

# Good Practice in the improvement of pupils' attendance in Sheffield Settings

An investigation into best practice in Sheffield to improve attendance

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# Introduction

In the academic year 2023-2024, Learn Sheffield supported a working group (chaired by Greg Fell – Director of Public Health in Sheffield) which was focused on attendance.

Learn Sheffield committed to undertake a piece of work to look at strong practice in the city and produce a report on the learning from this to share with our partnership settings and more widely.

Using wide ranging contextual data Learn Sheffield identified a small group of schools ([Appendix 1](#)) who appeared to be outperforming their context with regards to pupils' attendance. This data will not be published or shared as it is not robust enough for publication. However, the data gave a useful steer in identifying schools to visit.

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**Schools are following the legal requirements set out for penalty notices around holidays**

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At the setting visits a set of key questions about the attendance processes and practice which has enabled schools to maintain strong attendance were discussed with leaders. ([Appendix 2](#)). In addition, schools' response to the latest changes resulting from the 'Working together to improve attendance' guidance was discussed, in particular in relation to penalty notices, fines and coding. Schools are following the legal requirements set out for penalty notices around holidays – however they generally feel that impact is limited. (In one area the travel agent advertises in the window that it will pay the penalty notices for a family booking a holiday with them).

Schools recognise that many agencies are often working under pressure and that resources are low. Schools made thoughtful comments about the impact of too much paperwork. They were concerned about the lack of action when they reported educational neglect. The outcomes of these discussions will be considered further and shared with relevant parties, but do not form part of this report, which is designed to share strong, positive practice.

It is acknowledged that this review focussed on a relatively small group of schools and that all schools will have good practice to share and indeed will certainly already be using some of the practice itemised in this report. For this reason, the report recommends that a group of Senior Attendance Champions is set up to share good practice more widely.

This work builds on the DfE statutory guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities](#) published in August 2024. Working together to improve attendance highlights the need for a whole school culture which promotes the benefits of high attendance based on strong relationships with families.

It is clear that the work on attendance is never done. Attendance must be a focus with every member of staff, every parent and every pupil. This report aims to identify what some schools are doing well to achieve this focus, impacting positively on the attendance in their setting. Unfortunately, the report does not provide a magic wand to improving attendance in this post Covid era. Rather, it is a summary of golden nuggets which are having a positive impact on pupils' attendance.

At the end of the report there is a set of questions which you might find helpful in reviewing your work on improving attendance and reducing persistent and severe absence, although this is not an exhaustive list.

### The key ways in which Sheffield schools are promoting good attendance



# Building a strong team in which attendance is everyone's responsibility

The DfE provide a summary of responsibilities for school attendance: [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

Schools typically have a senior leader who is their Senior Attendance Champion as well as an attendance team who manage phone calls, the administration of registers, paperwork for fines and penalty notices, and knock on doors. Several schools where attendance is strong given their context have allocated financial resource to increasing the number of staff in their attendance team. For example, employing an additional admin assistant to complete the administration of attendance, including first day calls, can allow other members of the team to spend more time knocking on doors and meeting with families. One setting has extended the number of working weeks of the admin team to give more time to manage legal work.

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**Attendance is not only the responsibility of the pastoral or inclusion staff**

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Most schools talk about pastoral or inclusion team involvement, as well as engagement of form tutors or class teachers in promoting good attendance. This works better in some schools than others. Where attendance is genuinely everyone's business and every team contributes to meetings in which attendance takes centre stage on the agenda, there is greater impact. Schools speak of weekly inclusion/pastoral/year group meetings in which attendance of individual pupils is discussed and methods to reduce barriers to attendance are agreed and monitored.

In primary schools, attendance is a focus at pupil progress meetings when the attendance lead, class teacher, pastoral care and the SENDCo work together to discuss how they can best support each pupil. The impact of actions taken to improve a child's attendance is then reviewed at the next pupil progress meeting.

Attendance is not only the responsibility of the pastoral or inclusion staff. Attendance can form a focus of line management meetings between senior and curriculum leaders. For example, where an agenda item focusses on Key Stage 4 attendance and concerns leading to missed lessons and incomplete coursework.

