



Department
for Education

Working together to improve school attendance

Stockton
Children and Young People Select Committee

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Working together to improve school attendance

Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies,
independent schools and local authorities

Published: 29 February 2024

Applies from: 19 August 2024

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Progress to date

Update on reforms to the attendance system and implementation of *'Working together to improve school attendance'*

School implementation – Departmental surveys plus the work of the attendance advisers show good progress in implementing the core elements of the new expectations, including 79% with an attendance policy, 90% with a senior champion, 56% having termly meetings with the LA. However, there's further to go this year.

LA implementation – attendance advisers have- or are- working with all LAs to support them to implement the new expectations. There's significant progress across the country. Survey of LAs at the end of term showed 1/3 are delivering and 2/3 will be delivering by January. 89% of LAs have SPOCs in place, 67% will be delivering TSMs this AY, 93% reported improved joint working on attendance.

Policy – consultation response published on modernising school registers and improving consistency in the use of fixed penalty notices.

Updates and clarifications on common sticking points – including working with cross-border pupils, how to deliver effective and efficient targeting support meetings and on trading additional services with schools.

- **90%** of schools now have a senior champion
- **85%** of schools are now sharing data on a daily basis
- **2/3** of LAs either fully delivering the new expectations or with an agreed plan in place to do so by January 2024
- **89%** of LAs now have single point of contacts for schools in their area

What might be working-Targeting support meetings

Examples of strong practice in the use of TSMs

A clear, structured agenda shared in advance, that may flex to suit the time of year. Where all participants are clear about what the meetings are expected to achieve and what they will need to participate fully. For example, different themes for Autumn, Spring and Summer term with appropriate attendance at the meetings from senior school leaders.

Understanding the data to identify trends and risks at a strategic level but also at a pupil level. What types of challenges are specific to a particular group and what can be done using all the available resource in school and their partners. This may lead to specific agenda items and focus for some schools.

Opportunity for honest, open reflection with decision makers in school- a focus beyond the absence to the reason behind it and discussion about what might be possible in terms of challenge and support.

Top tips

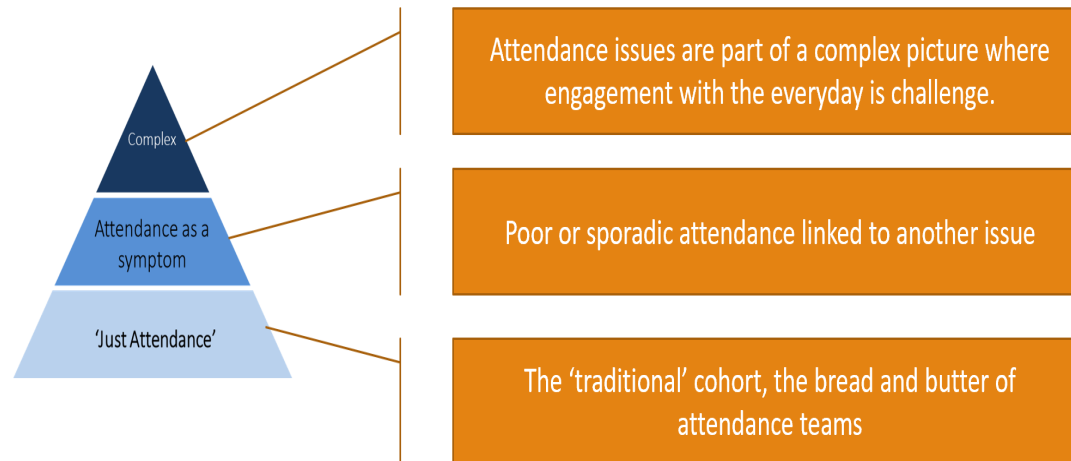
- A focus on making a difference
- The right level of participation and engagement
- Simple systems for booking and confirming meetings
- Live recording and agreement of actions so no need for minutes and delays in follow up.

'Targeting Support

Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils'.

What might be working -Targeting support meetings

Examples of strong practice in the use of TSMs



Using the meetings to really understand and explore the cohorts. What works well is finding a shared language that simple to understand and follow.

Top tip

- Use the opportunity to stop and really consider the barriers to attendance and how these might be tackled

'Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils'.

What might be working- Multi-disciplinary support for families

Examples of what may be impacting

- Early help is the front door for all attendance concerns.
- Each school has a Link Worker with a role across early help and attendance. These are managed by the Locality Manager.
- An Early Help School Attendance Matters Pathway for Schools articulates the graduated response.
- A Local School Attendance Panel triages cases.
- Head of Early Help sits on the EHCP Panel to ensure attendance is a priority there.
- Social Care include attendance in all plans and there is a clear route into educational neglect.
- Health have agreed to use the same early help assessment tool for their assessments across 0-19, including school nurses, health visitors etc.

Top tips

- Invite services and partners to populate the DfE self-assessment tool.
- Articulate what contribution partners can make in their day-to-day business through pledges.
- Ensure attendance data is shared with key practitioners, early help workers, social care and training is given to interpret this data.
- Ensure the graduated response for schools around attendance identifies clearly the role of all agencies.

