

# GET YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL ON TIME

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## **SHEFFIELD'S ATTENDANCE STRATEGY**

**(For Early Years Settings, Schools,  
Academies and Colleges)**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Schools, local authorities, parents/carers and the wider community all have a role to play in improving attendance. Every child should be in education every day and every school should have policies and procedures designed to ensure that all its pupils attend regularly. The Local Authority (LA) should have clear policies and procedures in terms of how it will carry out its statutory duties and support schools with the wider attendance agenda.
- 1.2 There are clear links between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children. It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children and young people and poor school attendance is a recurrent theme in Serious Case Reviews. It is therefore important to ensure that school attendance remains high profile on school and local authority agendas.
- 1.3 Regular review should be a key component of strategy development. This review has been particularly influenced by the:
- Sheffield City Council Corporate Plan 2015 – 18
  - Sheffield Children and Families' Plan
  - The planned changes to support services within the LA, in particular the New Locality delivery model for Early Intervention and Prevention.
  - Central position of schools being responsible for the attendance of the children on their roll.
  - Need to continually strengthen and improve the attendance of vulnerable groups of children
  - Sheffield's position in Attendance National League Tables
  - Changes to legislation with regards to term time leave for holidays. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.)
- 1.4 School attendance is central to all the priorities in the city's Children and Families Plan. Within this Plan, the **Prevention and Early Intervention Service** has the following key priorities:
- Prevention and Early Intervention, including enabling and strengthening universal services and community support.
  - Early Years: commissioning of services to support the Early Years Best Start model.
  - Parenting: delivering a multi-agency citywide approach to support for the families in need of additional support.
  - Attendance: ensuring continued improvement in attendance across the primary, secondary and special school sector.
  - Building Successful Families (Troubled Families): embedding the whole household 'Way of Working' approach to supporting and assisting

those families who present with particular needs in relation to domestic abuse/violence, school attendance, anti-social behaviour/crime, ill health, substance misuse, financial exclusion and worklessness issues.

- 1.5 These priorities are linked to the Sheffield's Corporate Plan. The reviewed strategy is therefore central to the Sheffield's Corporate Ambition that all schools are good schools and that every child will be in education every day.
- 1.6 Improving school attendance for children and young people will not only help the LA to achieve these priorities, but more importantly it will help improve the life chances of the most vulnerable including: Looked After and Adopted Children, Young Carers and children with learning difficulties and or disabilities (LD/D).

**Evidence shows the true impact of children and young people missing school:**

- 10 minutes late to school every day = 32 hours a year of lost education;
- 1 day a week of school missed = 2 months a year of lost education;
- Half a day a week missed, throughout school life =

**One full year of lost education!**

- 1.7 The strategy considers changes to local authority and schools responsibilities around part time timetables and exclusions.
- 1.8 The continuing approach for Sheffield, outlined within the revised strategy in Section 3, will to be to:
  - Continue to encourage and support schools to take an increased role in low level attendance issues prior to requesting support from the Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST);
  - Ensure that MAST and School staff have access to up to date attendance advice and support within the developing Localities Model.
  - Continue to take a whole family approach with regards to attendance and contribute to positive Building Successful Families outcomes
  - Prioritise Looked After and Adopted Children.
  - To target individual PA children within all Sheffield schools and support improvements in the attendance levels of those needing additional input or support to make positive change.
  - Make full and effective use of legal powers available to the LA and ensure that resource needed to administrate the legal process is predicted and appropriate action is taken.

- Increase Sheffield's attendance to match or exceed the National Average;
- Lower Persistent Absence.

1.9 The aim of this document is to help schools and services efficiently manage pupil attendance and absence procedures as set down by the statutory requirements and the guidance from the DfE \*. The document will provide a corporate approach for managing attendance and absence in Sheffield.

