



# Pupil Attendance in schools

-what governors need to know

25<sup>th</sup> May 2023



Steve Barker & Linda Waghorn

[www.bettermgovernor.co.uk](http://www.bettermgovernor.co.uk)

# Aims of this session:



to clarify why schools should have an effective attendance strategy in place that guides policy and practice;



to explore the latest DfE guidance on attendance;



to focus on how governors should monitor attendance and ensure good attendance is promoted.

# Why attendance matters

Psalm 1:3

*Being around teachers and friends in a school or college environment is the best way for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Time in school also keeps children safe and provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care.*

*That's why school attendance is so important and why the Government is committed to tackling the issues that might cause some children to miss school unnecessarily.*

DfE Blog February 2023

# The impact of attendance:

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Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence than lower attainers

KS2 below ARE pupils in 2019 had absence of 4.7%. For those reaching ARE it was 3.5% and those exceeding 2.7%

Pupils with 100% attendance at KS4 -83.7% achieved grade 9-4 in English and Maths v 35% for those who were persistently absent.

# Why attendance strategy is crucial:

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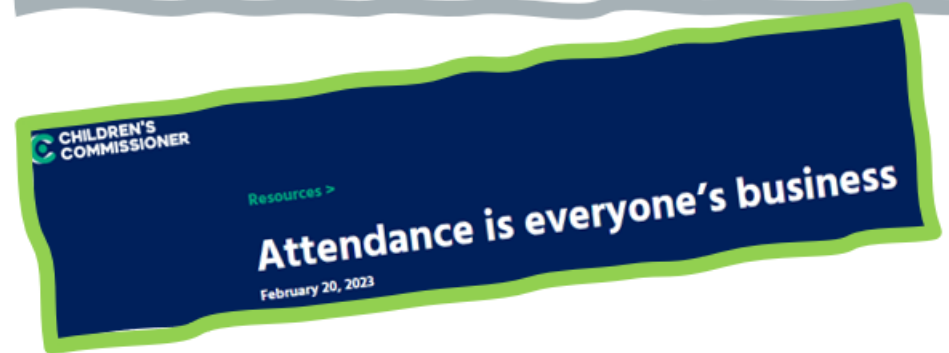
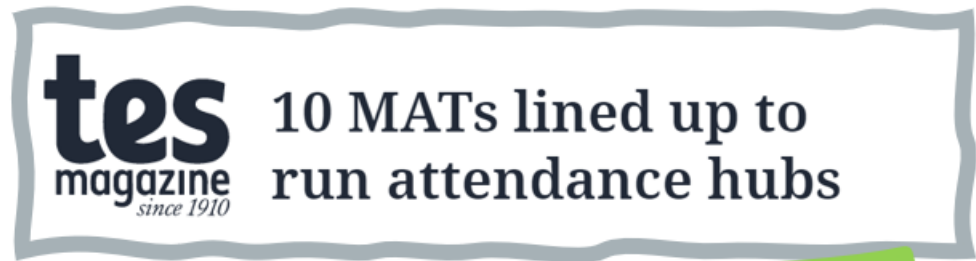
- attendance is dynamic and influenced by a variety of factors;
- schools need a plan, responsive to attendance emerging issues and concerns;
- strong attendance, alongside good behaviour makes it central to vision, values, ethos and day-to-day life in schools;
- if a child is not in school, they are not learning and may not be safe!

# Attendance in the news!



One in five pupils in England were persistently absent in past school year

Covid and other illnesses main reasons for attendance drop compared with pre-pandemic, according to DfE figures



# The focus of governance:

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- to know attendance levels in our own schools;
- to be aware of trends over time;
- to know how our schools compare to others;
- to understand the reasons;
- to know what our schools are doing to address attendance concerns.



# DfE Guidance:

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## **Working together to improve school attendance**

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

Published: May 2022

Applies from: September 2022

- treating the root causes of absence;
- removing barriers to attendance;
- Both need collaborative working between schools and local partners.