One setting has a WhatsApp group which informs all senior, pastoral and admin staff of who is away on each day. The names are written on a whiteboard and photographed. All staff are invested in good attendance.



The engagement of the SENDCo alongside the Senior Attendance Champion is important in monitoring and encouraging the strong attendance of pupils with SEND. The attendance of pupils with SEND, especially those with an EHCP, is an area of concern. Where the SENDCo helps families and pupils to understand the barriers to good attendance and identifies ways of mitigating against these barriers, attendance can improve. In some schools this has involved the use of the school's additional provision for vulnerable pupils or specific rewards for attendance over a set period, say 20 days.

In secondary schools, form tutors are typically involved in discussing attendance with their pupils. Where this discussion focuses on lessons or days missed or the impact on future outcomes it is likely to have more impact than the use of percentages. The greatest impact is where form tutors are consistent in following the school's expectations in these discussions. Pupils often record their own attendance in planners or booklets. In some schools, form tutors record on a tracker that they have had conversations with their pupils about attendance. Schools do not assume consistency – rather there is quality assurance of the impact of the work in tutor time, including the work on attendance.

Class teachers in primary schools know well which pupils are persistently absent or might have severe absence. Staff are expected to welcome pupils back straight away following a period of absence. One setting found that it helped if the teacher rings home if a child has more than one day off; talking about what they were doing in class – saying, 'it will be great to see your child tomorrow, we will be doing....'

One to one intervention works well with individuals who need additional support to have good attendance. Pupils are matched up with an adult that knows them best so they feel they have someone to turn to if they are worried. Many schools say it is more important to make sure pupils feel 'important and special,' than giving 'massive gestures and big prizes.' For example, a boy with 44% attendance in Year 10 has almost full attendance in Year 11, as a result of intensive work with a pastoral staff member. In one setting, all (upper pay scale) UPS staff become mentors for a persistently absent (PA) pupil. The PA pupils have a £100 raffle every half term. They receive a raffle ticket each time they meet their mentor. This has engendered a culture of friendliness and belonging between staff and pupils and has impacted positively on attendance.

Staff receive training about the importance of attendance and the attendance of different groups. Attendance is referred to in staff meetings and briefings. One setting has even quizzed staff on attendance matters. Many staff are trained in Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA). One school refuser's attendance improved from 4% to 85% using these techniques.

# The importance of good punctuality

A feature of the schools visited was their insistence on good punctuality. Schools recognise the negative impact of U codes on overall attendance.

Senior leaders maintain a high profile at the start and end of each day. Every setting focuses on positively encouraging and reinforcing good attendance – telling pupils ‘it’s great to see you’ when they return to school following an absence, rather than ‘where were you yesterday?’

Schools are typically very strict about closing gates and doors at the start of the school day. In secondary schools, poor punctuality is likely to result in a same day or next day detention (with some pupils exempt for extenuating circumstances). Leaders’ analysis shows that this is impacting on improved punctuality.

In primary schools, the policy is often to be supportive in the first instance, but then to give parents and pupils a clear time limit for improvement. Most schools have a policy of always asking the parents why children are late, when they bring their child to school.

Several schools use social media and seesaw messaging to thank parents for being on time, but also to highlight how many children were ‘late for their learning.’ Schools take great pains to develop a personalised approach to improving punctuality. For example, one pupil was motivated to arrive at school on time when they were allowed to join the school football club as a reward.

Free breakfast clubs are a common feature of the schools visited. Some schools find that giving pupils jobs in school, such as delivering milk to each class, is helping to improve punctuality.

Analysing punctuality allows schools to open the dialogue about routines in the morning. Ringing families with poor punctuality at 8am helps pupils to arrive on time. In one secondary setting, year leaders and teaching assistants call ten pupils each at 8am. This has improved punctuality and attendance.



