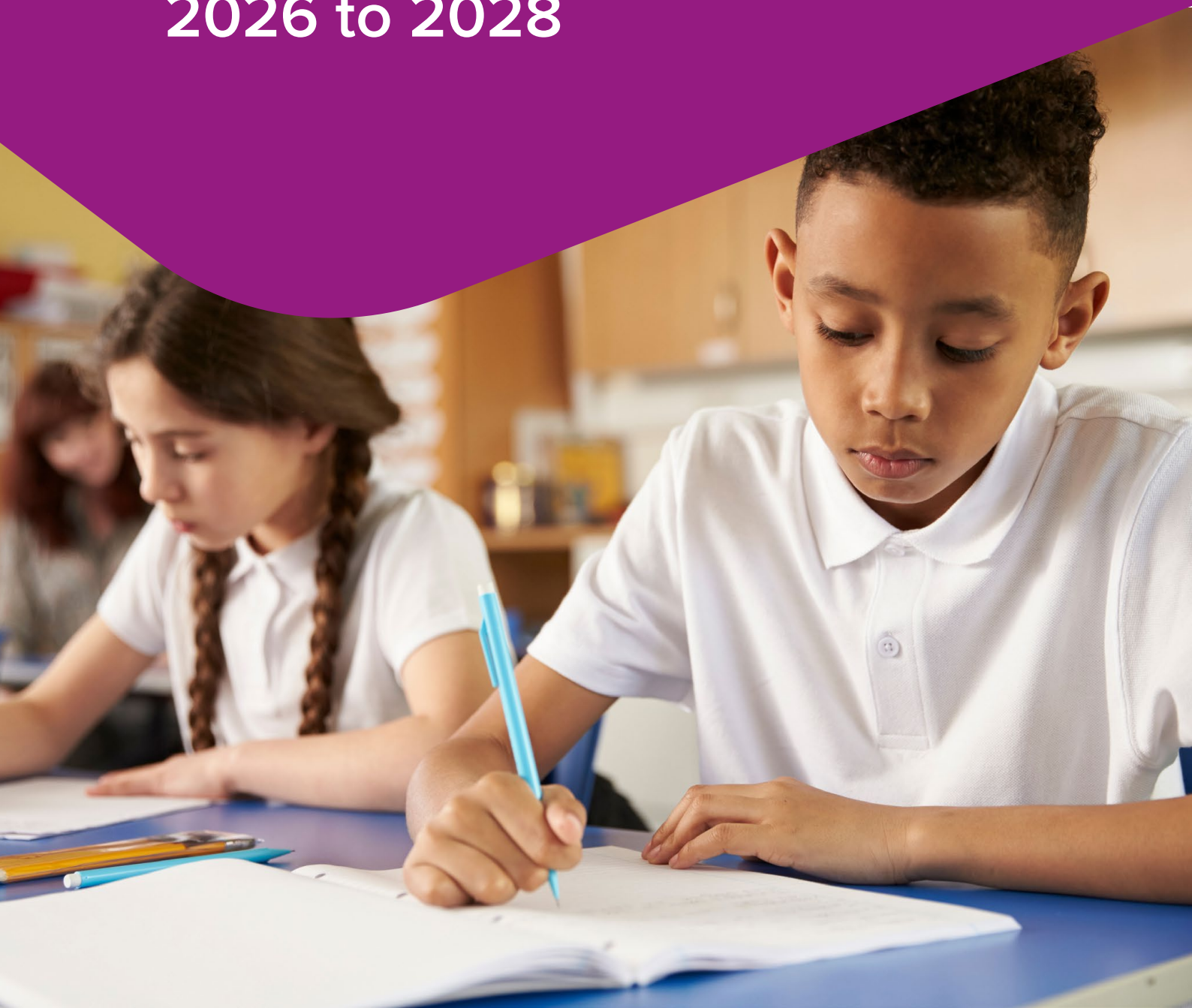
Public

DERBYSHIRE County Council

Derbyshire County Council

Attendance Strategy

2026 to 2028



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Derbyshire's Attendance Strategy
2025 to 2028

Foreword

Derbyshire County Council is dedicated to working collaboratively with schools and partners to improve attendance and punctuality. This strategy sets out our objectives and priorities for raising and sustaining attendance across the county.

We are committed to ensuring all Derbyshire schools are inclusive, providing calm, safe, and supportive environments where pupils feel a sense of belonging and are engaged in learning. Our approach supports parents and carers in promoting regular attendance, underpinned by strong partnerships with all those involved in supporting children and families.

Where attendance issues arise, the local authority and schools will work together to provide targeted support. Our approach is measured, aiming to understand and address barriers to attendance, and to encourage and support children and young people to attend school every day.



Our Mission

To make Derbyshire an even greater place for children and young people to thrive, where all can access a high-class education with a culture of inclusion and achievement that will positively impact on their life outcomes.

To achieve this, excellent attendance from children and young people is necessary.