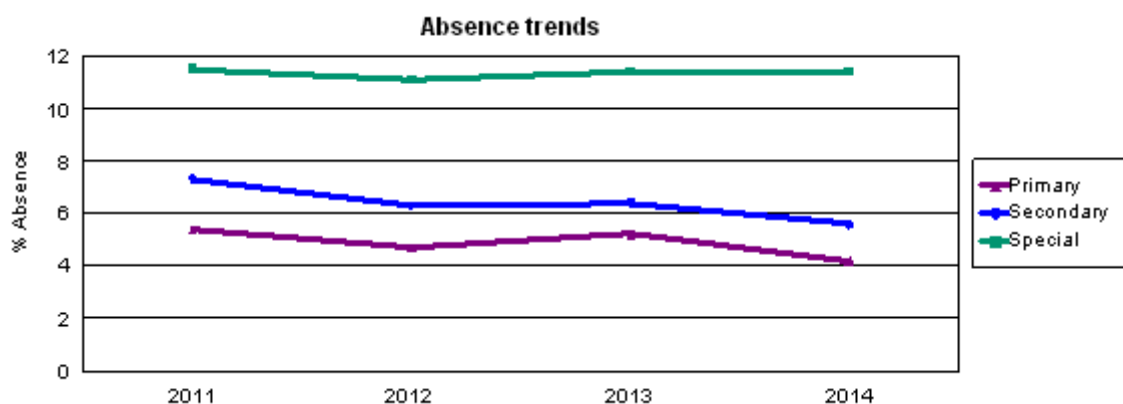
## 2. Context/Background

### 2.1 Attendance

Improving school attendance has been and continues to be, a challenge for schools, parents/carers and the Local Authority. The overall picture for school attendance in Sheffield, and nationally, has shown an increase in all phases since 2010. Last academic year (2013-2014) saw the highest levels attendance for the last 5 years, across all phases.

Primary attendance still remains higher than secondary attendance, with many primary schools having attendance consistently above 96%.

	Primary		Secondary		Special	
	National	LA	National	LA	National	LA
2010	94.79	94.38	93.20	92.59	89.75	89.26
2011	95.00	94.55	93.50	92.59	90.00	88.30
2012	95.60	95.25	94.10	93.60		88.87
2013	95.30	94.80	94.20	93.60		88.60
2014		95.70		94.40		88.60

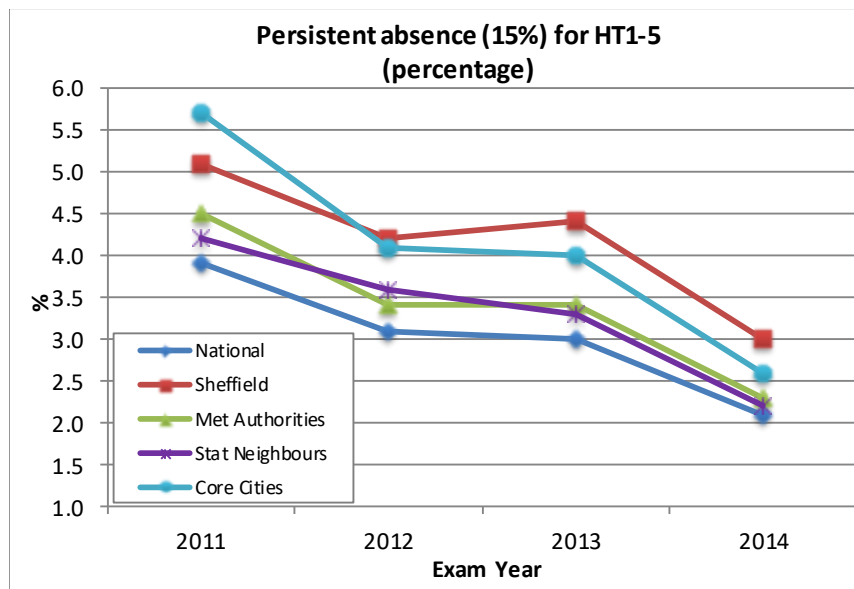


## 2.2 Persistent Absence

A key priority both nationally and locally is to reduce Persistent Absence (PA). A child or young person is deemed to be PA if their overall total attendance is below 90%, this rose from 85% in September 2015.

Based on the 85% threshold, the graphs below show that nationally Persistent Absence has improved each academic year. At Primary phase the national picture improved every year. Sheffield mirrored the improvement up to 2012, with a slight increase of 0.2% in the 2013 exam year. At Secondary phase there has been a consistent improvement every academic year.

Despite these improvements Sheffield still has significantly more persistent absentees each academic year compared nationally and against statistical neighbours.



### Persistent Absence 15%

	2011	2012	2013	2014
National	3.9	3.1	3.0	2.1
Sheffield	5.1	4.2	4.4	3.0
Met Authorities	4.5	3.4	3.4	2.3
Stat Neighbours	4.2	3.6	3.3	2.2
Core Cities	5.7	4.1	4.0	2.6