# Attendance ‘in your face’

It is interesting when arriving at a setting to walk the route of a parent visiting into a meeting room and similarly the route of the pupils to their first destination. In some schools the importance of good attendance can be seen everywhere: on the gate, on the fence, in the reception or entrance, in the waiting room, in the meeting room, on classroom doors, on classroom walls, on the staff room noticeboard. One note about percentage attendance of classes or form groups on the door of rooms- some classes will never reach the highest attendance because of the absence of one or two pupils in that group. This therefore needs to be done in a thoughtful way.

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In one school the attendance team have moved offices to be front facing for parents and pupils

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Schools make good use of pop-up banners, plasma screens and projected noticeboards to reinforce the messages about good attendance and where appropriate identify those who have strong attendance. One school's pop-up banner in the entrance hall linked the percentage absence to the number of days off, the number of lessons missed and the consequent life chances.

In a setting where pupils line up at the start of the day and after break and lunch the leader overseeing the lines tells the story of attendance –for example, which class has improving attendance.

In one setting the attendance team have moved offices to be front facing for parents and pupils. This has successfully raised the profile of the attendance team and their work. It is important that school staff, parents and pupils know who the attendance team are and what work they do.





# Excellent relationships with families- going the extra mile

The DfE provide a toolkit for schools in working with families: [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance - GOV.UK](#)

Fostering very strong relationships with pupils and their families is seen as being the key factor to improving attendance. One headteacher said, 'We live and breathe for these families.' Another maintains that the most important thing is 'having staff who care and love the families. The staff want to be here and to make a difference to the children.' A common feature of all of the schools visited seems to be that that leaders and staff 'know pupils and their parents inside out.' All of the schools in the sample explained how they went the extra mile to work with families to support attendance and punctuality. One leader described the constant engagement with stakeholders over attendance as an 'exhausting battle.' 'When parents come in for attendance reviews, we treat them really well.'

Some settings set the standard for attendance with families before their children start at the school, laying out expectations for good attendance and explaining what will happen if their child is not punctual or does not attend. This could be personalised and particularly important on transition to secondary school with individual families where there have been attendance issues at primary school.

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Fostering very strong relationships with pupils and their families is seen as being the key factor to improving attendance

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When a significant number of pupils being admitted are new to English and have often never been to school before, leaders and staff focus on developing trust first and do all they can to build up positive relationships, especially as they are aware that many families tend to have a deep level of mistrust of 'authorities' and 'social services.' Many schools try to run advice sessions from school and invite other agencies to come into school as much as possible.

Schools with exceptionally high attendance make sure that admissions meetings with new parents are thorough and, whenever needed, supported by a translator, especially when the vast majority of pupils are new to English and new to living in the UK. Leaders emphasise that the setting is 'here to help' families at attendance meetings and reassure parents that their children will be well looked after.

Schools emphasise the importance of fostering very positive relationships with all of

the different heritages and cultures represented in the school community. For example, in one setting working towards the Anti-Racist School Award (Leeds Beckett University) has led to the make-up of the governing body becoming more diverse, which in turn has helped to promote good attendance throughout the whole school community.

Whole setting special events in the community are a common feature and help to reinforce the message for parents and children that 'you belong here and we will support you.' For example, several schools host Summer Fayres, which involve parents and pupils showcasing their country/heritage/culture with foods and national dress etc.

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## Care is taken to have the right people in place to both support and challenge parents

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Often one of the first contacts with families is the phone call from a parent saying their child will be absent. In a setting with particularly high attendance, there is an expectation that every phone call to the attendance team is answered promptly and never left to an answering machine. The attendance team respond to parents with a set

script. The separate script for those who are persistently absent is more challenging. This method means that parents always speak to someone to explain their child's absence- rather than the low bar of being able to leave a recorded message. Similarly, scripts can be used when the attendance team call to ask where pupils are.

Care is taken to have the right people in place to both support and challenge parents. Leaders and staff listen carefully to parents to find out why their children are not attending well, doing all they can to 'get beneath the surface' and successfully treat/address the root causes. The approach with parents is typically supportive, but also firm and challenging. Some leaders report that their families are used to support services and other agencies withdrawing if the family does not engage with them. However, leaders at every school visited are relentless as they work with parents to improve their child's attendance.

