

# Attendance Support Team

## Introduction to the Attendance Support Team

19 April 2023



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

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# Welcome



# Attendance Support Team

## **Team Leaders**

Rochelle Isaac-Simon

Loralene Bain

## **Attendance Support Officers**

Antoine Julien-Charles

Melissa Higgins

Sally Edwards

Kathryn Franklin

Brooke Kidd

Keri Walsh

## **Attendance Support Officer (MASH)**

Susan O'Farrell (interim)

## **Penalty Notice Officer**

Vacant post

## **Head of Education for Vulnerable Children**

Kathryn Angelini



# Objectives

- To develop an understanding of the 'Working together to improve attendance' guidance and what this means for the local authority and schools
- The function of the Attendance Support Team in line with the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance
- Support offered to schools by the Attendance support team and the statutory functions
- To understand Termly Targeting Support Meetings held by the Attendance Officer with the school



# Working together to improve school attendance

- Improving attendance is everyone's business
- Education is a legal requirement for all children of compulsory school age
- Outlines the expectations of schools and local authorities

  
Department  
for Education

## Working together to improve school attendance

Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities

Published: May 2022

Applies from: September 2022



# Working together to improve school attendance

	Not meeting expected standard in reading writing and Maths	Meeting expected standard in reading writing and Maths	Meeting the higher standard in reading writing and Maths
<b>Absence rate at KS2</b>	4.7%	3.5%	2.7%

	Not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and Maths	Achieving grade 4 to 1 in English and Maths
<b>Absence rate at KS4</b>	8.8%	5.2%



# Attendance Support Team - statutory functions

The Attendance Support Team will provide core functions below free of charge to all schools regardless of type:

- **Track local attendance data**
- **Provide communication and advice** through bringing schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area
- Hold termly **Targeting Support Meetings**, having 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
- Provide access to **Multi-disciplinary** early help support for families where intensive work takes place to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance
- Take forward attendance **legal intervention** using a range of parental responsibility measures where voluntary and formal support has not been successful or engaged with
- Monitor and improve the **attendance of children with a social worker** through their Virtual School



# Provide communication and advice

- Regularly bring schools and trusts together to communicate messages and provide advice by area: primary and secondary schools
- Create networking opportunities to share effective practice through virtual meetings
- Guidance on how partners will work together
- Named point of contact for each school
- Answering queries from school-based staff
- Newsletters





# Targeting Support Meetings are to be:

- Held once per term for all schools in the borough
- To be attended by the attendance officer and the designated senior lead for attendance to be the point of contact at SLT level or above along with
- The attendance support officer
- The targeted support meeting will be used to set specific timely objectives for both the school and LA where appropriate
- Build strong relationships and work collaboratively with the school's attendance leads to identify, discuss, and agree joint targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or those at risk of becoming so.
- Agree what support the LA will provide and which (if any) other statutory or voluntary services should become involved.
- If time allows and the school seeks it, they may also include:
- Identifying areas to focus on in school policies or approaches to attendance.
- Helping schools to analyse their own data, comparing themselves to other schools in the geographical area or considering how they may learn from or work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends.



# Targeting Support Meetings will be:

- Short virtual or in person conversations between the school and LA as equal partners
- Different lengths of time for different schools depending on the levels of need and number of pupils or pupil cohorts to be discussed
- An opportunity to agree action plans and joint approaches for every severely absent pupil, and pupils who are persistently absent
- An opportunity to agree which agency will act as the lead practitioner for each case – this will usually be the school however can be a local authority or partner team where they are the most appropriate service
- A forum to discuss and agree the most appropriate attendance legal action where support has not been engaged with or has not worked
- Focussed, with the allocated time prioritised in a way that benefits both school and local authority



# Targeting Support Meetings will not be:

- An exhaustive discussion of the attendance of every pupil on the school roll
- The local authority taking responsibility for leading all cases discussed or acting as lead practitioner in every case
- An inspection or audit of the register and use of attendance codes
- The only conversation between the school's attendance leads and their point of contact in the local authority's School Attendance Support Team
- The same length of time for every school regardless of need or always in person if it is more efficient to conduct them virtually
- A reason for lots of preparation by either the school or the local authority, or a cause of additional data recording. Wherever possible the Wonde data should be use so school and local authority have access to the same information and where this is not possible schools should prepare a simple list of persistently and severely absent pupils for discussion.



