

KNOWSLEY ATTENDANCE HANDBOOK 2024-2027

A GRADUATED, PARTNERSHIP APPROACH
TO IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

‘Everyday counts’



‘Everyday counts’



Introduction

Why is regular attendance at school important?

Evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key for ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. Missing lessons leaves students vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning, and diminishing their self-confidence.

Good attendance habits must start from the earliest stages of education. We know that children who regularly miss school in Reception class will most likely go on to have poor attendance at secondary school. Research by Universities UK indicates that children with poor attendance are 5 times less likely to achieve 5 strong passes at GCSE, preventing them from going on to higher education or into employment.

We also know that poor attendance at school can lead to poor emotional health and wellbeing. Children and young people, who miss school on a regular basis, can become socially isolated; they can lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Children can feel like they don’t fit in with their peers and this can lead to loneliness. We also know that young people who regularly miss school are at greater risk of anti-social behaviour and are more likely to become victims of crime.

These are not the life outcomes and experiences we want for our children. School is not just about academic success and attainment; it is about learning about the world, about relationships and about ourselves. It is about trying new things, making new friends and finding our place in the world. To miss school is to miss the many, many experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have and the quality of life that we lead.

There is a wide range of international evidence that tells us that children who attend school regularly go on to achieve better outcomes, to live healthier, wealthier and more enriched lives – and we want to make sure we are all doing everything that we can to make that happen for all of our children.

It is true that many children, families and schools in Knowsley have great attendance – we need to do more to celebrate that; we know that there are examples of great practice happening every day in our schools – we must do more to learn from that, and we know that we have some strong partnership arrangements in place that we can strengthen, to really make a difference together.

We believe that by improving attendance we will:

- Ensure more children and young people have a happy and enriched life experience
- Enable children and young people to achieve more at school academically, emotionally and socially
- Overcome some of the challenges we have all faced during and after the pandemic
- Help children build positive, long lasting friendships and lead happy lives
- Improve mental health and wellbeing of children and families
- Reduce child exploitation and abuse, anti-social behaviour and knife crime on our streets
- Help children and families prosper socially and economically
- Increase chances of success in further or higher education or apprenticeships
- Improve employability of young people
- Reduce the demand for support services
- Improve lifestyles and better prepare our young people for adulthood and the world of work

What are our Key Issues?

Children, families, schools and council services have worked hard over recent years to improve attendance in Knowsley schools. Whilst there are many examples of children and young people attending on a daily basis and achieving well, too many students remain persistently absent from our schools. This means that they are missing lessons, enrichment activities and opportunities to build meaningful relationships with their peers and school staff.

Of particular concern is the high rate of persistent absenteeism; the most recent full year data (2022/2023) shows that 21.6% of children in Knowsley primary schools were classed as persistent absentees (the national average was 16.2%); and in secondary schools the figures were 36.3% and 26.5% respectively. For Knowsley special schools the figure is 41.2% compared to a National average of 38.3%.

We know that some of our most vulnerable children with social workers and children with special educational needs are more likely to be absent from school. We know that this is having a detrimental impact on their progress and attainment.

National and local research tells us that there is a strong correlation between poor attendance and under-attainment at school. Missing school for just a few days a month can seriously affect a student's chance of achieving well.



‘Every day we
prepare’

In Knowsley too many young people leave secondary school without the qualifications they need to go on to higher education or employment, for some of these students this is a result of a long legacy of poor attendance at school.

National research indicates that pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment. Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage. Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent. Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Increasing the attendance of all students will undoubtedly lead to improved attainment, narrowing the gap between Knowsley and National performance data.

Impact of the COVID pandemic

The COVID pandemic created huge disruption for children, families, and educators. Attendance at school became more challenging for all. The disruption to learning created by the closure of schools and settings and the creation of remote learning packages is unprecedented. It is important that we work together to overcome the legacy created by the pandemic and make sure all of our children are supported to return to school; have any barriers identified and re engage with learning.

Our Attendance Strategy has been reviewed in Autumn 2024. This is in order to refresh and improve its content following significant National ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)) and local attendance legislation changes, together with service user feedback on the strategy and its graduated response . The Strategy will now cover the next three years from 2024 to 2027 and will direct our work in improving school attendance over that time. One of our guiding principles in developing this strategy has been to build on our existing partnership working with schools, academies, partners and stakeholders to make sure our local approach is not only in line with current government guidance and legislation, but that it recognises the needs of our community and seeks to empower and support them, inspiring confidence to attend school rather than exercising statutory powers to enforce it.

What do we know already?

There are many reasons why a child or young person may be missing school. It is important that professionals, working with families, take the time to understand those reasons; can identify risk and work in a solution focused way to mitigate and overcome these barriers so as to prevent further non attendance and promote the benefits of attending school.

It is also important that, when considering poor attendance, a holistic approach is taken that considers the emotional, social, economic, and academic reasons why a child or young person may be missing school and how, through the support of the school and/or other agencies, barriers to regular attendance may be reduced or removed.

We know that many schools and agencies do this work very effectively; however, our analysis and the outcomes from the commissioned Attendance Behaviour Insights Project (Appendix F) tells us that there is more that we can do to make sure that this approach is consistently applied across the borough.

We believe that when teams and services come together, in a person-centered way, we are likely to use our resources more effectively and instigate long lasting change in behaviours and life experiences.

We know that there are lots of positive examples of good practice in schools, teams and organisations in relation to the management of attendance. However, this work is often not joined up enough to really make a difference for children and families.

We also know that we need to look strategically at the range of services available to schools to support attendance, to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to look for new and innovative ways to work with children and families.

What are we going to do?

Through surveys and conversations with our community we have identified some key priorities to shape our work. Our schools and young people tell us to improve attendance for all students we need to develop:

- A person-centred approach to the identification and management of poor attendance
- A clear and well communicated graduated response built on early intervention: so that children and families get the help they need when they need it regardless of which setting they attend
- A multi-agency approach where partners work with, not against families so that children and families get help from the right person or service at the right time and that attendance isn't just seen as an issue for schools

How are we going to do this?

- Develop model policies, procedures and proformas for schools to adopt to bring a consistent approach to managing attendance at school
- Work with children, families, schools and partners to find new ways to celebrate great attendance
- Introduce a tool kit into our schools that provides practitioners with the resources they need to promote good attendance and intervene quickly when attendance is a cause for concern
- Regularly review our practice guidance in relation to early help and social care practices to make sure that a consistent approach is taken to the management of poor attendance
- Ensure a rolling training offer for school-based staff, Head Teachers, Governors, Health and Care professionals and other key partners so that there is a common appreciation of what we mean by good attendance and how best to secure it
- Develop a communications campaign that helps raise awareness of good attendance and why it is important
- Review our existing universal and service level agreement offers and refresh them to reflect need and meet national expectations
- Utilise the mental health workers in schools team (MHSTs) to ensure that children and young people's wellbeing needs are supported

- Review our safeguarding practices so we understand the risks associated with poor attendance and the escalation processes available when a child or young person is at risk
- Utilise the government's Attendance Mentors Programme to work directly with persistently and severely absent children and their families across Knowsley
- Ensure governance systems and processes are in place to manage key local issues such as the attendance of vulnerable students, and that, where appropriate, alternative delivery models are secured to meet needs of children, families and schools. An example of this would be our, Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group (CLAAG)

The graduated approach to good school attendance

The graduated approach is a framework of staged interventions.

Interventions begin with effective whole-school approaches to managing the attendance of all children.

School policies should promote good attendance, make clear what everyone's roles and responsibilities are and clearly outline what action is taken at each stage so that early intervention can take place. An effective whole-school

approach will include regular monitoring and reviewing of practice and acknowledges that attendance is "everyone's business".

The toolkit outlines the 4 graduated levels of intervention and support:

Level 1 refers to the variety of school-based interventions to celebrate and promote attendance and secure good attendance levels for all

Level 2 deals with early intervention and a family response to early challenges with children's attendance

Level 3 uses targeted intervention and brokering multi-agency support

Level 4 moves on to statutory intervention through the local authority

The toolkit provides guidance and resources to help schools move through the levels in a person-centred way. The local authority provides enhanced support for the non-statutory aspects of the graduated approach.

As part of the offer, we will be working with several teams to create one point of contact to support schools to work directly with families and address their individual needs.

The role of the local authority

The key principle which underpins the Local Authority's procedures for managing attendance is the belief that regular and punctual attendance is the key to academic and social development. This will in turn safeguard vulnerable young people and will improve their life chances.

Attendance and Inclusion therefore are key priorities for our work with children, young people, families, partners and schools to embed the concept of early intervention and prevention and keep children and young people safe.

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure parents fulfil their legal responsibility in respect of their child's education. This is usually through ensuring attendance at school. The Attendance Strategy has an early help and prevention approach at its heart. The introduction of the early help approach ensures that issues and difficulties faced by children and families are identified early and dealt with holistically and in a timely manner by services from across the Local Authority.

The approach aims to build closer co-working relationships with families through early identification by schools and other services. Bespoke models of triage, screening and the delivery of a graduated response will better meet the needs of the children, families and schools in each area of Knowsley.

We will ensure that promoting good school attendance has a high profile within our community and local services and that council services across the community understand that attendance is everyone's business. This will be particularly the case in our wider contextualised safeguarding work and within Children's Services generally. Critical to this work will be partnerships with community wardens, community leaders and housing providers.

The plan will be underpinned by a comprehensive communications strategy which will make good attendance high profile. The Local Authority will seek to work closely with communities across Knowsley in championing the needs of young people and promoting the importance of attendance and the benefits of a good education.