Schools visited have a strong nurturing ethos, founded on initiatives, such as EBSA, mental health support, Thrive, restorative practices and the Trauma Informed approach. Initiatives like Meet and Greet, Soft Landings and Sensory Circuits are provided to help some primary pupils settle at the start of the day.

Leaders use home visits to promote good attendance. This can include knocking on doors to find out where pupils are, leaving a formal letter if no one answers the door. Some schools visit key groups of pupils who have been absent after two days, even if

the parent has called in. More pastoral home visits are used to develop the relationship between home and setting. In some schools, senior leaders are involved in home visits for more complex cases.

Leaders show a high level of care to families in many ways. This could be through referrals to food banks, help with transport, free Christmas presents, making sure every child has a warm coat and a school uniform, and supporting families as they liaise with other agencies. For example, one setting uses its own minibuss to collect pupils from a neighbourhood where the local bus service has been cancelled.

When meeting with parents, leaders typically talk in terms of 'learning time lost,' as opposed to percentages – to help parents more fully understand the negative impact of poor attendance. For example, one primary setting finds it very helpful to go through a half termly mathematics or literacy plan with parents. The Attendance Champion shows the parents how the learning has to build up in stages and tells parents how many of the lessons their child would miss if their current rate of attendance continues. The Attendance Champion then asks the parents how likely they think it will be that their child will be able to catch up on lost learning so they can keep up with other children in the class. Feedback from the child and work from the class are often considered. For example, parents hearing that their child is very keen to learn to read and write, can motivate their parents to bring them to school more regularly. Parents are asked what they think the main problems are in bringing their children to school every day (such as routines in the house/in need of early help). The attendance team then meets to consider how they can best help. Care is taken to identify root causes and to develop an individualised response.



# A sense of belonging

All the schools talked about the importance of pupils feeling a sense of belonging. In the section above it can be seen that this sense is often extended to whole families. In one secondary setting there has been a lot of work with the pupils on protected characteristics, ensuring that LGBTQ+ pupils feel supported and comfortable. This has led to pupils being open about their gender and sexuality – there is a culture of ‘celebrate not tolerate.’ The school has an email address for parents and pupils to contact if they have concerns about their own or another’s safety. The school’s vision is to make sure that all pupils feel wanted and valued.

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Much is done to develop an enriching curriculum that pupils enjoy and to make sure that school is somewhere children want to be

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Another setting ensures that pupils are invested in their work. If pupils have been away for two weeks, then they have a half day ‘reboot’ with a member of staff to re-induct them into school life rather than the stress of going back to lessons immediately and feeling lost with the work. They also operate an after-school intervention in which pupils must catch up with the work missed during their absence.

Many settings use opportunities for pupils to carry out roles of

responsibility which helps to foster a sense of belonging. ‘Pupils feel valued and that they have a voice’ and are keen to come to school. For example in one primary setting: Eco Warriors, School Council, Mental Health Champions, Pupil Worship Committee and celebration assembly each week which the setting try to make it as fun as possible with a theme tune and dancers (including the deputy head teacher) – ‘The children love it. It is a real celebration and has really raised the profile of attendance.’

Much is done to develop an enriching curriculum that pupils enjoy and to make sure that school is somewhere children want to be. Teachers often praise pupils for how well they have learnt something and enthusiastically explain what they are going to be learning the next day. Bespoke targeted interventions are provided for pupils who are new to English (and often new to school), trying to help them make the best possible progress. Several primary schools are focusing on simplifying the curriculum and explicitly teaching vocabulary.

One secondary setting described an unusual approach to Key Stage 4 options in which all pupils take an option GCSE in Year 10 and then have time to do a different one in Year 11. They operate mixed Year 10 and 11 groups. The pupils appreciate doing well



and gain confidence in examination techniques. If they are not initially successful, the pupil can resit in Year 11.