	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Pri PA actual	4.3	4.9	3.2			
Pri PA target		3.9	3.5	3.1	9.5	8.5
Pri PA national	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6
Sec PA actual	9.8	8.7	7.2			
Sec PA target		8.3	7.5	6.7	13.5	12.5
Sec PA national	7.4	6.4	5.9	5.5	5.2	5
Spec PA actual						
Spec PA target					27	25
Spec PA national						
Pri absence	4.7	5.2	4.2			
Pri target		4.6	4.45	3.8	3.4	3.0
Pri national	4.4	4.7				
Sec absence	6.4	6.4	5.7			
Sec target		6.1	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.2
Sec national	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.4
Spec absence	11.4	11.5	11.7			
Spec target		10.7	10.3	11.2	10.7	10.2
Spec national	9.6	9.7				

Data sources:

Actuals - C&F performance dashboard

Targets - black = attendance strategy;

National - DfE SFRs

Key:

Target met

Target not met

### 3 Strategy Themes and Priorities

3.1 The key themes and priorities of the strategy are:

- Continue to support schools' own management of attendance
- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Support for Looked After Children
- Local Authority Targeted Support
- Full and Effective use of Legal Powers

#### 3.2 Schools' own management of attendance

Schools have a statutory duty under Section 175 of the Education Act (2002) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. 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 the school attendance policy that will engage families. It is important that Governors take a key role in promoting good attendance when approving this policy.

3.3 It is further acknowledged that schools will take responsibility for low level attendance issues before requesting additional support from the Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST). In most schools this would include 'First Day' absence procedures, meeting with parents and where resources permit, home visits.

3.4 Good practice guidance suggests that schools can improve attendance By:

- Designating a member of the Senior Management Team as Attendance Lead.
- Identifying a member of the Governing Body to take responsibility for attendance. Other governors may also play a more active role in monitoring individual cases where this is part of the school's attendance policy.
- Producing and annually reviewing a whole school attendance policy, which sets out how attendance is managed and what monitoring systems are in place. This should be endorsed and monitored by the governing body.
- Setting realistic but challenging annual attendance targets.
- Having efficient and effective registration systems which encourage punctuality and safeguard children.
- Adhering to legal requirements regarding attendance and registrations. **(please refer to 'Full and Effective Use of Legal Powers' below)**



- Having efficient and timely monitoring and referral systems that identify attendance concerns, provide support and escalate to Social Care Fieldwork Teams when appropriate.
- Being observant and alert to changes in patterns of attendance by individual pupils as well as particular groups.
- Having a rigorous approach to sanctioning holidays in term time, following the LA guidance (**please refer to Sheffield's Code of Conduct for penalty notices (draft) 2015**)
- Encouraging both teaching and non-teaching staff to forge effective links with parents.
- Sharing good practice locally across families of schools and city wide through engagement with the Schools Attendance Forums.

### 3.5 Early Intervention and Prevention

Integrated Children's Services were introduced in 2006 and the Attendance and Inclusion Service was redesigned and became part of the Children and Young People's Service. Investment has been made over recent years in the 'Early Intervention and Prevention' approach, with the introduction of the Multi-Agency Support Teams (MASTs) as part of the Early Intervention and Prevention strategy. MAST's are made up of a range of staff with a variety of skills and backgrounds. The introduction of the 'whole household' approach ensures that issues and difficulties faced by children, young people and families are dealt with in a holistic way, which would of course include school attendance.

3.6 In 2015, the service is further developing to introduce a new locality working model which aims to build closer co-working relationships with schools. Bespoke models of triage, screening and delivery are being developed which better meet the needs of the children, families and schools in each area. The teams will continue to work within the principles of whole family working: 'One Family, One Worker and One Plan'.

3.7 The key principle which underpins the LAs 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 is a key priority for all MAST staff as they continue to work closely with children, young people, families, partners and schools to embed the concept of early intervention and prevention and keep children and young people safe.

3.8 Children, Young People & Families (CYPF), via MAST, will continue to provide support to schools on a range of issues, which will include attendance and inclusion (including exclusions). When schools have exhausted their internal support systems they can refer to MAST. The Attendance & Inclusion Officers, who are specialists within MAST, will offer advice and support to ensure that needs are identified and appropriate support is requested. Where the issue identified is a simple single agency issue, this will be requested via the completion of a 'Request for Support' proforma. Where the issues

presented are more complex it may require a multi-agency discussion, to address issues within the whole family, and will therefore require the completion of a Family Common Assessment Framework (FCAF) assessment.

3.9 MAST will continue to work closely with Social Care Fieldwork Teams to reduce the number of cases that may otherwise escalate. The Social Workers for Prevention and Intervention (SWPIs) who are part of MAST will play a lead role in providing advice and guidance to schools, partners and other MAST staff.

3.10 MAST will also continue to work closely with colleagues in the Inclusion and Learning Service (ILS) where dedicated work is already underway to ensure that 'Every child is in education every day'.