When appropriate, if support options provided to parents, have not succeeded, the School Attendance Service will take the lead role on behalf of any school in using legal powers, as a last resort, when this is necessary to address poor attendance. This statutory intervention is available to all schools.

The local authority will:

- Provide an attendance support team (School Attendance Team) which works with all schools in Knowsley
- Provide every school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Team to support with queries and advice

- Provide a traded offer for schools that provides support and guidance around attendance policy and practices
- Hold a termly Targeting Support Meeting with every school in their area to identify pupils who need support with removing barriers to attendance
- Work jointly with all local partners to offer multi-agency support to pupils who need it
- Provide Early Help and Family First support workers to work with families to improve attendance where required and act as lead professionals when appropriate
- Work jointly with schools on an agreed approach/ plan for every severely absent pupil
- Develop strategies to remove common area-wide barriers to attendance
- Work with schools to formalise support or take forward legal action where voluntary support does not work
- 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
- Ensure school attendance is a priority for families for children with social workers or support workers eg. YOS, Shield, MACE

- Ensure attendance is a priority for Children Looked After and supported by the Virtual School
- SEND/Inclusion team will provide support and guidance to families with EHCP and SEND needs
- For schools without a Service Level Agreement, the LA will provide support to ensure schools have enough evidence to move to statutory work where necessary
- To identify children who are not receiving an education
- Ensure our statutory duties for school attendance are fulfilled
- Establish a communications campaign to raise the profile of school attendance
- Continue to monitor and escalate the attendance of vulnerable children through the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group (CLAAG)
- Provide events throughout the year to raise and celebrate the profile of good attendance
- Share good practice

The role of parents/carers and pupils

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Parents are expected to report their child's absence from school on the first day of absence and to confirm the reason in writing on their child's return to school. Where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance, parents/carers are expected to work with school staff and other services to address them and engage proactively with the support offered.

Parents/carers are expected to support school attendance by avoiding family holidays during term time and only request leave of absence in exceptional cases and do so in advance. Headteachers can ask the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice for holidays taken during term time when the criteria are met.

Parents/ carers are also responsible for following any related Public Health England (PHE) guidance and are required to inform school of any infectious illnesses and book any medical appointments around the school day, where possible. Attending school is compulsory entitlement under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#) 4441 and 4441a parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their children, of school age, receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have "either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

Responsibilities and expectations

Parents and carers:

- Encourage and ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually unless there is a valid reason for absence which is accepted by the school's headteacher
- Intervene promptly and work closely with the school and local authority to resolve any barriers or issues when attendance problems occur
- Comply with their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the school attendance policy
- Avoid term time holidays. A term time holiday may mean a pupil becomes a persistent absentee if they go on to have any further time away from school
- Discuss and resolve any issues surrounding their child's attendance with members of school staff. Parents should not keep children away from school whilst they are resolving any issues
- Proactively engage with any level of attendance support offered
- Ensure that their child continues to attend their current school until a place is available at another school if a transfer has been requested

Children and young people:

- Attend school regularly and punctually in accordance with the agreed timetable

- Stay in school for the school day unless lunchtime arrangements are agreed with the school and put in writing
- Ensure they arrive at school in correct uniform and equipped for the school day
- Adhere to school rules
- Comply with the requirements of them as laid out in the school attendance policy

The role of schools and academies

Schools have a statutory duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This can only be fulfilled through effective registration systems and active, whole school monitoring of pupil absence, in order to support and promote regular school attendance.

While regular school attendance is predominantly the responsibility of parents and carers, schools play a central role in ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly. This includes taking a positive and proactive role in the promotion of regular school attendance through strategies identified within their school attendance policy that will engage families and ensure that there is a coherent and consistent approach to attendance across the school.

**‘Every day
I see my
friends’**



All schools and academies should have a whole school attendance policy, including a graduated response which sets out how attendance is managed and what monitoring systems are in place. The Headteacher should take overall responsibility for and drive the attendance agenda, actively supported by every member of staff and endorsed and monitored by the governing body.

Parents/carers should be informed of the school's staged response systems. The governing body should nominate a governor to take a monitoring responsibility for attendance issues. Other governors may also play an active role where this is part of the school's attendance policy. All schools and academies should operate first day absence procedures to ensure that parents are aware when their child is not in school. Schools and academies are responsible for actively monitoring the attendance of their pupils receiving alternative provision and will need to be able to explain how they do this as part of an Ofsted inspection.

Primary and secondary schools and academies are part of the Fair Access Protocol which is implemented through the primary and secondary Fair Access Panel. This process should be considered when specific issues might be seen to prohibit a child or young person from attending school. Where the Panel deems this is the case, a child or young person may be moved to another school/academy through a managed move or as a hard to place pupil in an effort to improve their attendance.

Schools will:

- Have a whole-school culture and ethos which promotes and reinforces the benefits of good attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- Set annual targets for attendance and monitor progress towards them
- Appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to take strategic responsibility for attendance matters and ensure all school staff are clear about their individual responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to school attendance
- Ensure that staff receive adequate training and development opportunities in relation to attendance (e.g. they ensure that admin staff are appropriately trained in using electronic attendance monitoring systems)
- Comply with statutory registration and off-rolling procedures in line with Children Missing Education statutory guidance for removing a child from roll
- Submit attendance returns to the DfE and LA as required
- Regularly monitor the effectiveness of their registration system
- Take appropriate action and inform the LA when any pupil is absent for more than 10 days without contact or a reason being provided
- Adhere to the LA guidance on Children Missing Education where a pupil ceases to attend and they fail to enrol at a new school and/or their whereabouts are unknown

- Implement and regularly review their attendance policy
- Clearly communicate their attendance policy to all staff, pupils and parents
- Ensure parents/carers are supported in promoting the regular and punctual attendance of their children
- Regularly update parent's on their child's attendance
- Actively involve pupils in the development of attendance initiatives (e.g. by using pupil surveys to assess the impact of interventions)
- Provide easily accessible pastoral support to pupils who have become, or are at risk of becoming, disengaged from the education system and work with other partners and agencies to support pupils and families
- Involve medical personnel (e.g. the school nurse) in relation to long-term medical absences, either consistent or intermittent
- Discuss attendance as part of the agenda for SEND reviews
- Ensure that that senior leaders regularly analyse and report school attendance data to the governing body and use it to inform planning to further improve attendance
- Support mid-year transfers between schools via effective induction procedures for pupils and good inter-school communication
- Implement a clear escalation process for managing attendance, prior to local authority involvement, with clarity about respective roles and responsibilities at each stage
- Contact parents on the first day of absence

Academy Trustees and governing bodies will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it

The role of other agencies and stakeholders Support to schools

We recognise that schools need the ability to draw in additional support from a single point of contact. To ensure there is clarity they need to know that the right person is supporting the child at the right time. Schools are sometimes unclear which service is best placed to provide support and this can lead to a number of similar services being requested for the same child or family.

As resources are scarce and demand is high, we need to maximise our capacity to ensure that we meet the needs of children within schools.

We know the importance and value of intervening early before problems become entrenched within families and therefore we need to have a clear distinction between a preventative Early Help support service within schools and a statutory response when Early Help has not achieved positive outcomes.

The services within scope which can bring additional resource and expertise to supporting schools in a preventative way are:

- Traded School Attendance Officers
- Statutory School Attendance Officers
- Attendance Mentors
- Behaviour and Inclusion Team
- SEND Support Team
- Early Help Support Workers
- Mental Health in Schools Team (MHST)
- Early Help and Family First
- Children's social care
- Children's centres, family hubs and early years services
- School nurses and the wider health service

Early Years

Whilst attendance in early years settings, before the age of 5, is not statutory, early years is where lifelong habits are established. Securing good early years attendance therefore is an important foundation on which children will go on to thrive throughout their school life and beyond.

Our early years team will provide advice, guidance and support to families and settings to help secure good attendance. The same person-centred approach and keen desire for early intervention will feature in all of our practice and development work with settings. Support is available to all settings from the team.

Children's Centres

Engagement with young children and their families, through a local Children's Centre, is a key opportunity to work with parents to ensure that they understand the importance of their role in ensuring good attendance at school. Staff working in these settings are well placed to support parents and to emphasise the crucial role parents play in their child's learning and development. When children start school, children's centre staff can support the transition, working with the school staff to ensure a positive start, which includes good attendance.

Health Services

The school nursing service is available to all children in Knowsley schools. The school nurses support with health education in schools as well as providing support for both physical and mental health needs. Their role in attendance can often be key and we engage with the services on a regular basis.

Vulnerable Pupils

Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group (CLAAG):

The aim of this multi-agency group is to provide guidance and support to schools where the attendance of a child is causing concern. This can be when there is no other wider agency involvement and school believe all other avenues have been exhausted; or to provide challenge when there appears to be drift or delay in the support another agency is providing to a child in relation to their attendance and wider needs.

Any child, including vulnerable children and young people, can be referred to this bi weekly group. Referrals can be made by the school attendance lead, learning mentor, designated safeguarding officer, SENDCo or other related agency by completing the [electronic referral form](#). Referrals are best supported when as much detail and evidence of risk is captured. This can mean that the form may need to be completed as a team with all relevant information included.