# Targeting Support Meetings – prioritising discussion

- The priority should be discussion of cases where there are out of school barriers to attendance, where joint action from school, local authority and local partners is needed
- Where time allows and the school would value the local authority's advice
- By exception, where additional action is deemed necessary and time allows, there may be discussion of cases that are already being discussed at other multi-agency meetings
- Targeting Support Meetings should not usually cover cases where joint action is not needed because support is already in place
- For severely absent pupils, it may also be necessary to consider if any of the pupils on the list should actually be considered as Children Missing Education (CME) and therefore joint reasonable enquires started to identify their whereabouts in line with CME procedures.



# Targeting Support Meetings – the structure

- A discussion of overall trends in the school's data and any emerging patterns or issues, not as an opportunity to hold schools to account but to identify patterns early and focus support
- Sharing experiences from other schools that have tackled similar issues and/or putting schools in touch with one another to facilitate effective practice sharing.
- Where time allows, this may include trends in lateness, reasons for absence or cohort or year group absence
- A focus on pupils with emerging patterns of absence or those at risk of becoming persistently absent in the next term.



# Multi-disciplinary support for families

- Schools, local authorities, and other services working together to provide an intensive whole family support approach and are expected to have agreed a joint approach for all severely absent pupils
- A single lead practitioner is to be appointed from the team or service best placed to support the family and their needs
- Can be the school, local authority team, service or another statutory partner such as a health professional. For example, in the case of a pupil experiencing barriers to attendance because of a housing issue, the lead practitioner may more sensibly be the family's housing officer
- The Attendance support officer can support and advise the family's lead practitioner on any attendance related elements of the plan, be part of the team around the family if necessary and can act as the responsible officer if support is formalised in an education supervision order or parenting order
- The Attendance support officer can provide schools with information on how to raise concerns and make referrals to early help (and other services) outside of their Targeting Support Meetings
- The Attendance support team will also build strong relationships with a range of services and partners that can help with specific barriers to attendance and how to access them
- Work closely with local mental health services, school level senior mental health leads (including school based Mental Health Support Teams where in place), the local School Nursing Service and the local authority's special educational needs and disability team(s) to ensure joined up support for families facing health or disability related barriers to attendance.



# Improve the attendance of children with a social worker

- Absence for pupils with a social worker has been historically higher
- Virtual School Heads since the expansion of the programme to provide strategic oversight of the education of pupils with a social worker
- The attendance support team along with schools will regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area, including those looked-after by the local authority
- Set aspirational targets for attendance of pupils with a social worker in the area, and put in place personal education plans for pupils looked-after
- Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after
- Work across children's social care services to make sure all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern
- To facilitate effective working across the local authority, schools are expected to inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school. Children missing education officers or a school's point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team should also inform a pupil's social worker if their name is to be deleted from the school register.



# Range of legal interventions used by the Attendance support team

## Range of legal interventions

- Education Supervision Orders (ESO)
- Parenting Orders
- Fixed penalty notices
- Building attendance into child in need or child protection plans where relevant
- Taking forward attendance prosecutions including for persistently breaching as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.





# How to refer for legal interventions

Prior to referral please ensure that:

- All forms of support has been collated such as the Parenting contract or Attendance panel agreement is included in the referral
- All previous evidence of support such as minutes from meetings or letters from other agencies involved has been collated as part of your referral
- Depending on the progression of the case a witness statement may be required



# Contact details

Email: [attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:attendancesupport@hillingdon.gov.uk)