3.11 Support for 'Early Years' is integral to the early intervention approach and MAST staff and Managers will continue to build robust relationships with professionals working in Early Years, including Children's Centres. Support is available to Early Years settings for the management of attendance and punctuality. Tailor made guidance has been developed for early year's practitioners.

3.12 The LA will continue to work with other agencies to identify vulnerable children and young people who may be missing school.

3.13 It is acknowledged that children and young people who are 'Young Carers' for their parents, or other family members, can have poor or fluctuating attendance patterns. It is also evidenced that attendance and therefore their attainment can be substantially affected. The LA has made a pledge to work with schools and other partners to identify young carers at the earliest possible opportunity. In line with recent changes to legislation, the Care Act 2015 states that all young carers have a right to an assessment of need. This will require close working arrangements with Adult Services to negotiate and secure effective packages of support to ensure that these children and young people have every opportunity to reach their full potential and are not disadvantaged by loss of school time.

3.13 It is acknowledged that children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may require additional support to enable them to attend school every day and reach their full potential. MAST will work with partners who support children with complex needs, to enable families to have additional support to improve their attendance during and after the assessment process.

3.14 The LA will offer support to schools to ensure that absences are appropriately coded. This will include register checks when issues are identified and challenging schools where there may be the practice of 'unofficial' exclusions; in line with 2014 DFE changes to reporting and recording of part time timetables.

3.18 The LA will set realistic but challenging city wide attendance targets for attendance. Progress against these targets will enable the LA to demonstrate that the early intervention and prevention approach is having a positive impact on the children, young people and families that have been supported.

3.19 The LA will ensure that it fully utilises all available data to effectively track and monitor attendance trends and will target its resources appropriately, by providing early intervention and prevention services or by challenging and supporting schools to manage their attendance.

### **3.20 Support for Looked After Children**

On the whole, school attendance for our looked after, adopted children and care leavers is better than that of their peers. This has a wider benefit for looked after children than solely their educational achievement, as poorer school attendance is associated with higher levels of difficulties as they move into adult life. A key priority for Sheffield LA is to improve all outcomes for Looked After and Adopted Children (LAAC). For further information on Sheffield's LAAC strategy - please read Sheffield's Looked After and Adopted Children and Care Leaver Strategy 2014 (June 2014 to May 2015) <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/childfam/children-in-our-care/professionals-info.html>

3.21 Poor school attendance frequently has a direct impact upon achievement and life chances of young people, therefore for LAAC this is a crucial area for support. CYPF will do this by:

- The work of the Virtual School team, which will include monitoring attendance daily and calling multi-agency meetings at an early stage to address escalation of poor attendance.

The Virtual School team will:-

1. Monitor the attendance of all LAC in the city via Welfare Call;
  2. Follow up identified attendance issues for all LAC out of city, by contacting the schools and/or the Social Worker;
  3. Follow up identified attendance issues for all LAC in city, by contacting the school and/or the Social Worker and advising the school to make a referral to the MAST, where appropriate.
- Develop the role of the 3 LAC Champions as part of MAST who will support the process to fast track referrals for allocation and support;
  - Providing targeted support to staff and young people in Children's Residential Homes.

### **3.22 Local Authority Targeted Support**

3.23 MAST will work collaboratively with schools, to identify key issues relating to the impact of persistent poor attendance on overall attainment and progress of individual pupils.

3.24 It is acknowledged that schools and providers across the city may be at different points in terms of attendance process and procedures, and may have differing resources to support this agenda. Before a referral is made to MAST, the Attendance & Inclusion Officers will work with schools/providers to ensure that staff are able to:

- Identify the absence patterns;
- Work with the young person to identify the issues and put a support plan in place to address the issues;
- Contact parents where attendance issues do not improve;
- Inform parents that a referral is being made to MAST when the school/provider has exhausted all its internal support services available.

3.25 MAST will undertake a support and challenge role to schools, the LA and partners to ensure that barriers preventing school attendance are addressed and that pace within each case is maintained.

3.26 MAST will liaise with key members of Lifelong Learning and Skills (LL&S) to improve monitoring systems for attendance with alternative providers. And will ensure that young people who are affected by the raising of the compulsory participation age and who have had identified school attendance issues are supported.

### **3.26 Full and effective use of legal powers**

The LA has statutory duties to fulfil with regards to poor school attendance which include utilising legal powers. However, the LA will continue to work with Parents and Carers to do all it can to engage them and their children with schools. The LA will also ensure that all possible support avenues, both within schools and within the LA, have been exhausted before taking any punitive action. It will be important therefore to target families sensitively to ensure additional pressure is not put on vulnerable families in crisis.