The CLAAG will:

- Ensure all schools are using the Attendance Strategy/ Attendance Toolkit and have adopted a graduated approach to tackling the attendance issue
- Ensure all schools have adopted a graduated response and utilised social care assessment tools to evidence the concerns and factors impacting on the child and family
- Share information across services to ensure a joined-up approach to working with these children
- Agree and advise strategies for specific families/children or particular schools/teams

Virtual School

Knowsley' Virtual School is committed to following the Working Together to Improve School Attendance statutory guidance to ensure education is a high profile and it has strategic oversight of the education of pupils with a social worker. As such, Knowsley Council make use of the Virtual Schools to:

- Regularly monitor the attendance of Knowsley cared for children (CfC) and children with a social worker
- Set aspirational targets for attendance of Knowsley cared for children ensuring a Personal Education Plan (PEP) is in place
- Provide training for designated leads about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have a social worker
- Work across children's social care services to make sure all social workers recognise the importance of good attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where there is an attendance concern
- Provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after

Knowsley's Virtual School Attendance Policy can be found here: <https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-02/Knowsley%20Virtual%20School%20attendance%20policy%20202425.docx>

The graduated approach to good school attendance

The graduated approach is a framework of interventions that can be used with pupils and families. Its purpose is to underpin integrated working between schools and the local authority to improve attendance and aims to enable schools to address poor attendance at an early stage. Staged interventions begin with effective whole-school approaches to managing the attendance of all pupils. School policies should promote good attendance, make clear what everyone's roles and responsibilities are and clearly outline what action is taken at each stage so that early intervention can take place. An effective whole-school approach will include regular monitoring and review of practice and its effectiveness; and enable schools to target appropriate interventions with pupils and families.

The toolkit also outlines how the graduated approach moves through Levels 1 to 4. Level 1 refers to the variety of school based interventions to improve attendance. Level 2 deals with early intervention and a family response to early challenges with pupil attendance; Level 3 uses targeted intervention and brokering multi-agency support; and Level 4 moves on to statutory intervention through the local authority. Again, the toolkit provides guidance and resources to help schools move through the levels. The local authority is able to offer enhanced support for the non-statutory aspects of the graduated approach via School Attendance Officers; Early help Support

Workers; Mental Health in Schools Team; and's Attendance Mentors.

Schools are able to access a universal offer for attendance support but can also choose to receive an enhanced support offer via the School Attendance Service traded offer. For schools who buy into this, a clear progressive pathway of support can be offered to schools to tackle the range of issues which impact on young people's attendance. This will be in line with the graduated approach (Level 2) to ensure that attendance is closely matched to the needs of the individual.

The Attendance Toolkit (appendix 1) describes the graduated approach.

As part of the traded offer we will be working with several teams to support schools to work directly with families and address their individual needs.

The multi-agency team consists of officers including, but not restricted to:

- School attendance officers – traded and statutory
- Family support workers
- Behaviour and inclusion officers
- SEND Officers
- Careers Support and Post-16 providers
- Children's Social care/Virtual School
- YOS education officers
- Early help and Family First support workers
- Shield officers and support workers



**‘Every day
I learn
something
new’**

LEVEL 1 UNIVERSAL: SCHOOL ACTION AND SUPPORT (BEFORE REQUESTING WIDER AGENCY SUPPORT)

Interventions are school-level actions to secure improvements at the earliest stages of non-attendance. The attendance policy should set out what school actions take place for pupils in each attendance band. For example, how pupils with good and improving attendance are rewarded and encouraged to maintain this. Pupils with patterns of irregular attendance should be identified and monitored as early as possible, for example when attendance drops below 95%. Schools should notify parents of their concerns. The message to both pupil and parents should be one of support and encouragement while making it clear that improvement is expected. The toolkit gives examples of effective actions that can be taken. The pre-requisite is to have the full support and drive of the headteacher.

Attendance is rarely a sole issue facing a family – in fact, when it is attendance improvement is often easily and quickly achieved! However, poor attendance is often a factor of wider family issues and, as such, a referral to Early Help should occur at this stage of school intervention. If Level 1 support has occurred for 6 weeks - with little or no improvement, then an Early Help Assessment must be completed in conjunction with all relevant professionals. If consent is a barrier, then this increases the risk to the child and provides further evidence. More attempts to offer support should be provided i.e. from

different staff members; utilizing the Knowsley Engaging Families Toolkit and all outcomes recorded for evidence.

The full range of Level 1 graduated response activity must have been undertaken by schools before a request can be made for multi-agency support from the local authority at Level 2 or above.

Such actions should include the following (although this is not an exhaustive list):

- Phone calls to parents
- Correspondence to parents highlighting concerns
- Meetings in school with parents to discuss issues
- Evidence of Early Help work offered. If initiated the first TAF Meeting has been completed
- Home visits
- Staff involvement eg. learning mentor, classroom support
- Support plans and strategies agreed and reviews in place
- Clear record keeping and evidencing of support offered and parental engagement
- Schools could send an education penalty notice warning letter (follow the Penalty Notice procedure) eg. For holiday absences
- Other professional support e.g. health services support and advice

The toolkit and library of resources will assist with this. The termly attendance newsletter will also give some strategies to assist with school support.

Note: At the point of parent contact, either by letter or verbally, the parent should be made aware that any further absences may not be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. Medical evidence can be in the form of an appointment card, prescription with the child's name and date on or prescription medicine. Parents should not be told to go to the GP to request evidence if they had none at the time. The Local Authority GP protocol can be used at a later stage if evidence is not available. It is important that the overall attendance record reflects a pattern of irregular attendance. There is no requirement for medical evidence for Covid-19 related absence but ensuring that the Test and Trace procedures have been adhered to is recommended.

THE ENHANCED OFFER FOR LEVEL 2 – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

LEVEL 2 / STEP 1: SCHOOL-BASED CHECK – FOR SCHOOLS WITH A SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA)

This will be work for schools that have bought into the Knowsley SLA. If schools have bought their SLA from another provider this is the type of work we would recommend from their provider.

Schools need to have completed actions at the Universal stage and an Early Help Assessment (Level 1) before instigating the next stage (Level 2).

A referral for traded service support is made via the establishment portal. Referrals are best completed when as much detail and evidence is captured. Therefore, the form may need to be completed, as a team, with all relevant information as outlined below.

The following information would be useful to gather before engaging with other services:

- Up to date attendance data
- Historical attendance (last 3 years)
- Siblings – dates of birth, school(s) attended

- Parents/carers – names, addresses
- Behaviour – exclusions
- SEND information
- GP details and medical information
- Historic or current in-school pastoral support
- Early Help Assessment (identifying all risks)
- Historic or current multi-agency support
- Extenuating factors that impact on the child ie parent mental health/ bereavement (what is the timescale here to allow empathy but not drift/what support for the identified issue has the school extended?)

The referral is received by the school's link traded officer and the case discussed in terms of any concerns or issues. If it is advised that a case is not suitable for referral ie due to a bereavement, then it is important that a clear timescale for reviewing the case are set (no longer than 6 weeks) and there is evidence of tracking in place and of other appropriate support being provided to the family such as making referrals for and assigning an Early Help support worker.

If the case is to be worked, the traded officer will ensure all children in the family are included within the attendance plan .Direct work will occur via the SLA request of any linked schools the children attend. The Traded Officer will support

the school with strategies or can provide low-level intervention attendance support. This may include addressing generic issues within the family and potentially small group work. Knowsley's SLA reflects the range of support options available.

Where families and children have been allocated additional support i.e. Early Help Support Worker, a close working approach is highly recommended and a joint approach to reducing barriers to attendance.

LEVEL 2/ STEP 2: ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT MEETING (AIM)

The school completes a consultation with the Local Authority School Attendance Service. The Traded Officer will organise an Attendance Improvement Meeting with the family on the child's next absence. The Traded Officer assigned to the school will decide who from all services should be at the Attendance Improvement meeting. The Attendance Improvement meeting should not last longer than an hour as it should be solution focused.

The Attendance Improvement meeting should include any professionals already supporting the family, the family themselves, the school attendance lead, the traded officer and any other services that may be appropriate. Any partner agency considered able to support would also

be requested to attend. If the family does not attend the meeting, communication clearly explaining the actions of the meeting is shared with them by the Traded Officer. The group will suggest appropriate strategies to support the child and family in line with this strategy. Suggested strategies should then be selected and an action plan created. The action plan should be reviewed by the Traded Officer and school after 3 weeks. The decision to close and refer another case or to extend will be agreed at this point. Cases at Level 2 should not be extended beyond one half term. Refer to Appendix A for menu of actions. Parenting Contracts would be encouraged as agreements between the school, parent, child, and other agencies. However, if these strategies have already been exhausted by all agencies, consideration would be given to escalating the case towards legal proceedings or a referral made to Step 3.

LEVEL 3: FAMILY FIRST/STATUTORY ATTENDANCE WORK/CLAAG

For cases causing concern that are greater than Level 2, where the Attendance Improvement Meeting actions haven't worked within the half term; or if the needs and risks to the child have increased, then the traded officer will follow the step-up process to either Family First or to the Statutory Officer in the School Attendance Service. At this stage consideration for a referral into the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group would also be relevant.

Within any step-up meeting process or referral there needs to be a correlation of all relevant details pertaining to the child / family. Practitioners are strongly encouraged to utilise Kowsley's Liquidlogic system and access ICM, EHM and EYES to gather all current and historic information to evidence concern and risk. There should be clear evidence of case/pupil tracking that provides the evidence for the non-attendance and the interventions provided within appropriate timescales, which avoid extended absence. There should be a strong professional curiosity as to why the case has reached Level 3 if the evidence isn't provided.

Step up meetings should identify the barriers to attendance and aim to unpick the issues. Lack of parental consent; mental health issues and bereavement, for example, are not reasons for non-attendance and should not be a reason for a case not to be worked. If lack of consent or non-engagement are barriers then those within the step up meeting need to action the completion of a Parenting Assessment together with a Graded Care Profile Assessment Tool by the school (if not completed already) to evaluate compromised parenting and the impact on the life chances of the child or young person. The aim is to prove that support at level 3, either at a social care or at a statutory attendance stage will prevent any further educational neglect.

