. For us, high expectations, warm relationships and early interaction are what have moved attendance in the right direction.

## Key area 7: Transition

[Data](#) shows that absence rises as children transition from primary to secondary school, move past their first Year 7 half-term, and move between Year 7 and Year 8. The drops are significant, and attendance does not recover throughout secondary. Separately, we know that attendance in primary school is lowest for those in Year 1 and below (i.e. relatively new starters). All these effects are more pronounced for pupils eligible for free school meals. Mitigating the impact of these declines is a key route to improving overall attendance at secondary school.

Schools can overcome this challenge by treating transition not as a single event, but as a structured process spanning the months before, during, and after the move between key stages. This requires consistency of care: data used intelligently to support early identification; trusted relationships built with families; and messaging, routines, and enrichment that foster a strong sense of belonging from the moment a pupil is offered a place.

## Recommended actions

### **Collaborate to identify at risk pupils early**

Begin transition planning early by working jointly with feeder primaries and local agencies to identify pupils most at risk of attending poorly or feeling anxiety about transition. Consider assigning a named staff member to each vulnerable pupil identified. Understand any barriers to attendance early, using one-to-one interviews and home visits to understand what support might be needed before, during, and after the child moves into Year 7. Fulwood Academy has adapted DfE guidance into a [pupil conversation script](#) to support one-to-one conversations throughout the year.

You can find Year 6 attendance data for your incoming pupils on [VYED](#) from the start of the summer term.

## **Deliver a phased transition curriculum from Year 5 to Year 7:**

Introduce a structured transition curriculum across Year 5, 6 and the start of Year 7 to gradually develop children's transition awareness, knowledge and ability to manage primary-secondary school transition, through scaffolding a repertoire of socio-emotional skills to build pupils' confidence and preparedness.

The University of Manchester's *#Talking about School Transition (#TaST 5-7)* resources take an early-intervention approach, through developmentally sequenced lessons, in line with children's 'window of tolerance'. In Year 5, the curriculum begins with scaffolding transferable skills, such as asking for help, and making decisions. This foundation lays the groundwork for the more explicit primary–secondary school transition content explored in Year 6, where attention shifts to exploring similarities and differences between schools to understand upcoming changes, before incrementally contextualising learnt skills in relation to typical primary-secondary school transition scenarios. In Year 7 children apply learnt skills in navigating unfamiliar people, places and routines, by practising in class, through activities such as reading school maps, and building peer connections, to develop adaptive strategies and confidence.

For primary schools, use [Year 5 and Year 6 pupil booklets](#) and [teacher guides](#) to develop and practice these skills. For secondary schools, reinforce these skills in Year 7 through short, [practical worksheets](#) aligned to pupils' lived experiences in their new setting, and use [the teacher guides](#). This gradual, cross-phased approach, supports continuity between phases and can help reduce anxiety and disengagement at a point where attendance often drops.

If you have any questions, feedback, or would be interested in evaluating the efficacy of *#TaST 5-7* within your educational setting, please do not hesitate to contact Charlotte: [charlotte.bagnall@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:charlotte.bagnall@manchester.ac.uk)

## **Build familiarity with the school before pupils arrive**

Provide opportunities for pupils and families to get to know the new school environment and staff well before September. This can include open evenings, small-group visits, and transition days. Where safe and appropriate, it can also include

home visits to better understand specific family contexts. Initiatives hosted in school such as 't with the headteacher' and family cooking classes can build a sense of belonging and create a space where parents feel comfortable raising worries and asking questions.

Workshops on practical issues such as bus passes, uniform, and attendance processes can enhance familiarity with your school's expectations, while providing an opportunity to identify families who may require additional support.

## **Create enhanced transition experiences for vulnerable pupils**

Offer additional visits, small-group sessions and, where possible, summer-school opportunities for pupils who may struggle with change, such as those with SEND, EAL, or known emotional or social needs. Work with SENCOs, pastoral leads and external partners to plan tailored building tours and family meetings. Meeting pupils and families to co-create one-page profiles can help build a shared understanding of key strengths and needs.

## **Plan a structured and welcoming start**

To support children's transition into reception, build early relationships with parents that keep communication open and ensure meaningful information about each child's strengths, interests and needs is exchanged. This can also help when identifying which children are at risk of absence.

Support the transition period through joint events and reciprocal visits that help children become familiar with their new classroom and teacher. These could involve stay-and-play sessions where the parent stays for an extended period with the child in reception until they are more familiar with the environment, or the reception teacher visiting nursery in the summer term in order to meet their pupils before the school year starts. [Further guidance on supporting a smooth transition](#) has been created by the DfE.

Parents may also need practical advice on encouraging their child's independence. Aligned messaging in this area can help parents feel less isolated in their worries. Kindred2 have produced helpful [guidance](#) on how to ease parental concern around starting reception.