There is a strong approach to improving mental health and well-being. Approaches to help support and understand children and their families are well embedded: such as Thrive and the Trauma Informed approach. One setting holds a mental health workshop and has bookable mental health appointments. Pupils receiving one to one support are matched up with an adult who knows them best so that they have someone to turn to if they have concerns.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for the future to try and change 'intergenerational low expectations;' doing all they can to ensure school is 'happy and safe place for pupils in an area with a lot of families with very difficult lives.'

The use of rewards, which can enhance pupils' sense of belonging if used well, is discussed later.



# Great links between secondary and primary settings

Some secondary settings have effective links with their feeder primary schools. This enables information to be shared when Year 6 pupils move up to secondary school. Some secondary settings use the data about those pupils with poor attendance to plan early induction and interventions. This may include meetings with parents and pupils before they start school to develop relationships and set standards or additional activities in school pre- September to help pupils to feel safe and settled in their new environment. The benefit of such interventions is that pupils know adults who will work with them in Year 7. This helps pupils to feel that they belong. The pupils may enjoy activities which encourage them to come to school at the start of Year 7. Data from primary settings means that attendance teams in secondary settings can be ready to intervene rapidly when any pupil with previous poor attendance show signs of repeating that pattern.

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All schools should work with local communities to help remove the barriers to attendance that families experience

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One setting has identified the 26 pupils in Year 7 who were PA in primary school. Their names were circulated to staff so that staff could encourage these pupils' good attendance. On the second day of absence in Year 7, the first letter is sent parents and parental meetings follow.

Effective links between primary and secondary settings looking at shared families can mean that tactics for working with families can be

agreed across schools to help families overcome barriers to good attendance. If the relationships between schools work especially well it is possible that the workload of attendance teams can be shared. Links between safeguarding leads across primary and secondary settings also supports important knowledge sharing.

Some links between primary and secondary settings are in their infancy. Paragraph 48 of [Working together to improve attendance](#) sets clear expectations for information sharing between schools and other agencies: 'All schools should work with local communities (including voluntary and community groups) to help remove the barriers to attendance that families experience. In some cases, families will experience the same or similar barriers to attendance for multiple children who attend different schools in the area. As such, it is of mutual benefit for such schools to work together where possible. This will be particularly beneficial in supporting transition between feeder schools.'

# Effective analysis and evaluation of attendance data

Systematic analysis of attendance data is a feature of all settings visited, with a strong focus on groups (PP/SEND/PA/SA/ethnicity/classes/year groups etc). Ofsted requires that, 'up-to-date attendance analysis for all groups of pupils' is shared with inspectors by 8am on the first day of inspection. Importantly, this is not just a presentation of data but an analysis of that data. It is helpful to share the analysis with staff. Training, staff meetings and regular newsletters reinforce the importance of good attendance and are designed to help staff secure a deeper understanding of both the typical causes and the negative impact of poor attendance. A key message is that unless there is a clear medical reason for absences - 'it's never just about attendance. It's normally fuelled by something else.' Leaders and staff do all they can to try to find out what is causing the absences from school.

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Training, staff meetings and regular newsletters reinforce the importance of good attendance

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Attendance data is analysed to try and get to the bottom of the key causal factors for any absences, for example by factoring out key groups, such as children missing in education (CME) and term time holidays. This ensures that the work on attendance can be focussed on the most appropriate pupils or groups. For example, focussing on pupils with 92% to 97% attendance in one setting because, 'you can turn those kids round more easily'.

Analysis shows the impact of the setting's work on improving attendance. For example, in one setting the attendance of some ethnic groups is well above the national average. This information drives the work of the attendance team with other groups.

Settings are quick to notice patterns that emerge, such as days of the week and times of the year when attendance typically dips. One secondary setting identified that Black Friday affects attendance (down to 70%). The national pattern of low attendance on a Friday is evident (and in some schools, Monday too). Analysis in one setting shows that PA pupils are more likely to be absent on Tuesday in that school. When one setting in an area has a training day, then the attendance of pupils in other settings can be affected.

This information arms schools with the opportunity to take strategic actions such as planning training days with neighbouring schools, using rewards for specific pupils on specific days, even serving the best school meal of the week on a Friday. In one primary setting pupils receive a bonus point towards an attendance prize if they attend on a Monday and a Friday.