If stepping up to Family First team, the school should ask Family First to attend a TAF meeting to consider escalation.

If stepping up to Statutory Officer and the schools have bought into the SLA. There is no further action to take, the traded officer will move this forward. If a school has another provider for their SLA then the school will need to complete a Statutory Referral Form to explain all of the actions taken so far. This would then be picked up by the statutory officer for assessment to see if the case can be progressed. A penalty notice may be considered at this point.

LEVEL 4: SOCIAL CARE

At this stage a comprehensive and well documented evidence of support, intervention and risk would be expected. Timescales would be appropriate with no drift , delay or extended periods of lenience. Evidence of the school following a graduated response to tackle the poor attendance and support any family issues would be clear. The Graded Care Profile and other Assessment tools would have been used to capture concerns and contributing risk factors for the child or young person. Working Together to Improve Attendance Statutory Guidance states that working practices across children's social care services should ensure all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance, and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern.

Complexities at this stage can be experienced when the Pre Proceedings Panel decide that a case is not in the public interest for prosecution. If this is the legal decision made this will have an impact on the decision whether Children's Social Care would consider pursuing a case as Education Neglect, for the same reasons. This is why ensuring that the evidence is in place to counteract the argument and prove that aspects such as mental health, bereavement, lack of parental consent

raise risk factors and evidence of all possible support and guidance was extended; multi agency involvement secured yet not accepted. Thus raising risk and impacting negatively on the child's life chances.

Ideally, with all necessary evidence, if the work of the statutory officer does not result in the required attendance improvement within a half term, this may be escalated to prosecution or educational neglect. To escalate to Educational Neglect the case needs to be referred into the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group for discussion.

If the work of the Family First Officer is unsuccessful or the family refuse to engage with the process, then this can also be escalated to educational neglect or Level 4 Children's social care, supported with the completion of the Graded Care Profile and parenting assessment Tools.

Actions at Level 4 can also include the use of Parental Responsibility Measures such as penalty notices. However, prosecution should always be a last resort; statistically it is the least likely to have a positive impact on attendance.

Appendix A – Knowsley’s Graduated response model

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>LEVEL 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Badges• Certificates• Class competitions• Clear school systems• First day response• Headteacher high profile• Home visits• Early Help Assessment• Attendance toolkit• Marketing/PR• Community support – wardens, walking bus• School Attendance meeting• Meeting with parents | <p>LEVEL 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance Team• Early Help Support Workers (primary)• Early Help Assessment (held by school)• Attendance Improvement Meeting• Risk Factor Tools: ie Graded Care Profile/ Screening Tools/ Parenting Capacity• CLAAG (drift and delay)• Health services – school nurse, health visitors• Behaviour and Inclusion• Shield/YOS/Virtual school support workers• Barnardos Attendance Mentors | <p>LEVEL 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory School Attendance Team• Family First Team• CLAAG (Education Neglect) | <p>LEVEL 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance Team• MARF & MASH• Children’s Social Care |
|---|--|--|--|



‘Every day we join in’

Appendix B – Glossary

| | |
|---|--|
| AIM – Attendance Improvement Meeting | Meeting led by the Traded Officer which brings together a range of people from appropriate services and the family to form an attendance action plan |
| Attendance lead | School based role to improve attendance |
| Butterflies/Listening Ear | Counselling for bereavement services |
| CAMHS | Child and Adult Mental Health Services – work with young people when they have been referred by the school or their GP |
| CLAAG – Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group | Bi-weekly multi agency meeting to discussed referred attendance cases which are causing concern and there is no other agency involvement drift and or there is perceived drift and delay with involved services. Consideration to cases which may constitute Education Neglect |
| CME – Child Missing in Education | Children missing from education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school |
| Consultation Meeting | Meeting between School Attendance Service and Schools to decide on appropriate families to refer into the Traded Officers work or Statutory Officers work |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development – training to improve practice |
| Diamond/Listening Ear | Counselling for Domestic Abuse |

EAL

Early Help Assessment

EPN

Educational Neglect

Education Supervision Order

EHCP

Evidential Test

FAP – Fair Access Protocol

LA Services

English as an additional language

The referral form required for Early Help to assess the family and decide whether they need further support

Education Penalty Notice – fine for non-attendance

Refer to the Educational Neglect Policy below

An order granted in the Family Proceedings Court requiring the family to follow directions made in the Order and work alongside the Statutory Officer to improve the child's school attendance. This order can also compel families to complete an admissions form for a school

Children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan which is a legal document

Whether there is enough and appropriate evidence for a prosecution

The Fair Access Panel meet to enact the Fair Access Protocol. The purpose of the Fair Access Protocol is to ensure that – outside the normal admission round – unplaced children especially the most vulnerable are found and offered a school place quickly to minimise the amount of time a child is out of school. Knowsley Fair Access Panel is made up of primary and secondary senior leaders from across the borough

Attendance, SEND, Behaviour and Inclusion, EAL, Children with Disabilities, Governor support services, Admissions, Sensory Impairment Service, School Transport, Early Help, Family First, Hospital and Home Tuition, Virtual School, Shield, MACE, Education Psychology, Early Years, Crime and Community

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| LM | Learning Mentor – pastoral member of staff in schools |
| MACE | Multi Agency Child Exploitation Panel, the means by which the local authority respond to children who are at risk or vulnerable to criminal exploitation which includes sexual exploitation, children who go missing, trafficking, criminal exploitation and modern slavery |
| MARF referral | Multi Agency Referral Form to be completed if there are educational neglect or safeguarding concerns |
| MASH | The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub screen the MARF referrals and escalate where necessary |
| NEET | Above school age child over 16 who is not in education, employment or training. These children are tracked by the LA's NEET Tracking service for 3 years after they leave education |
| Other Partner Agencies | Health – school nursing service, CAMHS, Kooth, Careers Connect, Listening Ear, Mental Health Support Team, Police, Housing, Parent/Carer Voice, SENDIAS |
| PA | Persistent Absentees – classed as this is a child misses 10% of school sessions |
| PACE Act | Police and Criminal Evidence Act – what evidence is required for prosecution |
| Parenting Contract | Formal written agreement to improve attendance. They are voluntary but are set within the context of possible legal action in the future. They commit both parents and the school to work together to bring about improvements. This is usually drawn up by an Officer in the School Attendance Service |

| | |
|--|---|
| Pre-Proceedings Meeting | This is the meeting between officers and legal services to decide whether there is enough evidence for prosecution |
| Pre-Court Panel | This is a meeting with the aim to see if any attendance problems can be fixed without the need to go to court. This is led by the Statutory Officer |
| Public Interest Test | Whether it is within the public interest for a prosecution |
| Restorative Practice | Strategies that seek to repair relationships that have been damaged, it does this by bringing about reflection by the offender and forgiveness by the victim |
| SAS – School Attendance Service | LA service which has a Traded Offer through the SLA and delivers Statutory duties with schools |
| SENCO | Staff member responsible for SEND and EHCP in a school |
| Shield | The child exploitation or missing team. Shield workers work with families who are at risk of exploitation |
| SLA | Service level agreement – a paid for traded service agreed with schools |
| SLT | Senior Leadership Team in a school (Headteacher, Deputy, Assistant Head etc) |
| Statutory Officer | A member of the Local Authority School Attendance Service whose work focuses on cases that may be pursued to legal proceedings. This includes further intervention work to assist with compiling the evidence for court proceedings |

TAF – Team Around the Family

Early help meeting organised by the school which includes the family and other agencies. This should promote effective partnership working. This is an opportunity for all practitioners along with parents, children and young people to discuss a given situation and how to progress

Traded Officer

A member of the Local authority School Attendance Service who delivers the attendance service level agreement in schools who have bought into this traded offer. This officer delivers early intervention support and strategies. This is time specific