The DfE has produced [webinars for school leaders](#) on how school leaders can help plan for reception transition.

Design the start of Year 7 to feel predictable and build connection. Schools may start Year 7 early, run a 'primary style' fortnight, or provide separate breaktimes to help form friendships. During their transition period, new pupils need to understand school's expectations and routines; tutors and support staff can greet pupils on arrival, check uniform or equipment needs, and resolve practical barriers immediately, adopting a support-first approach. Structured routines and visible belonging cues can help pupils settle quickly and feel known.

This [six-week induction programme for pupils beginning Year 7](#) contains suggested activities that can support.

Schools should also create structured opportunities for pupils to connect with peers and staff through enrichment and extra-curricular activities. This can include offering clubs in arts, sports, or wellbeing during the first term.

Celebrating attendance improvement and achievement during transition – including through small tokens of recognition like praise postcards – can help pupils to feel known, valued and included in school life.

## **Use data to target support**

Track new pupils' attendance closely from the very start of term, taking an absence banding approach to spot early decline, make progress visible, and celebrate improvement. You can use the DfE's View your school attendance data dashboard to track movement across bands and within year groups. This process is particularly crucial across Year 7 and Year 8, and schools should pay close attention to changing attendance patterns in the second and third half term of Year 7 where attendance can drop sharply.

Use your MIS and the DfE's Explore your attendance patterns tools (see [Key area 1: Data and Targeted Support](#)) to track attendance trends for Year 7 pupils over time. This allows you to see when attendance is relatively higher or lower for this cohort and act early where patterns emerge.

You can filter to focus on specific groups within Year 7, such as pupils with SEN or FSM, to understand how attendance patterns vary more precisely and identify where additional support may be needed. You can then combine and cross-reference academic, pastoral, and attendance data to tailor interventions to the needs of individual pupils.

Use this information to target proactive communication with parents and carers, setting clear expectations for attendance, helping pupils and their families feel confident in attendance expectations throughout Year 7.

## **Sustain personal contact with families**

Continue [proactive communication](#) with parents and carers throughout the first half term and beyond. Regular check-ins, alongside '[golden hour](#)' calls or home visits for absent pupils, can ensure that support is immediate when attendance begins to dip. It can make sense to surge this work at key risk points like after half-term in the autumn.

The details and outcome of each personal contact could be recorded in an attendance tracker to ensure continuity for families. Staff at Harborne Academy, Birmingham, use a simple [Student Attendance Support Sheet](#) to assist with this.

If students have been absent for a sustained period, a return to school form can be used to structure a supportive reintegration conversation between the pupil and a trusted adult. Return to school conversations can help identify underlying causes of absence, capture pupil voice, and agree practical next steps to sustain improved attendance. For inspiration, see Harborne Academy's [Return to School Form](#) template.

## **Case Study: an attendance toolkit that equips all teachers to support transition, Fulwood Academy**

### **Fulwood Academy is coeducational secondary school located in Fulwood, Preston**

Managing transition is a huge part of how we achieve strong attendance at Fulwood.

From the very moment pupils and families come through our doors, even if they're just looking around, we set out our sell in terms of attendance - what our expectations are, what we will do if pupils aren't in school, and how we'll support pupils.

We consistently work to evaluate attendance barriers and put in place support, and we don't apologise for having high expectations of our pupils.

As soon as pupil allocations are confirmed, we download the DfE Year 6 attendance data to identify anyone with low attendance and combine this with intelligence from our feeder primaries. We then visit each school, meet pupils, and record barriers on a shared tracker.

Over the summer term and into the holidays, we make home visits and contact families who may need help with transport, uniform, or making the transition to secondary school. For SEND pupils or pupils with additional needs, our SENCO leads bespoke visits and early meetings to build relationships, identify barriers and put support in place to overcome these. We also host transition evenings and a summer camp so that pupils meet their new teachers and feel part of the Fulwood community before September.

In 2024, after attending a DfE conference, we transformed our approach to using attendance data. We developed a banded approach to data analysis, giving all pupils sight of their attendance band so that pupils and parents/carers can track their progress weekly, celebrate upward movement, and intervene early where there are signs of attendance slipping.

After learning from a DfE conference last year, our Senior Leadership Team built a practical school-level Attendance Toolkit comprising [staff training modules](#), call scripts, tutor routines, and a pupil-facing banding card. Each week, staff at Fulwood act as school attendance champions to hold pupils accountable for their attendance,

communicate messages about attendance in a relatable language of 'days lost', and design targeted interventions for individual students. Every member of staff has one to three pupils that they are the school attendance champion for. They set up a report on SIMs with a user defined group so they can monitor their group each day and do their checks.

