



Department
for Education

Bradford Attendance Network

The new guidance – schools and local authorities

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24th June 2022

Overview of the morning

Agenda:

9.30	Introductions
9.35 -10.15	Overview of the new guidance
10.15 – 10.45	Activity determining the challenges for schools
10.45 – 11.15	Coffee
11.15 – 11.45	Activity determining the opportunities for partnership working with the LA
11.45 -12.15	Updates and next steps
12.15 – 12.30	Questions and close.

Purpose of the morning

An opportunity to share and reflect on the new guidance and begin to co-construct new ways of working to ensure effective partnerships to impact on children and families with poor attendance.

Overview

On 6 May 2022, the Department for Education released new non-statutory guidance [“Working together to improve school attendance”](#) to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support.

To do this, the guidance focusses on managing attendance by:

- **Preventing** patterns of absence from developing by promoting good attendance
- **Intervening early** by using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent and working with families to remove the barriers to attendance
- **Targeting support for persistent and severe absentees** with all local partners working together to reengage pupils.

Following public consultation earlier this year, and subject to Parliament, the Secretary of State has committed to this guidance becoming statutory when parliamentary time allows (this will be no sooner than September 2023).

Future school attendance system

To ensure a real difference for pupils and families, we need:

1. **Schools to proactively manage attendance**, spot patterns and act as quickly as possible
2. **More accurate data** for individual pupils, schools, cohorts and areas of the country sooner to facilitate that
3. **Evidence based interventions** that schools can make use of when they spot a particular problem
4. **Attendance expertise in schools and LAs** to provide the 1-2-1 support pupils need
5. **Local authorities to proactively remove out of school barriers to attendance** and working with schools to provide access to support/targeted intervention

What does the new guidance cover?

The guidance is split in 8 main sections:

1. The importance of school attendance
2. Expectations of schools
3. Expectations of academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools
4. Expectations of local authorities
5. Persistent and severe absence
6. Attendance legal intervention
7. Contents of the admissions register ('the schools roll')
8. Contents of the attendance register

What does this mean for schools?

Every school will be required to:

1. Develop and maintain a whole school **culture** that promotes the benefits of high attendance
2. Have a clear school attendance **policy** which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand published on their website
3. Accurately complete admission and attendance **registers** and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence
4. Regularly analyse attendance and absence **data** to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
5. Build strong relationships with **families**, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
6. **Support** for pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities
7. **Share** information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

1) Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance

- Make attendance central to school's vision
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider improvement
- Have a dedicated senior champion on the school's leadership team
- Resource attendance support appropriately
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life
- Continuously work to improve attendance
- Recognise children missing education can be a vital safeguarding warning

Ofsted : Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence report. Feb 2022.

‘Schools that improve attendance from a low baseline, maintain high levels of attendance and minimise persistent absence all have different starting points and take slightly different approaches. However, these approaches tend to have a number of features in common. They can best be summarised as ‘Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate’.

2) Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand

A school's policy needs to include:

- Clear set expectations for parents
- Day to day processes for managing attendance
- Name/ contact details of senior champion and pastoral staff
- How good attendance will be incentivised
- How the school will use its data to target improvement efforts
- How the school will support persistently and severely absent pupils
- When fixed penalty notices and other legal interventions will be used

3) Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence

- Maintain the admission register in line with regulations
- Accurately record in the attendance register in line with regulations
- Retain registers for 3 years from date of entry
- Only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances
- Set clear day to day processes for following up absences
- Regularly update parents on their child's attendance and absence

4) Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns
- Provide regular reports to class or form teachers to facilitate discussions
- Identify pupils who need support
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data
- Benchmark against local, regional and national levels
- Devise strategies based on the data
- Monitor the impact of your improvement work

5) Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them

- Listen to and understand the barriers to attendance when pupils are absent
- Support pupils and parents to address any in-school barriers
- Work with the LA and other local partners to support families with out of school barriers
- Intensify support where absence does not improve or earlier support is not engaged with

6) Support for pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

- Have sensitive conversations and develop good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions
- Work with parents to develop specific support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities
- Establish strategies to remove in school barriers for these pupils
- Ensure joined-up pastoral care is in place
- Consider whether a time limited phased return would be appropriate
- Ensure regular data monitoring

7) Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe

- Work with local community groups and other schools in the area, particularly important at points of transition
- Make the necessary returns to the local authority and work jointly with your LA point of contact when needed
- Sign up to share data electronically

What does this mean for trusts and governing bodies?