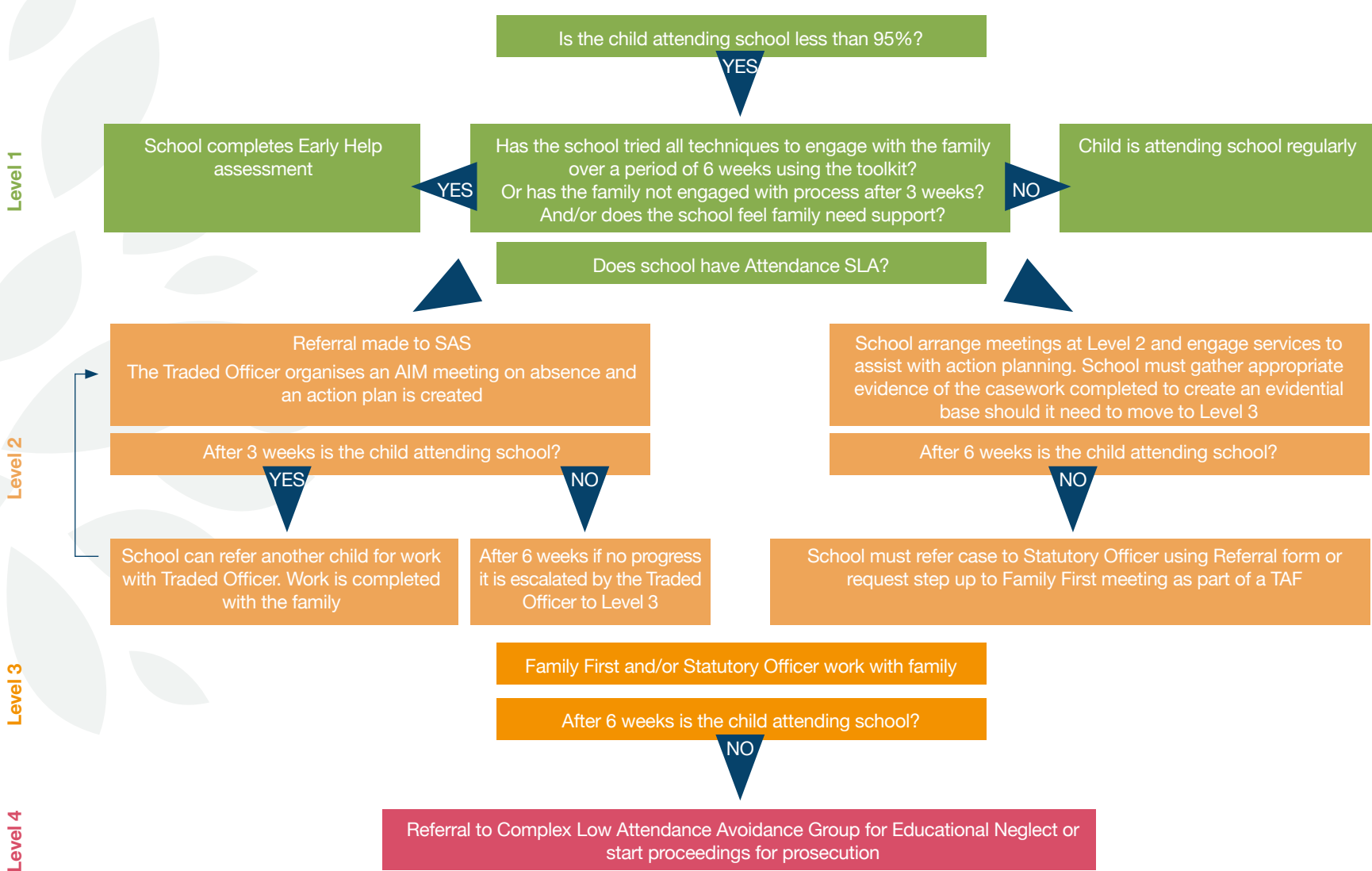
Virtual School

Virtual School acts as a local authority champion to promote the progress and educational attainment of children and young people who are or who have been in care so that they achieve outcomes comparable to their peers

YOS

Youth Offending Service is a statutory partnership to reduce reoffending by children and young people aged 10-18

Appendix C – Glossary



Appendix D – Glossary

Rationale

In the previous policy, families could only be referred into Children’s Social Care for educational neglect if they had a failed prosecution. Evidence suggests that prosecutions for attendance are often ineffective, lengthy and costly. This policy prevented the LA from intervening with families immediately to ensure their child/children attended school.

This new policy fits into Knowsly’s Attendance Strategy which supports a graduated response to attendance in schools. At Level 1, schools should provide as much support as possible, at Level 2 Early Help or Traded Attendance Officers can support further, at Level 3 Statutory Officers or Family First workers can intervene before reaching Level 4, which is prosecution or a referral to Children’s Social Care for educational neglect.

It is intended that this policy is used at the Level 4 stage of the attendance strategy; at the highest level of the CYPD Thrive thresholds or if the family refuse to engage with Level 1, 2 and 3 intervention. Schools, School attendance, Family First, Early Help or Social care can refer a family for educational neglect but there will need to be substantial evidence of attempts to engage the family before this point: clear tracking that demonstrates support and assessment and records of all risk factors.

The objectives for this policy are that families with persistently absent children receive essential support more quickly and without requiring their consent (as is the case for Early Help and Family First) or a prosecution.

This policy is for schools and services that work with schools such as Early Help, Family First, School Attendance and Children’s Social Care to agree on a definition and process for educational neglect.

Definition

The Local Authority recognises that educational neglect exists and can be a factor within physical, emotional, sexual or criminal harm. It is a likely outcome of a range of contributing factors that could be attributable to parent(s)/carer(s), professionals or organisations. It could also be the continued persistent failure of a parent or young person, deemed old enough to determine their own actions, to manage their own travel to and from school and to attend school regularly.

In Knowsley some of the factors that contribute to educational neglect are:

- Failure to identify education provision for their child or adequately maintain their child’s schooling or education provision
- Failure to engage in most school, Local Authority or Trust meetings where support is offered and where such action results in the disengagement of a child in their schooling and allows for a detrimental impact on their child’s development
- Failure to engage, as required, with agencies, beyond school, for example health services , which then leads to a delay or deterioration in their child’s development, indicating a disregard for their child’s needs
- Parental failure to provide substantiated reasons for absences from school
- Court and statutory interventions which fail to improve attendance
- Ineffective engagement to offers of support identified to likely improve the educational development or school attendance of their child
- Pupil engagement and attendance levels that are identified as seriously impeding their child’s development – 75% or below
- Where professionals or organisation(s) have failed to report concerns that require additional intervention to avoid serious impairment of a child’s development
- Where educational provision, that is alternative to full-time education, is not provided/is not in line with needs and is not monitored effectively or changed/adapted to reduce the serious impairment of a child’s educational development, taking into account an individual child’s needs and wishes
- Where transfer of records or known information that supports a child’s developmental needs, including their social, emotional, mental health and well-being and learning needs are not shared with other professionals or transferred to new settings in a timely manner
- Where a child is ‘off-rolled’ from a school that does not follow correct process, or is off-rolled when this is not in the best interests of the child but is in the interest of the school
- Where an agency has not put into place, in a timely manner, or sufficiently taken into account of, the advice from health professionals, to establish an Education and Health Care Plan to support individual health needs

Process

If a service believes children are suffering from educational neglect they should refer the children/organisation, including as much information as possible and clear evidence of a graduated response and the risk factors, to the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group (CLAAG). The Graded Care Profile tool or the Neglect screening tool should be used to assist in the decision making process prior to the referral. The CLAAG is a multi agency panel consisting of education improvement officers, the school attendance service, SEND Team, early help, family first, social Worker in Schools Team, children's social care, MASH, YOS and Shield.

At the meeting it will be decided if the threshold has been met for an educational neglect referral and whether all agencies/ services have tried all other avenues before reaching this threshold.

The school will then be asked to refer the child/family via the MARF referral process into MASH explaining that this has been recommended by the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group.

MASH should then complete a robust assessment and decide how best to support the family in improving the attendance of their child/children if they agree with the decision of the Complex Low Attendance Avoidance Group.

If it is an organisation rather than a family that needs to be escalated, this will be completed through the appropriate escalation services using the Knowsley Escalation Process.

9.2 Multi Agency Escalation Policy (proceduresonline.com)

**‘Every day I
understand a
little more’**

Appendix E – Attendance Toolkit

Attendance issues, concerns and queries need to be raised and discussed with the link school attendance and education improvement officer. It is highly recommended that schools use their discretion and professional judgement when addressing issues as there may be multiple reasons and circumstances which lead to non-attendance; these need to be taken into account and considered on a case-by-case basis rather than adhering too rigidly to a single approach, which can lead to inflexibility and a lack of inclusivity.

As always, the School Attendance Service can offer advice and support. However, the aim of this toolkit is to highlight to schools the many in-school interventions which can be implemented before cases are referred to the Service.



Ensuring good attendance – whose job is it?

| Child | Parent/Carer | Class/form Teacher | Attendance Lead | Head Teacher | Governing Body | Local Authority |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| These posters provide examples of key reminders that can be given to pupils at regular intervals | This guide for parents reminds them of the importance of good attendance and their responsibility for ensuring it | Monitor attendance each session. Welcome students back. Expect a reason for absence to be provided. Help them to catch up on missed work. Refer students to attendance lead where there are concerns or the school threshold has been reached | Being a member of SLT (with some admin support) gives this job the seniority it needs | Support and champion the importance of excellent attendance across the school, holding everyone to account and praising success. Report at least termly to governors on levels of attendance and actions being taken | Hold to account, challenge and support and praise success. Attendance should be a standing agenda item at relevant sub-committee meetings. Have a lead governor for attendance for link governor visits and as a member of school attendance panel | Statutory duties include legal intervention, children missing education, elective home education and child employment and performance licensing. School Attendance Traded Officers offer the Service Level Agreement |

The school attendance lead needs to ensure the consistency of approach and adherence to the school’s policy and practices by all members of the school community.