Each morning, staff greet pupils at the gate, removing any barriers straight away; providing bags, equipment, or uniform if needed. We start the day with our 'rise-and-shine' calls for pupils who need encouragement, followed by our first hour 'golden hour' of calls to every absent pupil.

Every term we have a reward experience. When pupils come back from school holidays, we mention this reward as part of our expectations assembly. This year, the students chose their activities. These are simple, low-cost and quick wins. One year group wanted the dining hall; they played board games, had cups of tea and croissants or pain au chocolates.

We've made attendance during transition a whole-school effort and are committed to helping every pupil feel that they belong from the very first day.

## **Case Study: Belonging before day one, KLA Warrington**

### **King's Leadership Academy Warrington is a coeducational secondary school based in Warrington, Cheshire**

We see transition as the foundation of strong attendance and begin our work with pupils long before they join us.

We have a laser focus on data from Year 5 and Year 6. Before pupils even walk through the door, we've worked with primary schools to make sure we know which children are likely to need support to attend regularly.

From the autumn term of Year 6, senior leaders visit feeder primaries to meet pupils and talk about our school. Before pupils arrive in September, they will already have met the headteacher several times through primary visits, open evenings and leadership days. This familiarity means new starters recognise the faces that greet them on their first day.

Every single child with their parent comes into the school for a one-to-one interview with a member of staff, getting to know them and identifying any barriers to attendance. We also hold a SEND open day so pupils who may be anxious can explore the school at a quieter time.

Our school specialises in character and leadership. Our work on transition is underpinned by this and our focus on our ASPIRE values. We embed belonging through a structured programme of activities that build confidence, character, and relationships, including:

- A residential in the first term that helps pupils develop resilience and friendships (once you've all been together in the freezing cold water of the Menai Strait, you suddenly find you're making a few more friends and seeing your form tutor in a different light!).
- Weekly enrichment sessions every Wednesday afternoon. Here pupils choose activities led by our staff members' interests and skills - such as crochet and British Sign Language. Staff members share their talents and interests.
- Starting each day with daily silent reading and having lunchtime family dining to create calm and predictable moments for pupils to settle and connect.

We aim to make every pupil feel that they matter as well as belong, sustaining high attendance and a strong sense of community throughout Key Stage 3.

## Key area 8: Meaningful, manageable changes

DfE has recently published [data insights](#) on a range of annual and one-off events driving short-term absences (both for authorised and unauthorised reasons). You can use Explore your attendance patterns in [View your education data](#) (see Key Area 1) to see how known attendance drivers appear in your own school's data across the year. This helps you identify when patterns occur and consider how to respond.

These events are just one of the many factors influencing attendance: pupils will experience multiple drivers, such as home environment, health and wellbeing, and their sense of belonging, some of which schools have more control of than others. However, schools have found that steps taken in response to one-off events can collectively have a tangible impact. This section summarises those actions.

When considering whether and how to adopt them, we recommend applying these **Principles for Inclusive Practice**, taking into account your own school's context:

- **Support-first:** understand barriers; seek proportionate solutions.
- **Clarity:** be explicit on what is expected of parents, as well as what absence the law allows and what is not allowed.
- **Consistency:** apply the same processes for all pupils while taking individual circumstances into account.
- **Data-informed:** use cohort analysis to plan targeted actions.
- **Co-design:** work with families, pupils, and local community leaders.

For further insight into how the suggested actions below have been successfully applied by a range of different schools in practice, please refer to these [case studies](#).

## Recommended Actions

### Medical appointments

**Insight** - Where a session is missed due to a medical appointment, around half of pupils also miss the other session that day (i.e. are likely to be absent for a full school day).

#### **Recommended actions**

Ensure clear and consistent messaging to parents/carers that leave of absence for medical appointments should be requested in advance.

Encourage appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, set the expectation that pupils attend before/after appointments, where they are well enough and logistics allow. This includes encouraging them to wear school uniform to reduce barriers to coming back in.

### Illness

**Insight** - Illness is the biggest single driver of school absence, contributing to half of all absence, and rates remain 50 per cent higher than pre-Covid.

#### **Recommended actions**

Share [NHS guidance](#) (or this related [poster](#)) with parents to reinforce that pupils with a cold or minor illness (as well as children feeling anxious or worried) can usually attend. Some schools have found success by introducing simple systems, such as an ['Under the weather' form](#) to enable parents to inform the school if a pupil is slightly unwell so that staff can monitor and support them during the day.

You could also promote [simple, preventative measures](#) across the school to reduce the spread of infection, including opening windows between lessons to ventilate the room and regular hand washing. This should be encouraged routinely but be boosted during periods of seasonal illness or other outbreaks.