3.27 Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices are interventions available to promote better school attendance and behaviour. Good behaviour and attendance are essential to children's educational prospects. These measures are permissive and it is for individual governing bodies and local authorities to decide whether to use them.

3.28 The LA will work closely with, and offer support to, named attendance staff in schools to progress cases via the legal system where required.

3.29 LAs also have other powers to enforce school attendance where this becomes problematic, including the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Eg: for unauthorised leave in term time.

3.30 School Attendance Orders. If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they can begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order. The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school. If they fail to comply with the order the parent can be prosecuted.

3.31 Education Supervision Orders. The local authority may consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education, either at a school or at home for a specified period of time.

3.32 Schools – Should adhere to legal requirements regarding attendance and registrations by:

- Completing attendance registers each morning and afternoon.
- Notifying the LA of any unexplained absences in excess of 10 continuous school days.
- Maintaining an 'Admissions and Attendance Register'.
- Only removing pupils from the Admissions Register in accordance with the requirements of the regulations.
- Keeping registers for three years, making them available to LA Officers when required.
- Keeping accurate records of any support offered which may be used if cases are progressed via the legal route.
- Presenting reports on absence to the Governing body for discussion;
- Taking a lead responsibility for initiating and monitoring 'Parenting Contracts' with support from MAST where required.
- Liaising with the LA if they wish to issue Penalty Notice warning letters.

For more detailed information, **please refer to 'Advice on School Attendance' and "Schools admissions Code" DFE 2014** and.

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/education/information-for-parentscarers/pupil-admissions.html> for information on the Local Authority admissions policy.

3.33 **Local Authority** – The LA will initiate legal proceedings only as a last resort when all other attempts to resolve attendance issues have been unsuccessful. Details of expectations of actions prior to legal proceedings are set out in Sheffield's Code of Conduct (2015)

## 4 Resources

### 4.1 Schools will:

- Identify a Senior Manager as Lead for Attendance.
- Identify a School Governor to take responsibility for Attendance.
- Analyse attendance data on a regular basis and make recommendations to the school's SMT;
- Submit attendance data on a regular basis in line with DfE and LA guidelines;
- Identify a member of staff to do first day calling (or will subscribe to an agency to carry out this work);
- Ensure that all school staff have a remit for challenging and supporting the attendance agenda;
- Have identified staff to liaise with MAST regarding a range of issues including attendance.

### 4.2 The Local Authority will:

- Continue to coordinate attendance improvement through the provision of a Senior Manager as Lead for Attendance.
- Develop an Attendance Strategy Group made of LA Officers, members of school staff and partners.
- Regularly analyse data provided by school to produce reports for key members of LA staff and schools.
- Provide Attendance and Inclusion specialists with responsibilities for:-
  - LAAC,
  - progressing cases through the legal system where appropriate,
  - Persistent absentees.
- Support the strategic development of attendance in schools via data analysis, support and advice. Team Managers, Attendance and inclusion specialists and Social Workers for Prevention and Intervention (SWPIs) give advice and guidance to schools, partners and MAST staff.
- Ensure that all MAST staff have a remit for challenging and supporting the attendance agenda.
- Undertake our statutory duties in the administration of the attendance legal process.

## 5 Action Plan and Review

5.1 Sheffield's Attendance Strategy will be supported by a live action plan which will be developed and agreed with key local partners including schools following the development of the Attendance Strategy Group. Progress in relation to the action plan will be monitored termly by the Attendance Strategy Group and the findings will form the basis of a report that will be made available on request.

5.2 If the strategy is working, then the key outcomes we would expect to see are:

- improved levels of attendance.
- reduced absence for holidays in term time.
- reduced numbers of pupils missing for unauthorised absence.
- an increase in the numbers of families supported via 'Building Successful Families' programme;
- improved levels of attainment in schools;
- improved outcomes for children, young people and families;
- improved outcomes for vulnerable groups e.g. LAC, Young Carers and SEND;
- reduction in the number of young people Not in Education or Employment (NEET);
- reduction in the number of cases escalated to the Social Care Fieldwork Service;
- reduction in the number of children deemed as 'Children In Need' (CIN);
- reduction in the number of children on child protection plans;
- Reduction in the number of children taken into the care of the LA.

5.3 The strategy will be reviewed annually led by the Attendance Strategy ASM in consultation with key partners including schools. The LA will monitor the effectiveness of the strategy through; regular review and updating of the Attendance Strategy Action Plan and report via agreed routes.

## **Further sources of information**

**[www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)**

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011
- Participation of Young People in Education, Employment or Training 2015
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006