# DfE Expectations:

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Expect

Monitor

Listen and understand

Facilitate support

Formalise support

Enforce

# DfE Expectations of governance:

## Section 3: Expectations of academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools

51. Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. We therefore expect all trusts and governing bodies to:

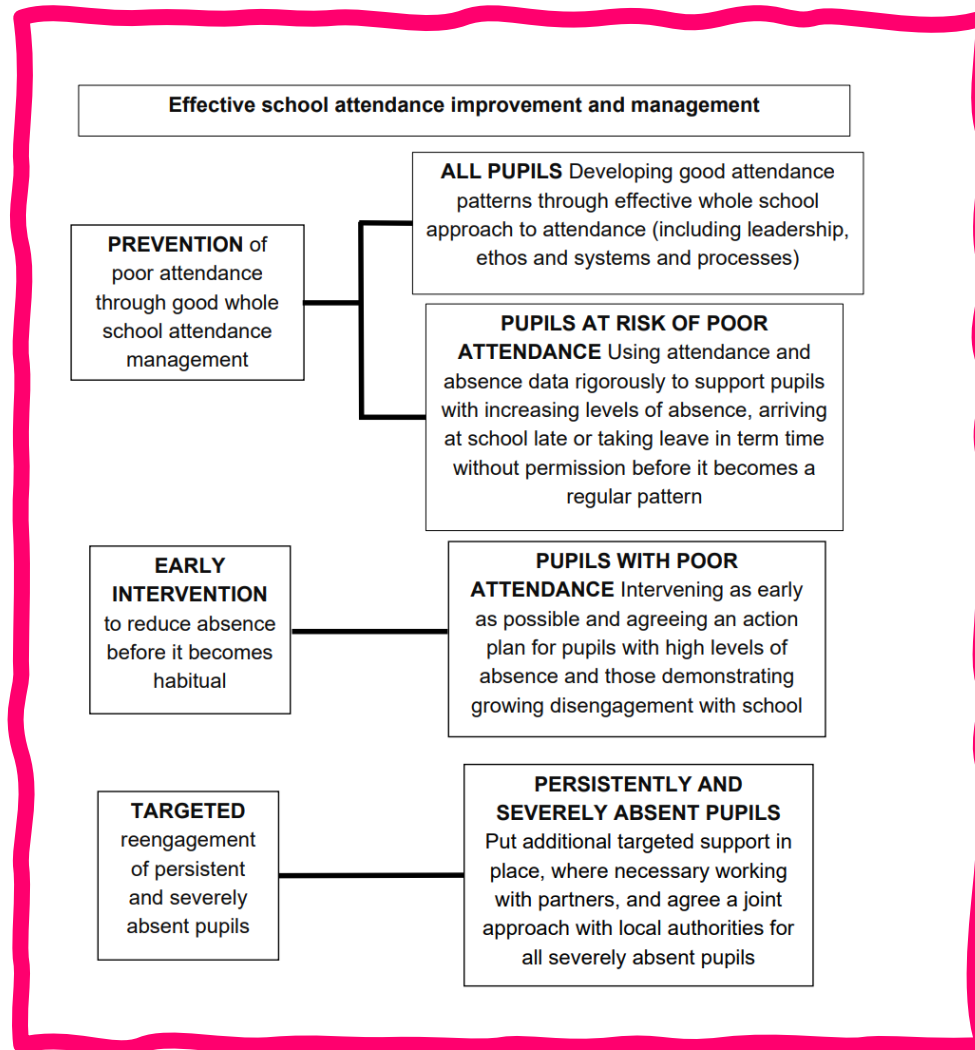
- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

52. Multi-academy trust boards and governing bodies of federations are also expected to:

- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.

53. Whilst it is expected that all trusts and governing bodies will provide support covering these areas, the approach to delivering it should be proportionate to the size of the group of schools and type of school(s) within it.

# DfE Expectations of schools:



# The latest data:

## Headline facts and figures - 2023

Overall absence rate

**7.2%**

during week commencing 1 May 2023

Authorised absence rate

**4.2%**

during week commencing 1 May 2023

Unauthorised absence rate

**3.0%**

during week commencing 1 May 2023

Overall absence rate

**7.6%**

academic year to date

Authorised absence rate

**5.2%**

academic year to date

Unauthorised absence rate

**2.4%**

academic year to date

Persistent absence rate

**22.3%**



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# The latest data (2):

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## Headline facts and figures - 2022/23

Overall absence rate

**7.5%**

▶ [What is this?](#)

Percentage of persistent  
absentees (10% or more  
missed)

**24.2%**

▶ [What is this?](#)

Absence rates have increased in Autumn term 2022/23

# What lies behind the data:

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- persistent absence;
- illness is still a factor;
- anxiety & mental health concerns;
- Friday absence;
- valuing of education;

and for info.....

- teachers' strike days are precluded from the data;

# New DfE Guidance ( 18<sup>th</sup> May)



## Persistent absence for unauthorised other reasons:

Who is at risk?