We commit to:

- A person-centred approach to the early identification and management of poor attendance through whole school attendance management
- A clear and well communicated graduated response built on early intervention so that children and young people and families get the help they need when they need it
- A multi-agency approach 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
- Targeted reengagement of persistent and severely absent pupils

This policy will be adjusted for children who have additional needs and / or neurodivergence.

Our Vision

- Ensure more children and young people have a happy and enriched life experience
- Help children build positive, long-lasting friendships and lead happy lives
- Improve mental health and wellbeing of children and families
- Reduce child exploitation abuse and anti-social behaviour; non-attenders are significantly more vulnerable
- Help children and families prosper socially and economically
- Increase chances of success in further or higher education, or on apprenticeships
- Ensure that all children and young people have the skills they need as they move from education to employment
- Improve lifestyles and better prepare our young people for adulthood and the world of work

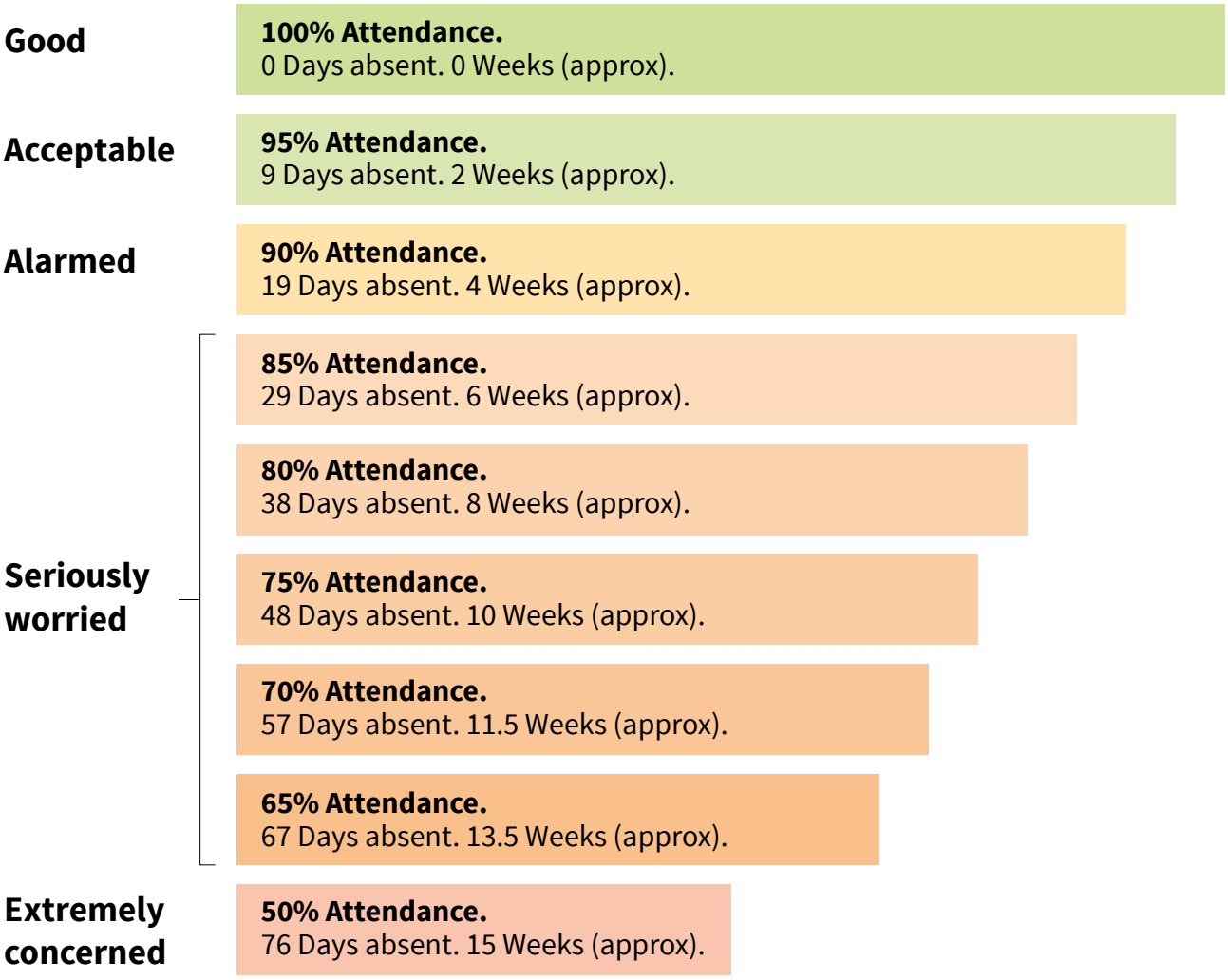
About Attendance

National Context

In May 2022, the DfE published the guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance and Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024). The guidance gives a clear message that improving attendance should not be the responsibility of one organisation. It should be achieved by working collaboratively and addressing the root cause of the absence.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates. They are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils have their needs understood and met. Schools should endeavour to remove all barriers so that children are able to and want to attend, so that they are keen and ready to learn. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance).

What do we mean by good attendance?



Educational Outcomes:

Pupils with 95–100% attendance are:

1.3 times
more likely to meet expected standards at Key Stage 2.