Who is here to help me?

| Name | Team | Phone | Email |
|--------------------|---|---------------|---|
| Phil McCalliog | Attendance Manager Children Missing Education | 0151 443 5118 | Phil.Mccalliog@knowsley.gov.uk cme@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Penny France | Education Improvement | 07973 949 469 | Penelope.France@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Karen Austin Smith | Education Improvement | 07385 945 030 | Karen.Austin-smith@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Chris Price | Education Improvement | 07350 400 507 | chris.price@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Jo Knight | SEND Education Improvement | 07973 741 736 | Joanne.Knight@Knowsley.gov.uk |
| Pamela Foster | Early Help | 07584 370 974 | Pamela.foster@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Karen Foley | EAL Manager | 07385 375 367 | Karen.Foley@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Paula Harding | Sensory Impairment Service Manager | 07825 145 125 | Paula.Harding@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Andrew Nimmo | Home to school Transport Manager | 07810 053 380 | Andrew.Nimmo@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Vicki Clements | Safeguarding | 07384 900 808 | Vicki.Clements@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Paul Davenport | Hospital Home Tuition | 07384 900 837 | Paul.Davenportl@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Jo Lowry | Attendance Deputy Manager | 0151 443 5129 | Joanne.Lowry@knowsley.gov.uk |

| Name | Team | Phone | Email |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Hannah Barton | Education Psychology | 07773 203 466 | Hannah.Barton@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Phil Ball | Attendance / Child Entertainment and Employment | 07825 996 491 | Phillip.Ball@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Sue Nevols | Attendance / Home Education | 07810 054 028 | Sue.Nevols@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Allison Jones | Attendance / Home Education | 0151 443 5133 | Alison.Jones@Knowsley.gov.uk |
| Mark Strevens | Behaviour Support | 07810 053 459 | Mark.Strevens@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Jennie Dooley | Schools Admissions Team | 07385 084 671 | Jennie.Dooley@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Mark Hardwick | SEND Team Manager | 07810 053 353 | Mark.Hardwick@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Benjamin Blake | Inclusion | 07881 267 736 | ben.blake@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Ian Willman | Crime and Communities | 07827 982 659 | Ian.Willman@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Susan Smeardon | Virtual School Headteacher | 07384 900 764 | Susan.Smeardon@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Alistair Scott | Early Years | 07810 053 531 | Alistair.Scott@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Suzanne Winrow | Early Years SENCO | 0151 442 3971 | Suzanne.Winrow@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Karl Blaylock | Shield | 07557 849 415 | Karl.Blaylock@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Sarah Scott | Attendance/ Entertainment | | Sarah.Scott@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Alicia Clarke | Attendance / Child Entertainment and Employment | 07810 054 062 | alicia.clarke@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Emma Boow | Attendance / Child Entertainment and Employment | 07385 944 956 | emma.boow@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Nicola Monaghan | Attendance / Home Education | 07384 900 814 | Nicola.monaghan@knowsley.gov.uk |
| Rebecca Moore | Attendance / Home Education | 07385 944 935 | Rebecca.moore@knowsley.gov.uk |

Leading and Managing Attendance: a community response

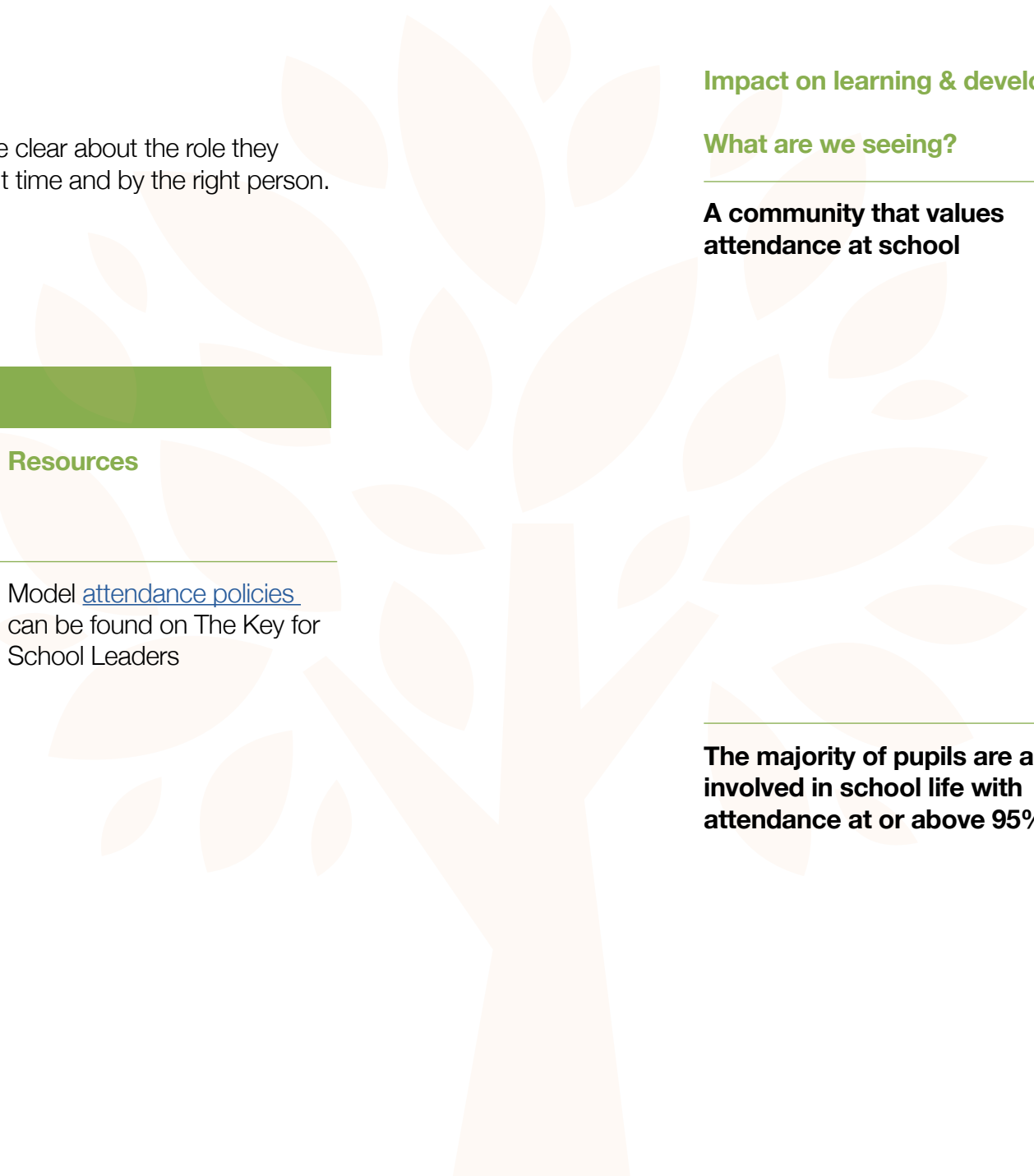
If pupil absence in school is to be addressed effectively, it is essential not only that all members of staff are clear about the role they have to play but also that there is a consistent, staged approach so that action is always taken at the right time and by the right person.

This graduated framework demonstrates a staged approach in action.

It starts with Level 1 which demonstrates how promoting good attendance is everyone’s responsibility.

Level 1: Universal – Making Attendance Everyone’s Priority

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|---|--|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Strong leadership which places attendance as everyone’s responsibility within the school family | Strategic analysis of attendance data High profile headteacher leadership of attendance Regular celebration of attendance in assemblies Maintaining/improving attendance is a strategic priority in the school development plan Budget allocation for attendance to support rewards and to overcome barriers to good attendance (eg travel or equipment costs) Analysis of data and looking at comparisons across collaborative and nationally | Model attendance policies can be found on The Key for School Leaders |



| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|--|--|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| A community that values attendance at school | Pupils welcomed each day Monitoring and celebrating staff attendance CPD and regular updates on attendance for all staff. Communication strategy – eg text message service. Walking School Bus Attendance displays are high profile Policy on pupils with medical conditions and administering medicines and a strategy for encouraging medical appointments to be outside school hours Parents are expected to communicate during absence or for a meeting to take place Avoid half-day and mid-week closures for training sessions Strong relationship with school nurses and local medical centres, faith and volunteer sector, community police and community wardens | The Dfe document Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions can help to form the basis of your own policy content, ensuring everyone understands there role |
| The majority of pupils are actively involved in school life with attendance at or above 95% | Praise, encouragement and acknowledgement of good attendance Pupils know that absence will be noticed and followed up Support is provided to enable pupils who have missed work to catch up Rich and accessible curriculum with support for blended learning and access to resources Wide range of extra-curricular activities that are accessible by all | Pupil questionnaires Curriculum review – what is the daily experience of your pupils? The LA comms team can promote school attendance on a wider scale |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|--|--|--|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| High levels of parental engagement – clarity about school processes and systems | <p>Attendance policy on school website with catchy examples of the importance of good attendance – emphasise the positive</p> <p>Attendance is a weekly feature in newsletter</p> <p>Use good relationships with families to promote the vaccination programmes</p> <p>Attendance meetings with pastoral staff and support workers</p> | |
| Good behaviour and positive relationships | <p>An effective behaviour management policy that is applied consistently and understood by all staff and pupils is in place</p> <p>Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded</p> <p>All phone enquiries from parents, carers and others are responded to promptly</p> | <p>Model behaviour policies can be found on The Key for School Leaders</p> |
| Period Poverty | <p>Arrangements to support female pupils during their periods are in place and known by pupils</p> <p>Pupils always have someone to talk to, whether it be a counsellor, mentor, form tutor or head of year</p> <p>Creating a peer mentoring programme within school so children have a role model for attendance and aspiration</p> <p>Discussing other barriers with families eg. washing/uniform assistance</p> | <p>This link is to the DfE's guidance on period products for schools.</p> |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Poor punctuality | <p>Registers close at the same time consistently across the school. Arrival after registers close is coded as U</p> <p>Encourage punctuality of both pupils and staff to lessons</p> <p>Lateness to lessons is recorded, monitored and early action taken</p> <p>Senior leaders on “meet and greet” at school gates to encourage prompt movement to registration</p> <p>Consider a graduated response to sanctions for lateness – is it the same sanction whether a child is 5 minutes or 2 hours late? Where is the incentive to attend? (See Behaviour Insights report Appendix F)</p> <p>Community engagement – brokering support of neighbours, wardens etc</p> <p>Collaboration with schools of siblings to understand the problem and consider possible solutions</p> | |
| Culture of high expectations | <p>Messages about the importance of high attendance are continually reinforced</p> <p>Robust first day response messaging and home visits. Clear term-time holiday guidance and consistent practice</p> <p>Class/tutor group attendance data and targets are regular talking points</p> <p>Consider using your faith and voluntary contacts to support your actions</p> | |

Evidence of successful Level 1 practice

- School letters on attendance
- Home visit minutes
- Parental meetings minutes
- Headteacher’s reports to governors and minutes of governor meetings
- Behaviour policy
- Attendance policy
- Medicine Policy
- Records of attendance-based CPD
- Attendance Lead job description
- Behaviour and attendance data
- Analysis of reasons for absence
- Data on engagement in extra-curricular activities
- School website
- School noticeboards
- Responses to parent and pupil questionnaires
- Penalty Warning Notice letter

Level 1 should help you to make sure that you have effective strategies in place to promote good attendance with the majority of your pupils.