May 2023

GOV.UK

[Home](#) > [Education, training and skills](#)

News story

### Government to tackle post pandemic absence rates with new support

Successful attendance programmes expanded by Government to get more children into school.

From: [Department for Education](#) and [The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP](#)

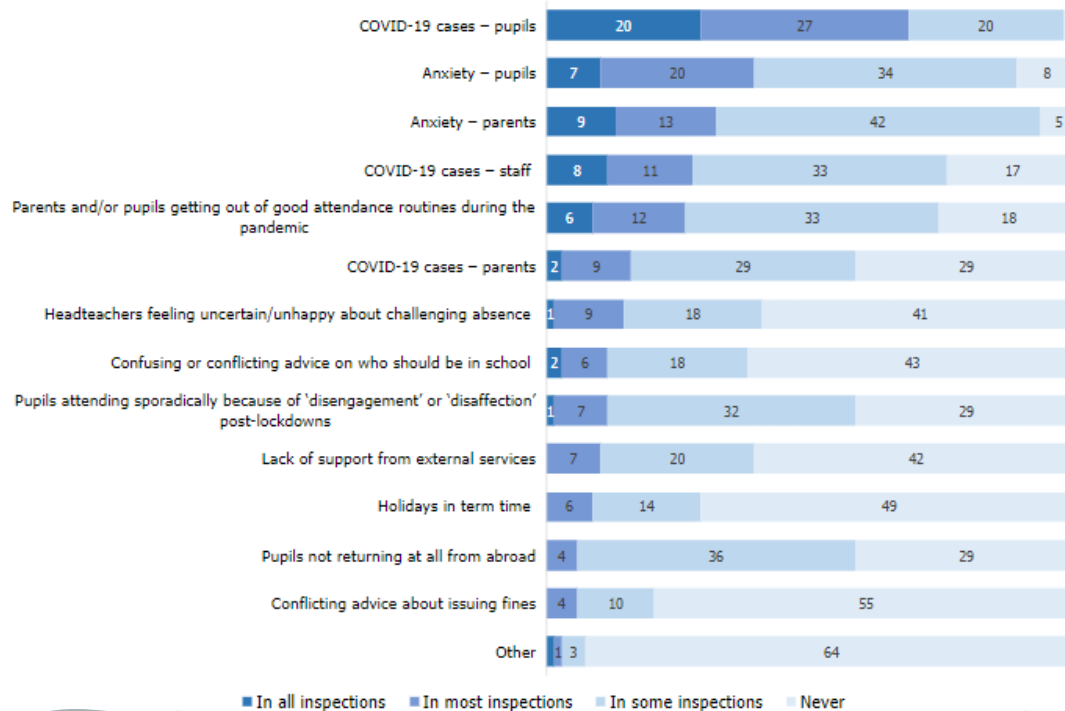
Published 18 May 2023





# An insight into Ofsted's view:

How often have you heard from leaders that the following are contributory factors to higher-than-normal absences this term?



# Questions governors could be asked:

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- How has your school improved since its last inspection?
- How has Covid impacted on your school?
- ....and how has your school responded?
- How does your school ensure pupils learn about, and are protected from, the threat on peer-on-peer sexual abuse?
- How does your school tackle workload concerns?

# Mental Health and Pupil Absence:

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## **Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance**

February 2023

- many pupils experience social, emotional or mental health issues;
- this has increased since the pandemic;
- high expectations should be set for pupils anxious about attending schools.



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# Common Barriers to good attendance

- Parents of young children don't think it's important;
- poor parental experiences of school;
- Misunderstanding data (90% is good in a test, it is not good for attendance)
- lack of basic home routines;
- family habits;
- young carer;
- mental health issues
- financial issues.

# Removing barriers

- listening to parents/carers;
- listening to pupils;
- the 'right' people to have conversations;
- noticing patterns;
- high ambition for all;
- role of governance;
- reviewing school practices and addressing weaknesses.

  
Ofsted  
raising standards  
improving lives

Research and analysis

**Securing good attendance and tackling  
persistent absence**

Published 7 February 2022

# Summary:

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- remember attendance is not just about data;
- know your school's context;
- know how your school is improving attendance;
- Ask what more could be done.

# Any Questions?

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# References:

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- DfE – Working together to improve attendance  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- DfE latest data  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>
- DfE Persistent absence  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/persistent-absence-for-unauthorised-other-reasons-who-is-at-risk>



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Thank you

