

NEWSLETTER

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT SERVICE

“ATTENDANCE IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS”



WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the Attendance Update. This update will provide you with key attendance information, updates from the Strategic Group for Improving Attendance and inform you about what is coming up. The newsletter will be published each half term.

STRATEGIC GROUP

A working group of headteachers was established in the Summer Term (21/22) to support development of new functions following the publication of the DfE's working together to improve school attendance guidance. Since September, the working group has evolved into a Strategic Group, encompassing a wider range of partners who share our commitment to improving school attendance. In addition to headteachers, we have welcomed partners such as the Police, Early Help, Lead for Neglect, Children's Social Care and Service Manager for Mental Health Teams in Schools.





PURPOSE & PRIORITIES

The purpose of the Strategic Group is to develop an Attendance Strategy to help the Local Authority, Schools, Settings and other services to understand what we need to do to work in a more coherent way, making the best use of resources available in order to ensure that:

- All children and young people can make the most of the opportunities provided by attending school;
- Systems are developed to provide the LA with accurate and contemporaneous attendance data;
- Data is used to identify patterns and trends and systems are responsive to these supporting schools to intervene early and prevent escalation of concerns;
- Through training and guidance, the workforce understands the LA's responsibilities for school attendance, they know who to contact for support and are confident to address concerns about school attendance;
- Responses to concerns about pupil absence at an individual, institutional, and locality level are co-ordinated across teams. Schools, parents, and children are clear about what support is on offer as well as their responsibilities.

The agreed priorities that we have collectively agreed upon are:

- Relationships & Communication
- Effective Intervention
- Systems & Data
- Workforce Development

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Since our initial meeting, we have successfully:

- Completed the draft action plan outlining our strategies and objectives;
- Drafted a survey (*more information below*) for parents/carers, schools and children & young people to help us gather valuable insights.

KEY ACTIVITIES

The key activities planned are:

- Convene a Task & Finish group dedicated to finalising the survey for distribution
- Meet with Attendance Leads across Walsall in order to plan an Attendance Network Session (*more information below*).



WONDE

Walsall is delighted to announce that Capita One is now working with Wonde to be able to connect and update our platform with the information inside schools' MIS systems SIMS, BROMCOMM etc.

A letter to schools has been circulated providing further information about WONDE and next steps.

If you have any queries, please contact Gretle.vanderMerwe@walsall.gov.uk

ATTENDANCE HUBS FOR SCHOOLS: APPLICATION RE-LAUNCH

The DfE have reopened the application process for schools to express an interest in joining an attendance hub. As you may recall, attendance hubs are led by senior leaders in schools with strong attendance practice from around the country. These schools share, in-depth, their successful strategies and resources for improving attendance. In return, supported schools are expected to revisit and revise their approach to managing attendance, and join half-termly virtual hub meetings to share practice, and discuss progress, and challenges.

For any schools wishing to express an interest in this, here is the application form <https://forms.office.com/e/w0Ycm4kdkM> and this website link [Attendance hubs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). **The deadline for schools to express an interest in joining a hub is 15/01/24.**



TARGETING SUPPORT MEETINGS - SPRING TERM

Invites have been sent to all schools to book their Spring Term Targeting Support Meeting (TSM).

Thank you to all Schools for the support and positive feedback following the roll out of the Targeting Support Meetings.

REMINDER: IF YOU HAVE NOT YET BOOKED YOUR MEETING, PLEASE DO SO.





WHAT'S COMING UP...

School Attendance Network Meeting

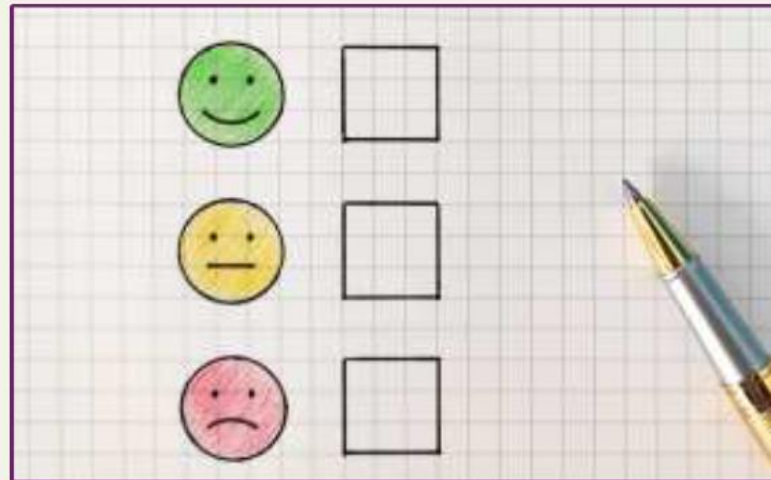
We will be hosting an opportunity for School Attendance Leads to discuss current attendance legislation, national guidance, local guidance, local processes and share good practice. Further details will be released.

Survey

In the Spring Term, we will be launching a survey to enable us to consult with schools, children, parents and carers to understand the barriers as well as enablers to good school attendance and what they need help with to achieve this.

The survey will be for:

1. **All schools** to enable us to identify what the barriers are to improving attendance, and what the more specific reasons are that are provided for absence.
2. **Children & young people** to find out what they enjoy and like about school, what their concerns are, why they might not want to attend, what support they feel is missing and what support they find useful to help them access school. Specific questions for transitioning from Y6 - Y7.
3. **Parent(s)/carer(s)** to find out what they know about attendance and the importance of regular attendance. What they feel are barriers to accessing school and if they know how to access support.



Attendance Campaign

The Government will launch a national attendance communications campaign aimed at parents and carers.

The campaign will take place January-March 2024 and remind families that **moments matter, attendance counts.**

A toolkit is available [here](#) for schools. Please use this resource and support the campaign throughout Spring term.





OTHER NEWS

Working Together to Improve School Attendance

New documents have been added! They now include:

- A 'Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance'
- Annex A: example attendance letters and emails to parents and carers'

[Working together to improve school attendance](#)

The Education Hub – Parent fines for Missing School: What you need to know

The Education Hub has provided guidance for parents to support the understanding of the risk of fines if their child misses school without a good reason.

For further information please visit: [Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Ofsted - Improving School Attendance

Persistent school absence is one of the most significant ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

Read the article here: <https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/16/improvingschool-attendance/>

Watch "An update on attendance with Ofsted and the DfE" on YouTube

Illness & Absence

It is important to remind parents and carers about when it is appropriate for their child to attend school or not due to illness. The NHS have provided clear guidance available via their website at Is my child too ill for school? - [NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

For further information, questions or queries please contact:

School Attendance Service Manager - Robyn Turner - robyn.turner@walsall.gov.uk - 01922 652822