If this is not working with an individual pupil or a group of pupils, the staged approach moves on to Level 2.

Level 2: Early Intervention: A family response to early challenges with pupil attendance

If you have an SLA then your Traded Officer may be able to support with these actions

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|--|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Attendance has not improved or has deteriorated over a 3-week period, despite early support intervention | <p>Review the Early Help Assessment via the TAF process every 4 weeks. If targets are not being met, escalate to Family First to lead the TAF</p> <p>Requesting help from an Early Help Support Worker</p> <p>Review the Attendance Improvement Meeting actions every 3 weeks and if targets are not being met, continue for another 3 weeks and then escalate this</p> <p>Consider the need for any additional referrals to support agencies to improve the wider issues which can support attendance</p> <p>Consider involving alternative education providers to best suit the needs and aspirations of the child</p> <p>Consider escalate to school attendance service as a case</p> | <p>This guide is to support school and parents during attendance improvement meetings</p> |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|---|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| | <p>Regularly track the pupil in pupil progress meetings – at least half termly</p> <p>Set pupil/family attendance targets</p> <p>Discuss with school nurse; school attendance officer; young carers</p> <p>Consider the pupil's additional needs/SEND – ensure the Senco is involved at all stages</p> <p>Involve the SEND/Inclusion team, contact any children with EHCP's, SEND key worker for further advice and support</p> <p>Seek advice from the Educational Psychologist</p> <p>Seek advice from the Behaviour and Inclusion service</p> <p>Consider Fair Access Panel Protocol and whether this process could assist</p> | <p>Trauma-related practice guidance</p> <p>FAP Protocol 2020-2021</p> |
| Parental/family dysfunction leads to change in norm, eg reduced engagement of child/parent, change in appearance, change in mood | <p>Signposting to parenting courses</p> <p>Consider support from other agencies eg school nurse, YOS school support worker, MACE education support workers, virtual school support workers and service, housing trust</p> | <p>“The only parenting advice you really need”</p> <p>Link to Knowsley family learning and planning</p> <p>School attendance improvement meeting guidance</p> |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|--|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Parents don't appear to have high aspirations for their child to have good attendance | School attendance meeting chaired by Chair of Governors or attendance link governor to agree improvement and set targets with pupil and parents/carers | <p>School attendance improvement meeting guidance</p> <p>School attendance improvement meeting template</p> <p>School attendance improvement review meeting template</p> |
| Increase in occasional absence impacting on learning and/ or friendships/relationships/self-regard | <p>Data analysis: understanding the scale of the problem (patterns)</p> <p>First day response escalated to home visit</p> <p>Teacher discussion with pupil</p> <p>Pastoral staff meeting with parent/carers – seek to understand</p> <p>Early help assessment initiated</p> <p>Pastoral staff work with pupil to understand barriers – eg is it a uniform/equipment problem?</p> <p>Hold a team around the family meeting at least fortnightly. This should be led by the headteacher or school attendance lead and include the parent(s), carer(s) and pupils</p> <p>Your traded officer may lead an Attendance Improvement Meeting to include multi agency staff and this might lead to an agreed parenting contract</p> | <p>This is a sample home-school agreement</p> <p>Attendance letter 1</p> <p>Attendance letter 2</p> <p>Good practice School Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting guidance</p> <p>Young Carer referral form</p> <p>LA contextual safeguarding guidance</p> |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| | <p>Complete an Early Help Assessment – request support from your traded officer to arrange an Attendance Improvement Meeting led by the most appropriate attendees. If the school has an SLA this will be arranged by the School Traded Officer</p> <p>Carry out a contextual safeguarding school assessment to identify any common themes</p> <p>School attendance meeting chaired by the headteacher. Consider use of the volunteer hub to support</p> | Model Child Protection Policy |

Evidence of successful Level 2 practice

- Summaries, plans, targets and reviews from school attendance meetings
- Letter recommending parenting courses
- Early help assessment form
- Contextual safeguarding assessment
- Minutes of TAF meeting with actions reviewed and implemented
- Minutes of AIM meeting with actions reviewed and implemented

Level 2 should help you to make sure that you have effective strategies in place to promote good attendance with pupils whose attendance causes concern.

If this is not working with an individual pupil or a group of pupils, the staged approach moves on to Level 3.

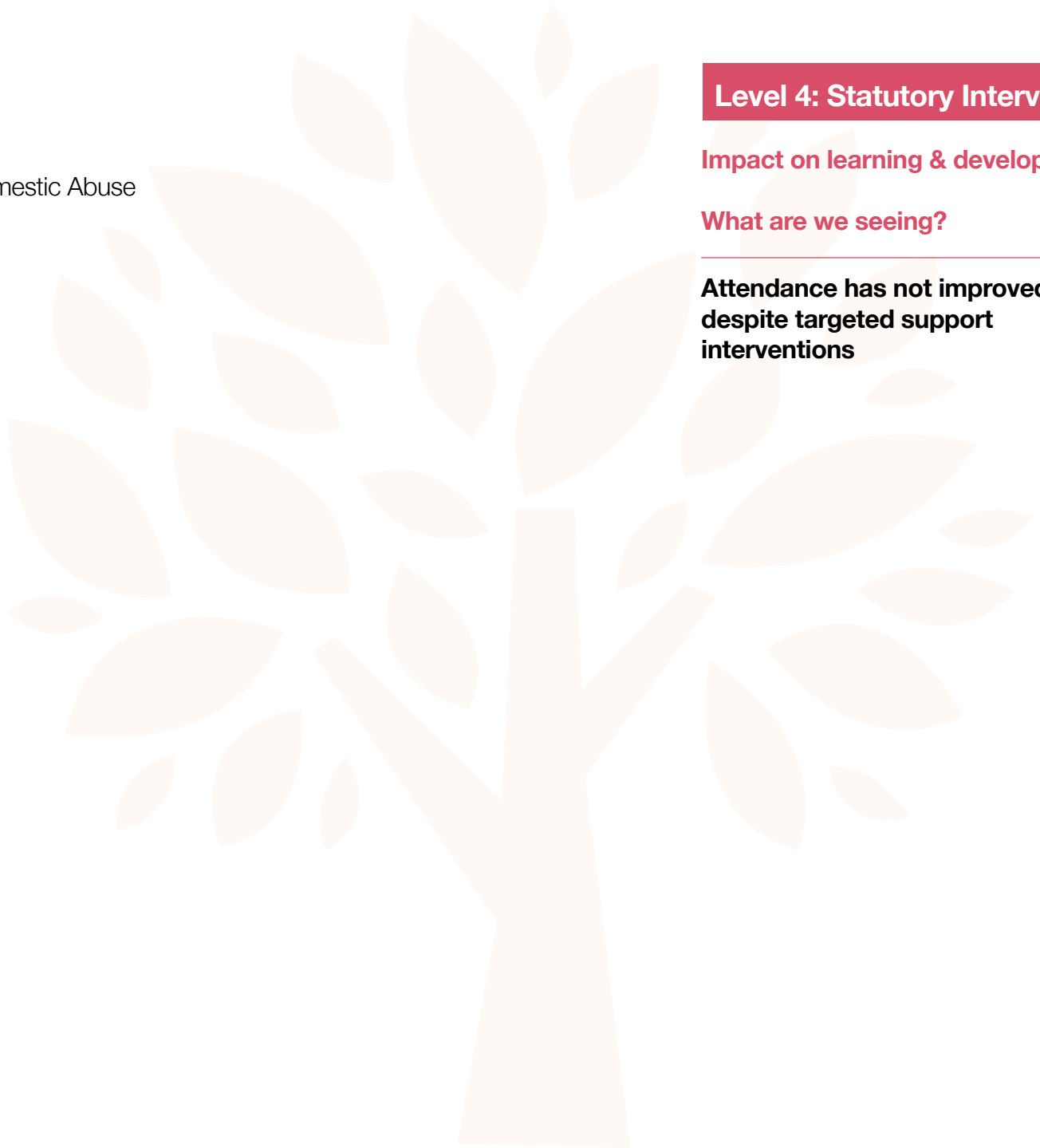
Level 3: Targeted Intervention: Brokering support from multi-agencies to meet the challenge of poor attendance

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|--|--|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| AIM and/or TAF meeting actions have failed to improve attendance | <p>Family First officer is assigned to family to encourage attendance by developing a more robust action plan and assisting with family issues</p> <p>The Traded Officer will refer the case to a Statutory Officer to consider for case work</p> <p>The school will refer the case to a Statutory Officer if they don't have an SLA using the Statutory Referral Form</p> | Statutory Referral Form |
| Parents are regularly providing reasons for their child's absence from school which are not legitimate | <p>Inform the parent that if their child's attendance doesn't improve, the LA has to consider statutory action in line with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)</p> | This Knowsley penalty notice code of conduct outlines the process and includes an exemplar letter to parents and referral form |
| Lateness has not improved or has deteriorated. | <p>A penalty notice may be issued "In cases where a child persistently arrives at school after the register has closed and has accumulated 10 unauthorised late marks within a period of no more than 10 weeks". (LA penalty notice code of conduct)</p> | |

Evidence of Graduated Response

- Warning notice to parents
- Additional referrals to other services – CAMHS, Shield, Butterflies for Bereavement, Diamond for Domestic Abuse
- Family First case notes
- Referral form from Traded officer/school to Statutory officer
- Statutory Officer Support Plan

If Level 3 is unsuccessful, the staged approach moves on to Level 4.



