

## **Terms of Reference: Termly Support Meetings (TSMs)**

### **Bradford Council – Attendance Support Team (AST)**

**Effective from: August 2025**

#### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

Termly Support Meetings (TSMs) are a statutory requirement introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) through the *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* guidance, which became effective in August 2024. The guidance sets out the expectation that local authorities will hold termly conversations with every school to support a proactive and collaborative approach to improving attendance. In Bradford, TSMs are facilitated by the Attendance Support Team (AST) and are designed to provide a structured, purposeful space for schools and the local authority to work together to identify attendance concerns early, agree joint actions, and ensure appropriate support is in place for pupils who are persistently or severely absent, or at risk of becoming so.

#### **2. Scope and Application**

This Terms of Reference applies to all schools within the Bradford local authority area. Each school is expected to participate in one TSM per academic term—Autumn, Spring, and Summer. The meetings are intended to be strategic in nature, focusing on whole-school attendance trends, the identification of pupils requiring targeted support, and the coordination of multi-agency responses where necessary. TSMs are not intended to be operational reviews of every pupil, nor are they inspections or audits. Instead, they are collaborative, data-informed discussions that support school improvement and pupil welfare.

#### **3. Objectives**

The primary objective of the TSM is to strengthen the partnership between schools and the local authority in addressing attendance issues. Through these meetings, schools will have the opportunity to reflect on their attendance data, identify patterns or emerging concerns, and receive tailored advice and support from their linked AST Officer.

The meetings also serve to ensure that schools are aware of and can access additional services where appropriate, including statutory and voluntary sector support. By engaging in regular, structured dialogue, schools and the local authority can work together to reduce persistent absence, improve outcomes for pupils, and promote a culture of high attendance across the district.

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Each TSM is facilitated by the school's linked AST Officer, who is responsible for coordinating the meeting, preparing relevant data, and supporting the school in identifying and implementing appropriate actions.

The school is expected to be represented by its Senior Attendance Lead, typically a member of the senior leadership team with strategic oversight of attendance. Depending on the school's context and the focus of the meeting, additional staff such

as the designated safeguarding lead, SENCO, attendance officers, pastoral leads, or family liaison workers may also attend.

Where appropriate, a governor or trustee with responsibility for attendance may be invited to participate. In some cases, representatives from the Attendance Improvement Team or other multi-agency partners such as the Family Hub/Early Help or School Home Support (SHS) may be involved, with the school's prior agreement.

## **5. Scheduling and Format**

TSMs are scheduled once per term, with dates agreed in advance between the school and the AST Officer. It is recommended that the date of the next meeting is confirmed at the conclusion of each TSM to ensure continuity and availability. Meetings may be held in person or virtually, depending on the preferences and availability of participants.

The format of the meeting is flexible and should be adapted to suit the needs of the school, while maintaining a clear focus on the core objectives of the TSM.

**TIP:** Reserving a suitable room or space within the school will help minimise distractions and aid confidential discussions, help the TSM progress smoothly.

## **6. Meeting Content and Structure**

The content of each TSM will be shaped by the school's current attendance profile and any specific issues or priorities identified in advance. The meeting will typically begin with a review of actions agreed at the previous TSM, followed by an analysis of whole-school attendance data, including trends and comparisons with local benchmarks. The discussion will then focus on pupils who are persistently or severely absent, with the aim of identifying barriers to attendance and agreeing joint actions to address them.

Where appropriate, the meeting may also explore wider school policies or practices that impact attendance and consider whether additional support from other services is required. The meeting will conclude with a summary of agreed actions and next steps.

**TIP:** Having access to the school's MIS system during the TSM can help answer questions quickly and reduce the length of the TSM.

## **7. Data Sharing and Confidentiality**

Schools are encouraged to share relevant cohort-level data in advance of the meeting to support effective preparation and discussion. While individual pupil cases may be discussed during the meeting, schools should not send lists of pupils in advance or provide written records of named pupils to the AST Officer.

All data shared during the TSM must be handled in accordance with GDPR and local information sharing protocols. The AST Officer will not retain or remove any personal data from the school unless explicitly agreed and necessary for follow-up support.

## 8. Recording and Follow-Up

The AST Officer will complete a standard TSM record form during or immediately after the meeting, capturing the key points of discussion and the actions agreed. This record will be shared with the school for their reference and to support internal follow-up.

Schools may also choose to record actions using their own systems, particularly where they relate to individual pupils or internal processes. The TSM record may be used by the local authority to evidence engagement and support, but it is not intended to be a formal inspection or compliance document.

**Did you know:** The support of the AST does not start and stop with the TSM. The link AST Officer is available outside of TSMs to provide information, advice and guidance on attendance matters.

## 9. Rescheduling and Cancellations

If a school is unable to attend a scheduled TSM, they should notify their AST Officer as early as possible. While it may not always be possible to reschedule the meeting within the same term due to capacity constraints, the AST will make every effort to accommodate the school's needs and ensure that the meeting takes place at the earliest available opportunity.

## 10. Cost and Support Offer

There is no cost to schools for participating in TSMs. They are part of the core attendance support offer that local authorities are expected to provide to all schools, regardless of type. The TSM is intended to be a high-value, low-burden intervention that supports schools in achieving their attendance goals and improving outcomes for pupils.

## 11. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Following each TSM, schools will be invited to provide feedback on the meeting process and content. This feedback will be used by the AST to review and refine the TSM model, ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of schools and delivers meaningful impact. Schools are encouraged to engage with this process to help shape the future development of attendance support in Bradford.

## 12. Supporting Guidance

This Terms of Reference should be read alongside the Department for Education's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* guidance (August 2024), as well as the accompanying summary table of responsibilities and any local guidance issued by the Bradford Attendance Support Team.

Helpful Links:

[Bradford Schools Online - Attendance Support Team](#)

Bradford Schools Online - Attendance

Department for Education - Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Department for Education – TSM Webinar (YouTube)

Appendix A – Bradford TSM Recording Document – Available via Bradford Schools Online: <https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/content/education-safeguarding/attendance/attendance-support-team>