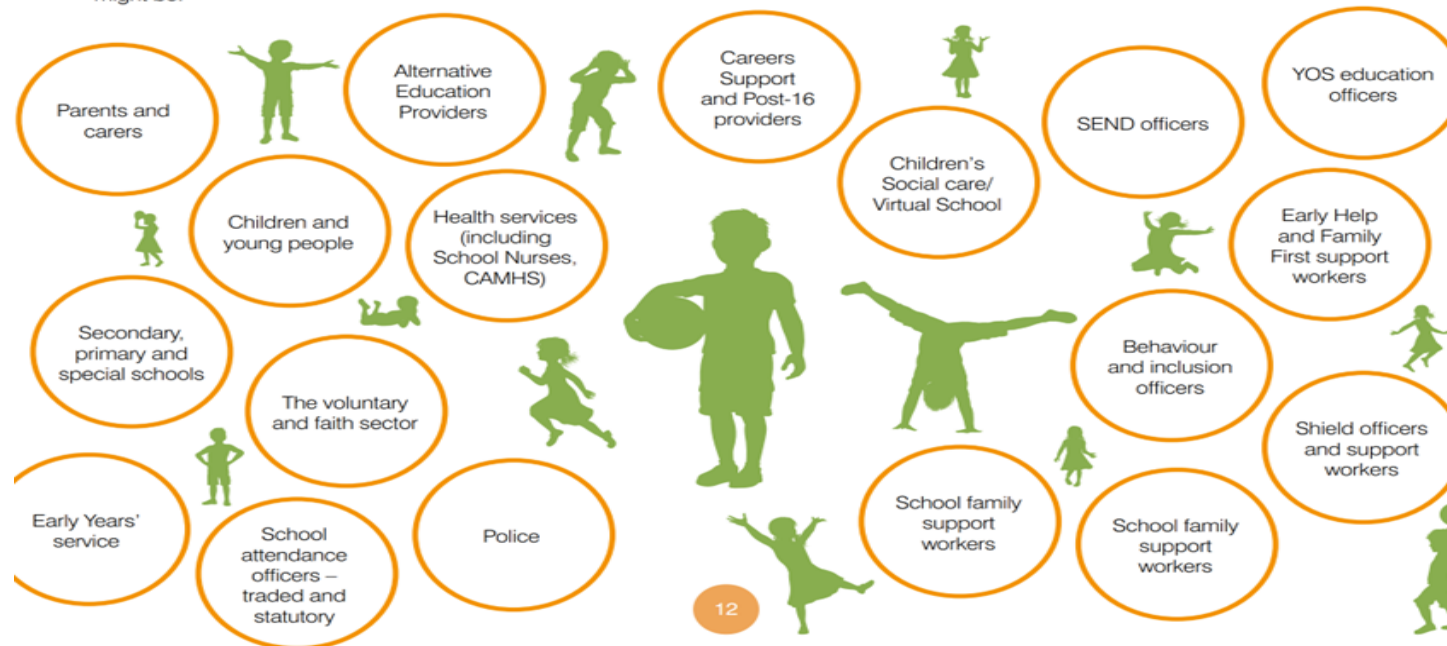
‘Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance’.

School attendance support Team- Multi-disciplinary support for families

- Tiered response document to ensure multi-agency working around attendance.
- A Complex Low Attendance and Avoidance Group with senior managers from services across health, social care, education, early help ensures oversight of cases.

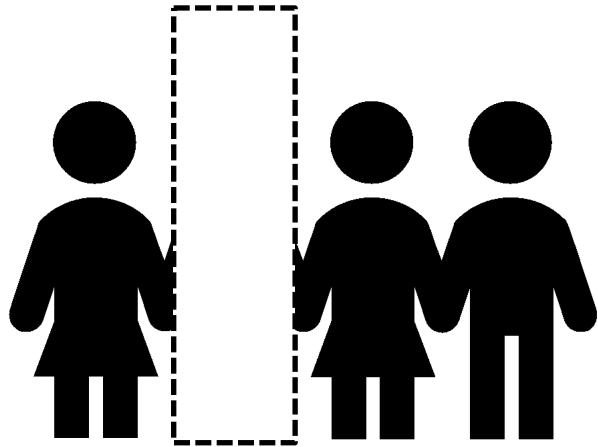
Working in partnership: who is going to help us?

Securing good attendance is everybody's business – if we are to achieve our ambitious goals we all need to work together. Lead professionals working with the family may identify key partners as some of the following, depending on the needs of the child and family might be:



What is the focus of work in Stockton?

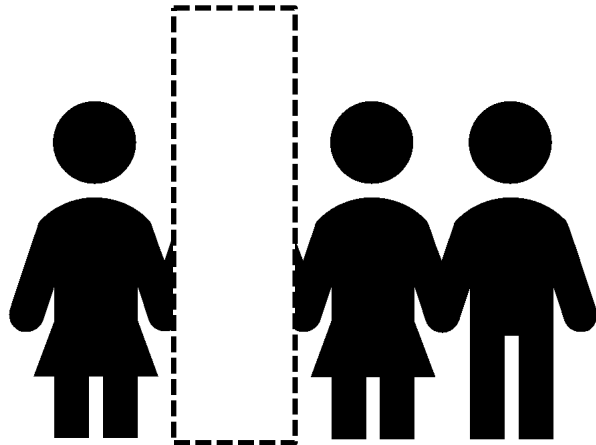
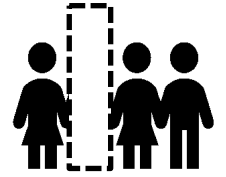
Understanding that attendance everyone's business



If a child or young person is absent from school what impact does it have on your work?

What is the focus of work in Stockton?

Understanding that attendance everyone's business

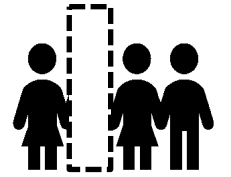


If a child or young person is absent from school what impact does this have on your work?

What change could you make at an operational level?

What change could you make at a strategic level?

What is the focus of work in Stockton? Understanding that attendance everyone's business



Complex
reasons for
absence

Low or sporadic
attendance where
there is a specific
issue

Attendance that can be
managed through traditional
approaches- 'just
attendance'