You might also want to reinforce [messages](#) that attending school can support children's mental health and wellbeing. Work to identify anxiety-related barriers as

soon as possible and take early, practical steps to address these, including working with pastoral teams and external services where appropriate.

## **Broken weeks**

**Insight** – In 2024/2025, schools finishing the year with a broken week had absence rates 27% higher for that week than those finishing with a full week.

### ***Recommended actions***

Use *Explore your attendance patterns* to identify any patterns of lower attendance during broken weeks. Where appropriate, work with your responsible body to align dates so terms begin on Monday and end on Friday and consider scope to schedule inset days to minimise broken weeks.

Where this is not possible, communicate clearly with parents/carers in advance that full attendance remains expected, and underline at the start of the year and as you near the particular dates that important learning continues during shorter weeks.

## **Religious observance**

**Insight** – In the 2024/25 academic year, around 2.45 million sessions were recorded as absence for religious observance ([Code R](#)).

### ***Recommended actions***

Use attendance data to understand the impact on specific pupil groups and tailor approaches accordingly.

Communicate clearly with parents, setting out the expectations for attendance alongside the days permitted for absence both at the start of the year and as you near key dates. Provide timely reminders and supportive messages before and after observance.

Develop an informed and inclusive approach by recognising observances, engaging with local faith leaders, and promoting a sense of belonging. Consider what community activities you could bring into school.

Where appropriate, also consider adjustments to the school calendar in consultation with staff and the wider community, ensuring that pupils continue to receive a full education entitlement.

Further sector advice on how you can plan proactively to support attendance while respecting religious observance can be found [here](#).

## **Birthdays**

***Insight*** – Across all pupils, overall absence rates are on average 40% higher on birthdays.

### ***Recommended actions***

Promote a culture of belonging by recognising and celebrating birthdays within the school day whilst remaining mindful that not all pupils will want the same level of public recognition and celebration. Include all staff in this by sharing information so that pupils can be acknowledged by them across the school such as in their form groups or at the school gate.

Consider small incentives or gestures to positively reinforce attendance on birthdays, as part of wider efforts to build strong relationships and make school an engaging place to be (e.g. passes to skip lunch queues).

## **One-off events**

***Insight*** – Large events such as concerts for musicians who are popular with teenagers, or agricultural shows in particular counties of England can have an impact on attendance when taking place on school days.

### ***Recommended actions***

Analyse data to identify patterns of absence linked to specific events or dates.

*Explore your attendance patterns* can help you spot repeated trends at school and cohort level over time. Where patterns are identified, take proactive steps to mitigate impact, such as communicating with parents about the impact of missed learning.

Lastly, and where relevant, engage with local event organisers or community partners to reinforce positive attendance messages.

## **Case study: using an ‘under the weather’ form to reassure parents that they can send children with mild symptoms into school.**

### **St. James School is a secondary school in Exeter and is part of the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust.**

At St James, we recognised that families often struggle with the morning decision about whether a slightly unwell child should attend school. We also identified a concern among some pupils that, once on site, they would not be allowed to go home if they began to feel worse. This perception sometimes resulted in pupils staying off entirely, even when they might have been able to actively participate in part, or all, of the day in school.

To address this, we introduced an Under the Weather form, which enables parents to tell us in advance how they would like us to respond if their child needs support during the school day. Feedback from families has told us that this reduces friction at home, and pupils are more willing to attempt the day because they know what will happen if they're struggling.

The system is intentionally light-touch. Once submitted, the form triggers an automated message to student services, ensuring that staff know exactly what the family has requested. We remind colleagues to respond consistently and kindly.

We average four or five form submissions per day. Each represents a child who might otherwise have stayed at home but is now attending. While we cannot attribute our year-on-year improvements in attendance solely to this intervention, it has strengthened communication with families and contributed to a wider culture in which pupils feel safe to come to school even on more challenging mornings.

## Case study: planning the school calendar to respond to recurring dips in attendance.

**Ernesford Grange Community Academy is a secondary school in Coventry, with around 50% of pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium, and high numbers of SEND pupils and looked-after children. It is part of Sidney Stringer Multi Academy Trust.**

After recognising that many students were missing the first few days of the school year because they were still away on holiday, we introduced two INSET days in September. We also phased out staggered starts after pupils and parents told us that coming in for only half a day offered limited value. By placing INSET days at the end of the year, we ensure we finish the final term on a Friday.

We haven't removed all broken weeks but have retained certain INSET days where they continue to meet the needs of our local community. For example, we retained the last day before Autumn half-term as an INSET day as it is an effective time to deliver staff training. The first day back in January is also an INSET day as some families now use this time to return from visiting relatives overseas during the Christmas break. Similarly, an INSET day in June coincides with a school trip the day before, and sports tours across the UK the following weekend.

