

TACKLING THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CRISIS

Guide for education colleagues

The problem

- Persistent absence has become a growing issue, with a sharp rise since 2015 and over 150,000 children severely absent post-pandemic.
- Absence rates are particularly high for children with SEN(D), from ethnic minority backgrounds, or growing up in the North of England.
- Failure to effectively work with families and health and social services leads to delays in identifying and supporting pupils at risk of persistent absence.

What you can do as school staff

- **Adopt a whole-school, relational approach** to attendance, fostering safety, belonging, and trust as foundations for engagement.
- **Use early data and screening tools** (e.g., Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), attendance dashboards) to identify at-risk pupils and plan targeted support. EYFSP for example is strongly predictive of attendance at secondary school.
- **Develop individualised support plans** through family engagement, staff training, and trauma-informed practices.
- **Collaborate with multi-agency teams** including Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), social care, youth workers, and the local authority to support pupils, especially those from high-risk groups (e.g., young carers, autistic children, and those involved in social care).

Evidence-based insights

In 2020, approximately **250,000** children were missing from education.

At Key Stage 4, students with **no absences** are more than **twice as likely** to gain grades **9-4** in English and maths (**83.7%**) compared with **persistently absent** students (**35.6%**).

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

Bradford SAFE Taskforce

A DfE-funded initiative leveraging schools' leadership, facilities, and local networks to deliver timely and effective support to children vulnerable to violence. It has led to improved attendance for nearly half of participating pupils and significantly reduced school suspensions.

North Birkenhead Cradle to Career Attendance Pilot

A pilot programme where small panels discuss key problems in identifying pupils with unmet needs within schools, leading to attendance problems. Identified problems were met with small-scale interventions and solutions.

Attendance Matters - Tees Valley Education

A multi-academy trust which takes a trauma-informed, whole-community approach to improving attendance and wellbeing, offering personalised, multi-agency support to pupils and families - especially those facing disadvantage or adversity.

The R place pilot

A pilot alternative provision programme in Liverpool for 13–16-year-olds with social, emotional, and mental health needs, offering a nurturing, low-stress environment to re-engage students with long-term non-attendance in education.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider implementing these practices into your school.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion in your school about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.