All trustees and governors will be required to:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement in their school(s) by regularly reviewing data, discussing and challenging trends and helping leaders to focus their improvement efforts
- Set high expectations of the school's leadership and hold them to account for delivery against them
- Ensure high aspirations are maintained for all pupils but that processes and support are adapted to individual needs of particular types of pupils (inc. all vulnerable children)
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance
- For schools struggling with attendance, work with the leadership to agree a comprehensive attendance action plan

MATs and federation trustees and governors will also be required to:

- Share effective practice on attendance across their schools

All schools can expect their LA to:

- Provide them with a named contact in the school attendance support team
- Hold termly Targeting Support Meetings
- Offer regular opportunities for schools to come together to share effective practice
- Work with them to provide support for pupils who are persistently absent or at risk of becoming so
- Agree a joint approach with them for every severely absent pupil
- Take forward attendance legal intervention

What does this mean for local authorities?

Local authorities are expected to:

- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance
- Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type).
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance

This strategy should prioritise pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support to and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.

To do this, local authorities are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of attendance and understand how attendance improvement is everyone's business.
- Make attendance a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Use attendance data from all schools in the area to identify the pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods/ towns on which to focus efforts.
- Use this analysis to set a clear vision for improving attendance across the geographical area, underpinned by tangible short and longer term aims and priorities for improving attendance for particular cohorts of pupils identified.
- All appropriate frontline operational staff in attendance, associated teams and local partners must understand their role in delivering this strategy and working together.
- Evaluate and review this strategy regularly. This should involve senior officers and lead members.

School Attendance Support Team

All local authorities are expected to have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in its area (regardless of type).

DfE has not prescribed what form or delivery model this team must follow, but these teams are expected to provide the following 4 core functions free of charge to all schools in their area:

- Communication and advice
- Targeting Support Meetings
- Multi-disciplinary support for families
- Legal intervention

These core function should not be traded or require service level agreements from schools.

Local authorities can continue to trade other elements of their attendance management and improvement to schools and trusts, for example delivery of school level responsibilities or training for attendance staff.

School Attendance Support Team

Communication and advice

- Provide every school with a named point of contact in the AST to support with queries and advice.
- Make clear on how schools, the AST and other partners should work together to provide voluntary and/or formal support for pupils and families.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Targeting Support meetings

- Hold a termly Targeting Support Meeting with every school in their area to identify pupils who need support with removing barriers to attendance.
- Assist schools to identify areas to focus on in their school policies through analysing their data.
- If local authorities already have regular meetings with schools (such as 'team around the school' meetings) the school, AST, and other relevant partners may join this meeting as the targeting support meetings rather than having a separate meeting.

School Attendance Support Team

Multi-disciplinary support for families

- Ensure staff are appropriately trained to understand the importance of attendance, and foster a collaborative culture across early help services
- Build strong relationships with a range of services such as health, youth justice, voluntary and community sector, early help, children's social care, educational psychologists, housing support to help with specific barriers to attendance
- Work jointly with all local partners to offer multi-agency support to pupils who need it, including acting as lead practitioner where the best placed service is an LA one.
- Build effective data sharing opportunities with different partners as part of the overall data sharing/ governance arrangements to ensure a joined-up approach

School Attendance Support Team

Legal intervention

- Work with schools to formalise support or take forward legal action where voluntary support does not work
- Understand and make use of the full range of legal intervention measures such as education supervision orders
- Secure effective working with statutory children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe.

School Attendance Support Team

*“If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, **it is likely to constitute neglect.**”*

School Attendance Support Team

Josh MacAlister Review of Children's Social Care May 2022

For families who need help, there must be a fundamental shift in the children's social care response, so that they receive more responsive, respectful, and effective support. To reduce the number of handovers between services, we recommend introducing one category of "Family Help" to replace "targeted early help" and "child in need" work, providing families with much higher levels of meaningful support. This new service would be delivered by multidisciplinary teams made up of professionals such as family support workers, domestic abuse workers and mental health practitioners - who, alongside social workers, would provide support and cut down on referring families onto other services. These Family Help Teams would be based in community settings, like schools and family hubs, that children and families know and trust, and the service they offer will be tailored to meet neighbourhood needs based on a robust needs assessment and feedback from the families.

Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School Head

To build on the progress made by virtual school heads since the expansion of the programme, local authorities are expected to:

- Set aspirational targets for attendance of pupils with a social worker
- Secure the regular attendance of pupils looked-after as their corporate parent
- Provide support and advice to previously looked-after children
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School

To facilitate this, schools are expected to inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school.

The big changes

1. **Clarity of expectation:** schools, trusts and local authorities will all have clearly defined statutory roles for the first time, set out in a clear table of responsibilities
2. **Earlier intervention:** Schools will have legal responsibilities to proactively improve attendance for the first time (beyond existing requirements to record accurately) underpinned by timelier sharing of attendance data
3. **Support first:** All pupils and parents no matter where they live in the country will have clear expectations from their school, be informed about their child's attendance and have access to early intervention and **support first before any legal action** if it becomes problematic
4. **Targeted whole family support:** Attendance teams in LAs will work in tandem with early help to provide a whole-family response with a single assessment, plan and lead practitioner
5. **Independent schools:** data will be collected for the first time, and will receive the same support from LAs (which currently happens in some LAs but not others)

What happens next?