We also think carefully about how we structure activities throughout the school year. High-engagement events—such as school photos and sports days—are often scheduled on Fridays, and all parents' evenings are held on Thursday evenings, to help encourage strong attendance at the end of the week.

As a school, we are additionally exploring whether there would be benefit in aligning INSET dates with our local primary school, helping families avoid situations where siblings are off school on different days.

We ensure all our work feeds into a school attendance calendar, which informs communication to parents and pupils and is mapped out a half-term in advance. This advance planning ensures that we continue to prioritise key messages (for example around Friday attendance), regardless of wider capacity and time pressures.

There are few quick wins in this area, but our attendance data is showing year-on-year progress, and we are also seeing our approach particularly impact the attendance of lower year groups, as they work their way through the school.

## **Case studies: calendar adjustments and community celebrations to manage absence related to religious observance.**

### **Star Academies is a large multi-academy trust comprising Muslim and Christian faith schools alongside non-faith schools serving multicultural families.**

Within our Muslim faith schools, Eid al Fitr and Eid al Adha are built into the school calendar, with two days allocated for each to account for differences in moon sighting and ensure the school is providing 190 days of education with full attendance. Where either Eid al Fitr or Eid al Adha fall during standard term time, at some of our non-faith schools we schedule an INSET day to coincide with it. We also liaise with local faith organisations and partners to identify the most likely dates and, once agreed, keep these dates fixed, managing any subsequent changes through established absence procedures.

This approach sits within a wider commitment to inclusive practice across our trust, which supports strong attendance both in the period leading up to Eid al Fitr (when some pupils may be fasting) and immediately after days of religious observance. We communicate regularly with parents during these times, reinforcing high expectations for attendance while also recognising the significance of these dates for families and the wider community.

As a trust, we have learned that inclusive planning is not about lowering expectations, but about setting them clearly and thoughtfully. By recognising the significance of religious observance and working closely with our communities, we sustain strong attendance and deepen trust with the families we serve.

### **Byron Wood Academy is a primary school in Sheffield, and is part of Astrea Academy Trust**

At Byron Wood Academy, we identified a sharp fall in attendance during Eid, with less than 25% of pupils attending on those days. Our leadership team began scheduling INSET days to coincide with predicted Eid dates, using community insight to identify the most likely days.

To maintain high attendance immediately after Eid, we then introduced celebratory activities on pupils' return. These include non-uniform days to grant the opportunity

to wear traditional clothing, a celebratory meal for staff and students and themed activities that extend the sense of celebration into the school environment. We have noted that this has been highly effective in encouraging pupils to return promptly. We apply the same inclusive ethos across all religious groups and celebrate Christian and Hindu observances in a way that ensures every family feels represented and valued.

During Ramadan, we provide structured support for older pupils who fast and pray, including a dedicated prayer room and clear communication with parents about expectations and wellbeing. Alongside this, we are strengthening community engagement through plans for a community hub and improved communication in languages used at home. The combined efforts of cultural understanding, thoughtful planning, and consistent dialogue with families have contributed to a marked improvement in attendance across the school year.

### **The Khalsa Academy is a Sikh ethos school in Wolverhampton, and is part of One Multi Academies Trust**

As a school serving a diverse community, we recognised that major Sikh days of religious observance falling in term time were beginning to create significant pressure on attendance. When Vaisakhi fell during the school week this year, we received a high volume of absence requests from both parents and staff. This experience highlighted the need for earlier planning and clearer communication.

We now identify key dates well in advance and have scheduled INSET days on both Vaisakhi and Gurburab next year. This ensures pupils have time off while prioritising their access to learning. We also survey families ahead of major religious periods to understand likely patterns and avoid last-minute disruption.

Alongside this, we have made wider adjustments to our calendar to support families whose travel is shaped by cultural and religious commitments. Introducing a two-week October half-term has reduced unauthorised absence for holidays and improved wellbeing.

We structure cultural drop-down days immediately before major festivals, often on Fridays, to maintain engagement and avoid dips in attendance. These days combine celebration with PSHE and safeguarding content, ensuring they remain purposeful and well attended.

Clear, consistent communication underpins our approach. We regularly remind parents that we have created specific windows for religious observance and travel, and that additional time off will be treated in line with our attendance policy. This combination of early planning, community consultation and structured messaging is helping us stabilise attendance around key religious periods, particularly for younger pupils building strong habits.

## **Avanti Fields School is an all-through Hindu faith school in Leicester, and is part of Avanti Schools Trust**

At Avanti Fields, managing attendance around religious observance is a core part of how we build strong relationships with families. From the moment pupils join us, we set out clear expectations about attendance and communicate openly about how we balance faith commitments with the importance of being in school.