# Governors who interrogate the attendance data, holding leaders to account

Leaders regularly report on attendance at governors' meetings. Governors have the opportunity to scrutinise attendance data and to ask about particular cohorts and groups, making comparisons with local and national figures. Analysis, trends, different groups and patterns emerging are typically looked at very carefully and any reasons why a pupil is not attending well are thoroughly discussed. Where the analysis and evaluation of data is effective, the challenge from governors or trustees is more likely to be impactful. Link governors sometimes support attendance and behaviour panels.

Some governors and trust teams visit schools half termly to check on key performance indicators on attendance. One academy described a company used by the trust which assists the analysis and audit of data as well as offering friendly improvement advice and challenge, asking 'Ofsted style questions.' Governors understand the crucial link between attendance and outcomes.





# Rewards which motivate and the power of 'special days'

Leaders have different approaches to the use of rewards for good attendance. One setting regards good attendance as an expectation and does not reward pupils for their attendance- however, they do make sure that pupils are recognised by staff when they return from absence or when their attendance improves. 'Staff noticing shows pupils you care.' The setting does in common with some others, reset attendance to 100% at the start of every half term. After October half term, every pupil is given a 100% attendance badge- because at that point everyone's attendance is 100%. Pupils must return badges to the head teacher if they are absent for a day.

Some settings regularly consult pupils about what rewards they would like. For example, this resulted in the relaunch of the online rewards shop and merits for attendance. Other examples include:

- A vending machine is extremely popular at one setting. Pupils receive a set number of tokens to put into the machine for good attendance and greatly enjoy choosing a prize from the vending machine.

## “ Leaders have different approaches to the use of rewards for good attendance

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- A free visit to Yorkshire Wildlife park for all pupils with 97% and above attendance.
- Each week pupils with 100% attendance in each class have the opportunity to take home a cake to share with their family.
- Most improved attendance awards; celebrate whole class

awards first, second and third. Top attendance per class is celebrated on Dojo. Half termly awards for the most improved and 100% pupils.

- At one school pupils respond well to initiatives such as: HERO (Here, every day, ready, on time) certificates: Every week the class with the most improved attendance are celebrated, and raffle tickets – try to make sure every child has a chance to win.
- One setting previously had an 100% attendance rewards/special events – but parents did not feel it was fair and it did not have much impact. The setting now focuses more on improving the attendance of 91-93% attenders. The setting finds a points system is helping attendance improve. Pupils are given points when they attend school for a full week and can use their points to save up for a range of prizes (chosen through pupil voice), such as a family trip to a local soft play area, Disney on Ice tickets and Sheffield Steelers tickets.

- Pupils and parents value positive phone calls home.
- Reward for 20 days attendance in a row (improving attender).
- Big end of year prizes for good attendance and behaviour such as a bouncy castle, funfair, seaside visit, cinema day.

## “ Schools have recognised that pupils attend better when specific events are taking place

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Where settings use rewards successfully to improve attendance the common approach is to find out what rewards pupils want and also to ensure equality of opportunity so that rewards are accessible to all.

Settings have recognised that pupils attend better when specific events are taking place. For example, one setting ran a ‘heart start’ day for Year 7. 98% of the year group attended on

that day. Similarly, attendance at Key Stage 4 improves during mock exams. Whilst it is not possible to have ‘special days’ all the time, it would be possible to place individual special days at times where absence was typically high. Training days can also be planned strategically, although it is important that all staff have the opportunity to attend the training day, if for example it is calendared to match a religious festival.



# Effective joint working in trusts, with the local authority and other agencies

Settings value the contributions of the attendance and inclusion team at half termly meetings. Leaders describe great relationships and attendance teams which provide support and challenge. One leader said, 'they make sure we are doing the right things.' The team take on cases, attend family meetings, broker good relationships and send letters. In some cases this has resulted in an upturn in attendance. Some settings have found that the Family Intervention Service (FIS) has had a positive impact in solving specific family's issues.