Additional clarity on funding, strategy and legislation.

For example, the department has opened consultation on:

- 1.Modernising recording in the attendance and admission registers through a replacement for the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 2.Draft thresholds for the new national framework for the use of fixed penalty notices for absence,

The consultation will run for 6 weeks, closing on 29th July.

The draft regulations, consultation document and a mock up of what would change in the guidance can be found here:

[School registers and national thresholds for legal intervention - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#)

Diamond 9 activity

The new expectations for schools

Can you meet them? Can you share your practice currently or your plans and ideas?

Rank the highest the ones you perceive to be the most challenging

This will help inform the content of future attendance networks, sharing of best practice and Local Authority support.

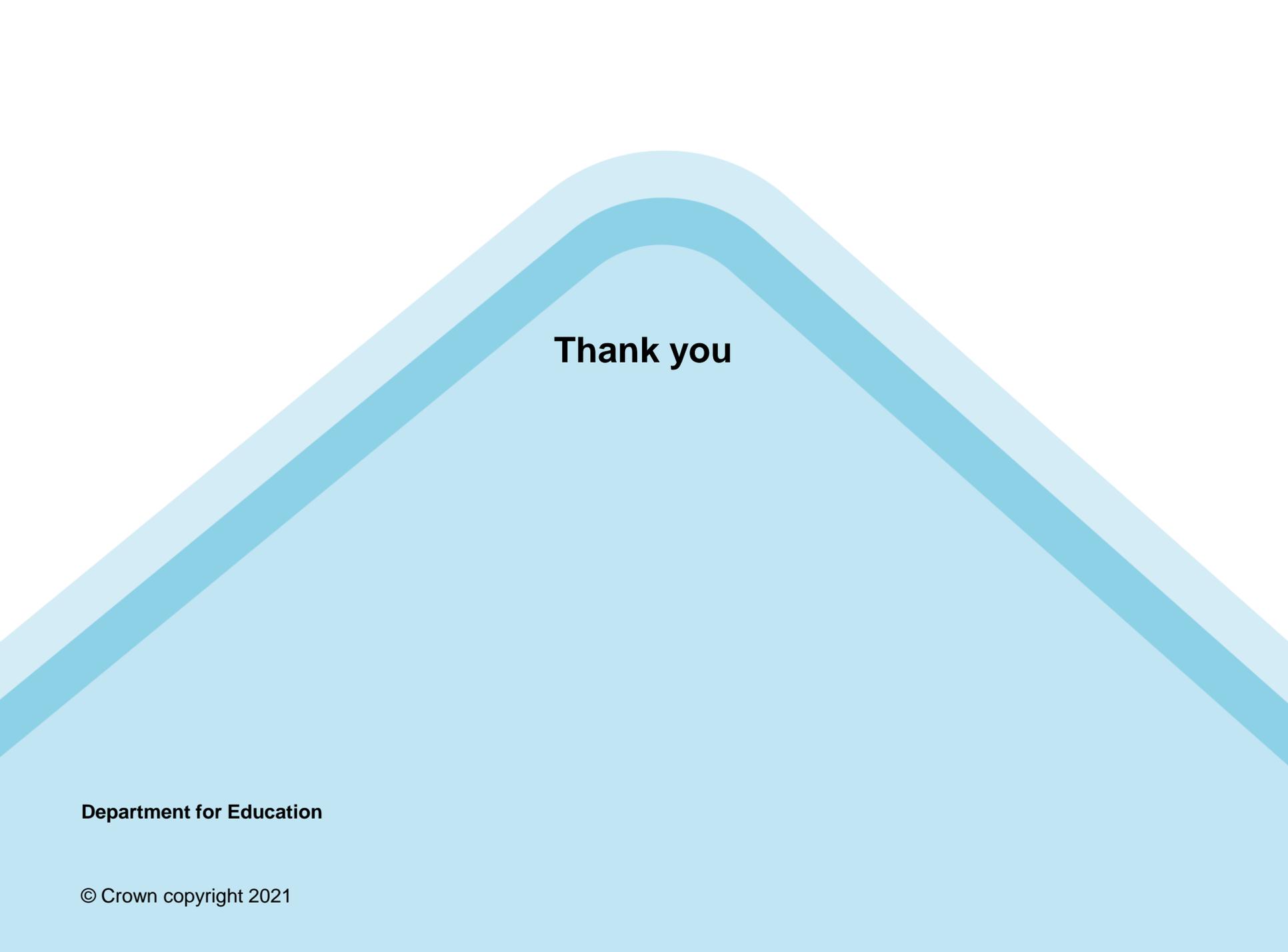
Diamond 9 activity

The new expectations for Local Authorities

Rank the highest the ones you perceive to be the most welcome and the most needed.

This will help inform the content of future attendance networks, Local Authority policy and strategy and Local Authority support, both traded and universal.

Questions?



Thank you

Department for Education

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