Each year, we review our school calendar to remove barriers before they arise. Major days of religious observance in the Hindu calendar, such as Diwali, Janmashtami and Govardhan Puja, are built into our term dates as full school closures. Further to this, we also manage a small number of requests for other significant days of religious observance across all other faiths. Where families request additional time off and we do not assess their circumstances to be exceptional, we inform them that the actual day will be coded as authorised religious observance and any extra days as unauthorised, explaining our decision clearly and early.

We also see occasional requests linked to spiritual gurus visiting Europe or hosting multi-day events. These affect only a few families at a time. While we understand their importance, we are transparent that the absences cannot be authorised and families appreciate the honesty.

Part of our strong attendance is due to our positive community relations. We celebrate festivals within school where possible, and wider community events such as Ratha Yatra take place at weekends. Even during Navratri, when children are up late, pupils still attend the next day; though we make a fair adjustment to our assessment calendar by not scheduling in this week.

What makes this work is our commitment to communicating early and openly. We speak with families before and during religious observances, explain coding

decisions clearly, and reinforce the importance of attendance. By planning ahead and holding high expectations, we ensure pupils feel respected and supported without compromising their education.

## **Case studies: encouraging pupils to attend school on their birthday by creating a positive atmosphere.**

**Delta Academies Trust is a large multi-academy trust, with primary, secondary and alternative provision schools across 14 LAs.**

We introduced a straightforward approach to improving attendance by adding upcoming pupil birthdays to the data dashboards used by form tutors and heads of year. This ensured that staff could easily identify which pupils had birthdays approaching and acknowledge them during form time or assemblies.

By doing so, we reinforced the principle that attendance is everyone's responsibility, not solely the remit of the attendance team. The simplicity of this system was intentional, and it has become one of several practical tools that enable all staff to contribute meaningfully to improving attendance.

When staff take the time to recognise a pupil's birthday, it strengthens relationships and helps pupils feel valued, particularly those who may not receive the same level of attention at home. These small relational gestures have proven powerful in positively influencing attendance and are one of several small but effective strategies that, collectively, have helped us raise attendance and strengthen the sense of belonging across our community.

**Cromer Academy is a secondary school in Norfolk and is part of Inspiration Trust.**

We have used our collective expertise in attendance and behaviour to address a clear pattern of birthday-related absence. It was recognised that some pupils were choosing to stay at home on their birthdays, and we wanted to shift this perception by making birthdays a positive and valued part of our school culture.

To support this, we introduced a simple but effective approach: our attendance officer now provides weekly lists of upcoming pupil birthdays, which are shared with staff so that they can offer warm, personal acknowledgements throughout the day. These

small gestures, alongside queue-jump passes for lunch, have quickly become embedded in our routines and are now something pupils genuinely look forward to. This has encouraged stronger attendance and contributed to a wider cultural shift in which pupils feel noticed, appreciated, and keen to be in school.

## Acknowledgements

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**Bedford Academy**, part of the Heart Academies Trust.