Level 4: Statutory Intervention: Safeguarding & the Management of Poor Attendance

Impact on learning & development

What are we seeing?

Attendance has not improved despite targeted support interventions

Response

What should we be doing?

The lead school attendance professional holds a formal inter-agency meeting. The outcomes will formulate a Parenting Contract and referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This will involve statutory casework and inter-agency support in line with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 and The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)

Escalate to the Attendance of Vulnerable Children Group for further support and advice

Consider referral to Children Missing in Education team via the School Attendance Service

Escalate to police for a welfare call 111 if unable to contact parents

Resources

These are examples of letters sent to parents following a referral to MASH:

[Letter 1](#)

[Letter 2](#)

[Letter 3](#)

This is a sample LA parenting contract

CME Statutory Guidance

Knowsley CME Policy

[Here is a summary of the main areas covered by PACE](#)

[MARF Referral form](#)

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|--|--|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Parents have not engaged with TAF and have no reason for the pupil's low attendance | <p>Parents are made aware that there are legal ramifications if they fail to cooperate. If the parenting contract does not improve the pupil's attendance, the parent will be invited to an Interview under caution in line with PACE and then the case will be reviewed by the pre-proceedings panel which involves the School Attendance Service Manager and two representatives from Legal Services</p> <p>The school and agencies involved will be asked if there are any reasons why the case should not progress to the Family or Magistrates' Court. These will then be considered by the panel as part of the "Public Interest Test" and the "Evidential Tests"</p> <p>The outcomes from this panel can be to apply for an Education Supervision Order or decide either that further support is required or that it is not in the public Interest to proceed to criminal prosecution</p> <p>Consider the risks to the pupil. Are the concerns such that they require the pupil to be referred to Children's Social Care for statutory involvement under Educational Neglect?</p> | <p>This document outlines the differences between a parenting order, education supervision order and a school attendance order.</p> <p>This is the agenda for a pre-proceedings panel meeting.</p> <p>Section 4 of this document explains the working of the "public interest" decision.</p> <p>This document contains relevant extracts about attendance from the Education Act 1996 Section 4441 (parent fails to secure attendance) 4441a (where parent failed to ensure they attend school)</p> |

| Impact on learning & development | Response | Resources |
|---|--|---|
| What are we seeing? | What should we be doing? | |
| Evidence of Educational Neglect. Prosecution has failed. | <p>The school makes a referral to children's social care for Educational Neglect via the MARF process to MASH. If school are unsure if meets the threshold of MASH they should refer via the vulnerable children template into the Attendance of Vulnerable Children Group</p> | <p>This is a copy of the LA's policy on educational neglect</p> |
| Evidence of Graduated Response | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MASH referral form• Parenting contract• Warning letter and paperwork around penalty notices• Minutes of MASH meeting | | |

Some top tips for improving attendance

Developing a skilled and attendance-knowledgeable workforce

- Appreciate that a ‘one model fits all’ approach is not effective and that dealing with attendance on an individual needs basis is paramount
- Lead from the top: aim for Headteacher involvement to promote the importance placed on attendance – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/for-principals-leading-attendance/>, <https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/educators/professional-student-support-staff/>
- Organise CPD for all staff to understand the importance of attendance: what constitutes persistent absence (PA)?; share the attitudes of pupils who are absent or late to school; heighten awareness of physical and mental illness and strategies for coping with these in school – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/educators/teachers/>
- Have a wall chart of PA pupils for admin staff/SLT/LM/attendance officer to refer to so that if a parent rings in to inform of an absence, these key school staff know exactly how many days the pupil has already missed and can respond appropriately

Review school practice

- Adopt an Adminstrating Medicine policy which is clearly implemented and shared with parents (see resource in Level 1 above)
- Engage your school nurse to encourage students to discuss their concerns. Conduct a medical health review – https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AAP_policy_statement_chronic_absence_2019_.pdf
- Encourage staff and children to have the flu vaccination – <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-flu-programme>
- Establish an asthma clinic in school (asthma can be a significant reason for absence) – https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Mapping-the-Early-Attendance-Gap-Exec-Summary-4-pager_4.pdf
- https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SBHCs-Early-Dismissal-Seat-Time_Van-Cura_2010.pdf
- Pick pupils up in the school minibus in the morning – <https://eu.freep.com/story/news/education/2019/05/28/detroit-public-schools-absent-vans/1253365001/>

- Set up a school walking bus – <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/145562/8/1-s2.0-S0965856418315751-main.pdf>
- Develop “safe passage” routes to school: volunteers line the routes to school to make pupils feel safer – https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REPORT_Attendance-Playbook-Covid-Edition.pdf
- Monitor remote learning attendance where this is operating – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/monitoring-attendance-in-distance-learning/>
- Ensure the school has developed and delivers an engaging curriculum, suitable for all learners – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/reducing-chronic-absence-requires-problem-solving-support-not-blame-punishment/>
- Greet each pupil at the school entrance at the start of school and at the classroom door for each lesson – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/mentoring-elementary-success-mentors/what-does-an-elementary-success-mentor-do/meet-and-greet-each-morning/>
- Review what happens and what pupils do during break and lunchtimes – provide more structure – https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REPORT_Attendance-Playbook-Covid-Edition.pdf
- Be familiar with the content and findings in Knowsley’s Behaviour Insights Report (Appendix F), especially what is captured from the voice of the child and the families. These are Knowsley pupils’ and families’ views

Effective communication systems

- Create short, considered letters and other communications, regularly reminding all parents about attendance – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategies-for-Connecting-with-Students-and-Families-rev-8-2-20.pdf>
- Send letters to parents of pupils who are absent, comparing their child’s absence with those of the whole class – <https://leadinglearner.me/2017/07/02/absences-matter-and-you-can-help/>
- Ensure that warning letters aren’t sent to parents of pupils with approved authorised absences or with known medical conditions that have prevented them from coming to school
- Adopt a personalised response to attendance bearing in mind parents’ and children’s needs – be careful not to blanket everyone with a threshold of 96% or below

- Use a text service to alert parents to absence or lateness, utilising this service as soon as the attendance issue is known – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/best-practices-for-texting-families/>
- Contact parents at different times of the day – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategies-for-Connecting-with-Students-and-Families-rev-8-2-20.pdf>
- Vary who makes first response calls to maintain impact – include SLT members including the headteacher when possible – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/for-principals-leading-attendance/develop-staff-capacity-to-adopt-effective-attendance-practice/>
- Nudging parents proves more effective than threatening them. Try “Are you aware how many days your child has missed?”– type letters – https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Todd-postcard-Nudge-research-publis-REL_2017252.pdf
- Discussions with families should be centred initially on hopes/aspirations for their children rather than focused on poor attendance. The impact of tackling attendance in research worked best when families were contacted about something else first – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/reducing-chronic-absence-requires-problem-solving-support-not-blame-punishment/>
- Regularly and in a variety of ways communicate how school attendance looks how children are enjoying school, share pictures on social media, extend positive messaging. Ensure the school makes it very clear when pupils are too sick to go to school and when they should attend – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/messaging/how-sick-is-too-sick/>
- Ensure pupils ask for medical appointments outside of school or virtual appointments so they don’t miss school. Can you enlist the help of local medical centres in only offering pupils appointments out of school hours?

Work with the pupil, not just the parents

- Use restorative practice methods and approaches – <https://www.iirp.edu/news/during-the-covid-19-crisis-restorative-practices-can-help>
- Provide mentoring in school for pupils with absence issues – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/mentoring-elementary-success-mentors/>
- Provide character-building and self-confidence education – <https://turnaroundusa.org/resources-three-rs/> – <https://www.rulerapproach.org/>

Practical assistance

- Consider how to discreetly provide uniform/relax uniform requirements or have spare items available
- <https://www.attendanceworks.org/a-dream-team-for-reducing-chronic-absence-the-cleveland-browns/>
https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REPORT_Attendance-Playbook-Covid-Edition.pdf
- Understand the positive impact of relaxing equipment/uniform/homework expectations if attendance issues are key. It’s better for the pupil to attend than not to do so because of fear of repercussions from any of the above
- Provide period products or use period product schemes to combat period poverty and ensure such products are easily accessible for pupils, avoiding unnecessary embarrassment caused if they have to request them – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/period-products-in-schools-and-colleges/period-product-scheme-for-schools-and-colleges-in-england>
- Provide pupils/parents with advice on washing uniform or personal hygiene if necessary – <https://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/toolkits/integrating-attendance-into-kindergarten-transition/offer-supports-to-reduce-health-related-absences/>

Rewards and incentives

- Consider rewarding improved attendance, not just 100% – <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10824669.2018.1438898?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=hjsp20>
https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REPORT_Attendance-Playbook-Covid-Edition.pdf
- Think carefully about any attendance incentivising during COVID-19 as pupils will need to self-isolate if asked – https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/REPORT_Attendance-Playbook-Covid-Edition.pdf

Appendix F – Knowsley’s Behavioural Insights Report

<https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-02/KMBC%20School%20Attendance%20BI%20Report%20FINAL%2001.02.23.pdf>