There tends to be a very well-coordinated approach for all attendance leads working in a particular trust, often with an overall trust lead for attendance. They have ample opportunity to share good practice and refine systems and procedures. For example, one trust is unpicking why SEND attendance is poorer in some settings and learning from settings that are bucking the trend. School leaders value the challenge and support of trust leaders for attendance and in particular the detailed knowledge they bring to managing attendance.





# Questions you might want to ask about attendance

1. Have you implemented the changes from [Working together to improve attendance](#)?
2. Do you have an up-to-date attendance policy? Does it represent what actually happens in managing attendance?
3. Do you have a clear strategic plan of action to improve attendance?
4. Do you have a Senior Attendance Champion? Is the champion known to staff, pupils and parents?
5. Does your attendance team have sufficient capacity? Is this team known and accessible to staff, pupils and parents?
6. Does every member of staff in your setting understand and promote the importance of good attendance?
7. Are tutors and class teachers consistently following the setting's expectations for discussing/sharing attendance information with pupils? How do you know?
8. How do you respond to parents' communications regarding their child's absence? (Do you have a script for responding to parents and avoid parents being able to leave a message?)
9. Is attendance always a priority on the agenda in key meetings?
10. Are the barriers for the most vulnerable attenders identified alongside families and actions taken to address the barriers including 1:1 support, support from other agencies? What evidence do you have of this successful work with the local authority and other agencies?
11. Is the SENDCo focussed on improving the attendance of pupils with SEND?
12. Are the importance of good attendance and the names of successful attenders displayed everywhere for pupils and parents to see? (In your face?)
13. Are there very high expectations for good punctuality reinforced by appropriate family discussions, rewards and sanctions?



14. What is your evidence that very strong relationships are fostered with families which support good attendance?
15. What is your evidence that you engender a sense of belonging in your setting?
16. What is the positive impact of the links with local primary/secondary settings in supporting transition of poor attenders and providing joint support for families?
17. Do you have an effective analysis of absence, persistent absence and severe absence for different groups (boys, girls, disadvantaged, pupils with SEND, different ethnic groups, year groups) compared to local and national averages? Do governors ask challenging questions about the attendance of different groups as a result of this analysis?
18. Can you demonstrate- for example through case studies- the impact of your work to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence?
19. Have you asked pupils about the impact of rewards? Do you know what rewards they value? Is winning an attendance prize accessible for all?
20. Do you celebrate/ talk about good attendance every day, every week?



## Appendix 1:

# Setting Visits

Alphabetical list of settings visited:

### **Primary**

E-Act Pathways  
Greengate Lane  
Meynell Primary  
Owler Brook  
Porter Croft  
Springfield  
Woodthorpe

### **Secondary**

Ecclesfield  
Fir Vale  
High Storrs  
Hinde House  
Mercia  
Westfield

## Appendix 2:

# Review Questions

The questions asked in the review:

1. Which features or practice work the best in promoting good attendance? How do you know? How do you analyse the attendance data e.g. by group? How do you respond to the analysis?
2. How do you foster the culture of good attendance including with staff, parents and pupils? (Beyond the percentages? Training?)
3. What systems of pastoral support do you provide to pupils who are persistently or severely absent?
4. How do you quality assure what staff do in consistently applying your attendance policy?
5. How do you prevent poor punctuality having an impact on attendance?
6. How are you implementing the changes to Working together to improve school attendance? Do you have a Senior Attendance Champion? How do they work? What is their profile in the school?
7. How do governors understand the need for good attendance and monitor the school's attendance?
8. What is the positive impact of locally available support services – for example attendance and inclusion officers? Fines? Fixed penalty notices?
9. How might other agencies/ services provide support? E.g. local council, health, early help, family intervention services, family hubs (for 0-5 years)
10. Do pupils have a role in promoting good attendance? Rewards?
11. What is the impact on systems and resources of higher volumes of persistent absence and critical absence- resources of Sheffield and those of the setting? Do higher volumes mean that the threshold at which attendance can be managed is raised- so pupils whose absence would have been managed previously is now not managed?
12. What could be better?

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