**Beacon Church of England Primary School**, part of the Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust

**Byron Wood Primary Academy**, part of the Astrea Academy Trust

**Cabot Learning Federation**

**Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery**, part of the Charter Schools Educational Trust

**Cromer Academy**, part of the Inspiration Trust

**Denbigh High School**, part of the Chiltern Learning Trust.

**Delta Academies Trust**

**Drayton Manor High School**

**Eden Boys' School**, part of the STAR Academies Trust.

**Ernesford Grange Community Academy**, part of the Sidney Stringer Multi Academy Trust

**Evelyn Street Primary School**, part of Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT)

**Forest Academy**, part of the Inspire Partnership Academy Trust.

**Fulwood Academy**

**Harborne Academy**

**KLA Warrington**, part of the Great Schools Trust

**Lealands High School**

**Lift Schools**

**North Shore Academy**, part of The Northern Education Trust

## **Meridian Trust**

**Mulberry Academy Shoreditch**, part of the Mulberry Schools Trust.

## **Olive Academies Trust**

**Putteridge High School**, part of the Chiltern Learning Trust.

**St Bede's Catholic Academy**, part of the Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust.

**St James School**, part of the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust

## **Star Academies**

**The Khalsa Academy Wolverhampton**, part of the One Multi Academies Trust Limited

**The Parks Primary Academy**, part of the Delta Academies Trust.

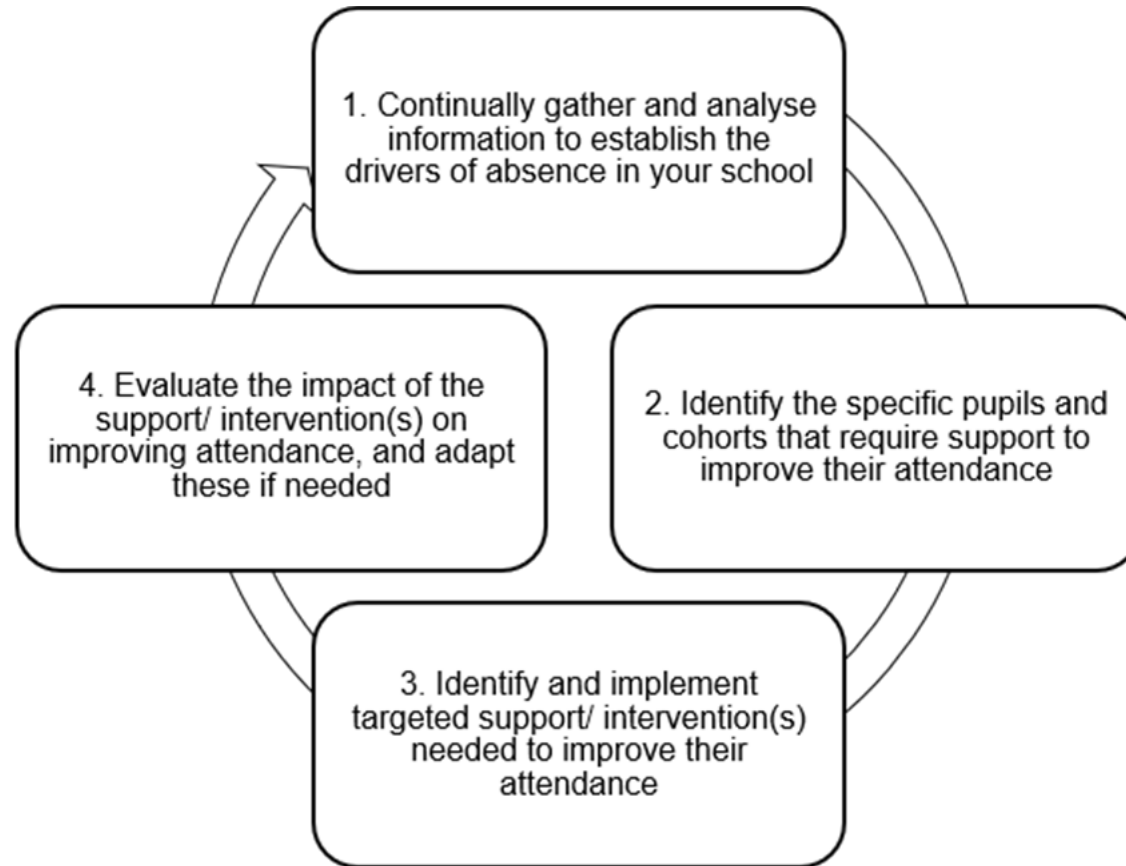
**The University of Manchester**, leading research on the impact of primary to secondary transitions on wellbeing ([PS-Wells Study](#))

**Tidemill Academy**, part of the REAch2 Academy Trust.

**Willows Academy**, part of the Delta Academies Trust.

**Wright Robinson College**, part of the Flagship Learning Trust.

## Annex A: Data flow chart



## **Annex B: Self-assessment**

This self-assessment is an informal and optional resource designed to support you to review your current attendance practice and identify any areas of practice that can be strengthened.

For a more in-depth review of your attendance practice, you may also wish to:

- discuss attendance with your leadership team, including attendance and pastoral leaders and partners (where applicable)
- consider this alongside analysis of your attendance data and wider development plans

### **What you need to do**

For each question, give a score between 1 and 4 that reflects the strength of your current practice, using the key below:

1. in place or in the early stages of development
2. in place but needs to be strengthened and further embedded
3. in place but effectiveness has not been tested
4. in place and known to be effective

Add notes explaining your score for each question in the 'evidence' column, along with details of your attendance systems, processes, engagement and communications and any supporting data.

When you have completed the assessment, use the results to help you refer to the relevant section of the toolkit. This will give you information to help improve practice.

You can record any agreed next steps or actions in the final column.

Please see the following page for the self-assessment table.

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
<b>Data and targeted support</b>			
Do you ensure that teachers and all other relevant staff are aware of attendance rates for their class, form and year (including overall, persistent absence, severe absence and specific cohorts)?			
Are pupils aware of their own attendance rates, and why these matter?			
Do you frequently monitor and analyse attendance data, including historic trends over time, pupil, year group, and specific cohorts e.g. SEN and FSM?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Do you use data to identify individual and cohort barriers to attendance, taking targeted action and developing strategies to overcome these?			
Are staff aware of the full range of support available within school for pupils with barriers to attendance, and how and when to access these?			
Do staff understand how the targeted support in place will respond to the pupils' attendance barriers?			
Are you confident that you have a full picture of the external support available for pupils with barriers to attendance? For example, what support is provided by your local authority and charities.			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Are you aware of how and when to access external services to help pupils to overcome barriers to attendance?			
Do you make sure that the intended impact of attendance support is clear, regularly reviewed to measure effectiveness, and adjusted if needed?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
<b>Culture</b>			
Do staff, pupils, parents/carers, and governors know your school's vision and values and how this relates to maintaining high attendance?			
Do your vision and values promote a culture that supports strong attendance and high attendance expectations?			
Do you ensure that your school's culture is warm, welcoming, supportive and encourages a sense of belonging in all pupils?			
Are you confident that staff and pupils understand, model and communicate your values and culture?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
<b>People, processes and systems</b>			
<b>The senior attendance champion</b>			
Are you confident that the senior attendance champion is sufficiently visible, and that their role is understood by staff, pupils, governors and the wider community?			
Does the champion receive sufficient support and challenge from the headteacher and governors?			
Does the senior attendance champion have the capacity, time, and skills to effectively deliver their role?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Do you ensure that staff are aware of their attendance responsibilities?			
Do you monitor the effectiveness of staff in delivering their attendance responsibilities and identify and meet any learning and development needs?			
Do you regularly review your current operating model to assess its effectiveness?			
<b>Processes and systems</b>			
Have you implemented clear attendance systems and processes to track and respond to absence in a timely and responsive way?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Do you ensure that information about attendance systems and processes is easy to locate and communicated frequently across the school community?			
Do attendance systems and processes feature in staff induction and training?			
Are your systems and processes sensitive to children with additional needs, such as SEN and young carers? For example, that you reward improved attendance, not just high attendance.			
Do you regularly measure the impact of your systems and processes and update or change them when necessary?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
<b>Relationships and communications</b>			
<b>Relationships with families</b>			
Are the right staff within the school holding the relationship with parents/carers?			
Do you create an environment that encourages families to feel welcome at school?			
Are school staff confident in discussing attendance, and any sensitive issues relating to this, with families, and do they have the listening skills required?			
Do you seek opinions from parents and carers and parent carer groups and use these to shape attendance support?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Do you measure the impact and effectiveness of attendance communications in reducing absence?			
Are you confident that families are aware of the attendance support, guidance and advice available to them, and how and when to access this?			
Do you describe absence in a relatable way? For example, in terms of lessons and days missed, rather than just percentages, and the social, health and academic benefits of regular attendance.			
Are you confident that families are satisfied with the frequency, accuracy, timing, language, tone and methods used for attendance communications?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
Do you ensure that communications are accessible to everyone, recognise diverse barriers to attendance and promote school as a positive and supportive place to be?			
Do you engage with other schools in your area or trust to ensure that your messaging and approach is consistent?			

To what extent...	Current rating (1 to 4)	Evidence to support your score	Actions you can take to strengthen this area of practice
<b>Meaningful, manageable changes</b>			
Do you take proactive, preventative steps to reduce absence due to illness or medical appointments?			
Do you structure your term time to avoid broken weeks where possible?			
Do you proactively anticipate and plan for periods where there is a risk to attendance due to one-off events or religious observance (including consulting with any local religious groups that could assist with this)?			

## Annex C: Data monitoring schedule

Below are suggested attendance tasks that can be completed on a daily, weekly, half-termly and termly basis to support schools to adopt a robust approach to responding to absence and improving attendance.

<b>Daily</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Half-termly (6 per year)</b>	<b>Termly (3 per academic year)</b>
Attendance staff monitor register completion and return	Senior attendance champion meets attendance staff to discuss the week's data.	School leadership team meet to discuss and scrutinise data on overall banding distribution, current and cumulative attendance, persistent and severe absence.	Meet with governors or trustees to share data trends, and progress.
Registers updated based on messages from parents and carers	Scrutiny and review of attendance banding distribution on View Your Education Data service	Monitor impact of attendance strategies and make changes where needed.	Headteacher writes to parents and carers of pupils with the poorest attendance, ensuring messaging is appropriate and reflects the child and family's situation.
Register data used to take immediate action, including (where appropriate) contact parents/carers, home visits, liaising with SENCO, escalating safeguarding issues, and requesting medical evidence	Review and progress individual action plans and consider next steps where plans aren't being engaged with.	Benchmark attendance outcomes against national and local authority level.	
Daily attendance data sent to relevant school leads with information about actions to take.	Senior leadership team to meet weekly to discuss weekly data broken down by key cohorts e.g. FSM, SEND etc...	Share absence data in communications to all relevant staff and parents/carers.	
Final attendance data shared with relevant senior leads at the end of the day, including outcomes.	Identification of pupils attending persistent or severe absence.	Arrange meetings with parents and carers of pupils with the poorest attendance	