1.9 times
more likely to achieve a Grade 5 in English and Maths GCSE compared to those attending 90–95%.

Missing 10 days in Year 6

reduces the likelihood of meeting expected standards by **25%.**

Missing 10 days in Year 11

can halve the likelihood of achieving a Grade 5 in core subjects.

Early absenteeism predicts later academic struggles and continued absence.

Reduced access to learning opportunities leads to **lower literacy and numeracy skills** which are essential life skills.

What the DfE says:

The Department for Education (DfE) says that attendance over 95% is considered "good". Hundreds of children in Derbyshire are achieving 100% school attendance, and we should all aspire to that level. Research shows that "good" school attendance can directly impact life outcomes for our young people.

Ideally, children should attend every school day. Therefore 100% is the expected level, however, 95% is considered as good attendance. Anything below 95% is not good enough and will require action by school and parents/carers in partnership with the local authority and other relevant services. This may seem a high expectation of the children. However, when converted into sessions and days missed, it becomes apparent why this level of attendance is important. 95% attendance means a child misses two weeks of school across the year. 70% attendance, for example, means a child is absent for more than 11 weeks of the school year. This level of absence can make it very challenging for the child to catch up and can spiral into further absences.

Low School Attendance and Life Outcomes

School attendance is a cornerstone of educational success and long-term life chances. Persistent absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or more of school sessions, has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from UK government data and academic research shows that low attendance correlates strongly with poorer academic achievement, reduced lifetime earnings, higher unemployment risk, and adverse health outcomes.

Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) - Derbyshire Local Offer

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 and work in a solution focused way to overcome barriers to regular attendance. It is also important that when considering poor attendance, a holistic approach is taken. This should consider 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 believe that when teams and services come together, in a person-centred 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 sometimes attendance is impacted because of the capacity of others to provide the right level of care and support to children and young people; sometimes this relates to complex health needs or challenging social/ family circumstances which are often systemic barriers. It is important that teams working with families acknowledge this and work in a solution focused way to minimise absence from school.

The importance of good school attendance

The benefits of good school attendance can be summarised by the following:

- **School as a protective factor** – If a child or young person is in school, they are visible to professionals. This is crucial for identifying and meeting any additional or emerging needs.
- **Learning and achievement** – Regular attendance is crucial for CYP to gain the most from their education and become confident, emotionally resilient and engaged people. They need access to opportunities to build the skills and gain the tools they need so that they can contribute to society and succeed in their adult life.
- **Meeting needs** – If a child or young person regularly attends school, we can ensure that any emerging needs are identified, and they receive the support they need from a variety of services including health and social care.
- **The law** – All children are entitled to a suitable education. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority and schools to ensure adjustments are in place to support their access to this. It is a parent/carer's duty to ensure that they receive this.

The benefits of good school attendance

- For most children and young people, school is a place of safety and belonging
- The opportunity to build positive relationships with trusted adults
- The opportunity to develop social relationships with peers
- Experience new opportunities and have fun trying new things
- Children and young people will be encouraged to develop responsible behaviours
- Children and young people will develop their self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence
- Children and young people will develop healthy attachments and be able to separate from parents/carers
- Vulnerability and risk will be reduced and access to pastoral support provided
- Develop a range of skills and experiences which will serve them well into their adult life
- Schools are also the heart of the community for children, young people and their families - the barriers that CYP face to attending school become ingrained barriers to community inclusion as CYP get older, and therefore attendance is also crucial from a community inclusion perspective, particularly for marginalised groups.

Derbyshire's Attendance priorities

Eight priorities have been identified as areas that need to improve and where improvement will have a significant impact on the overall attendance rate:

1. The level of authorised absence

2. The level of persistent absence

3. Absence rates in special schools

4. Absence rates for children with Education Health Care Plans

5. Absence rates of children with a Social Worker

6. Absence rates for children with anxiety or Emotionally Based School Avoidance

7. Absence rates of children who are neurodiverse

8. Absence rates of children known to the youth offending service

Local Authority Context (Last academic year – 2025/26)

Primary School

94.92%
Attendance Rate in Derbyshire
94.69% National Average

12.27%
Persistent Absence in Derbyshire
13.9% National Average

Secondary School

91.43%
Attendance Rate in Derbyshire
91.43% National Average

22.57%
Persistent Absence in Derbyshire
24.21% National Average

Special School

89.5%
Attendance Rate in Derbyshire
86.81% National Average

29.14%
Persistent Absence in Derbyshire
36.25% National Average

Targeting support meetings (TSM)

In line with the DfE guidance, local authorities are expected to organise termly targeted support meetings with each school in their area. These meetings will take place three times per year with the Inclusion Support and Advisory Teacher and will focus on the following areas:

- school attendance priorities
- local authority attendance priorities
- attendance of children in the five absence categories (see below)
- attendance of specific cohorts of children
- successes and areas for improvement

A template will be used for these meetings so that information collected from schools is consistent and can be used in any local authority data analysis.

These meetings will be an opportunity to:

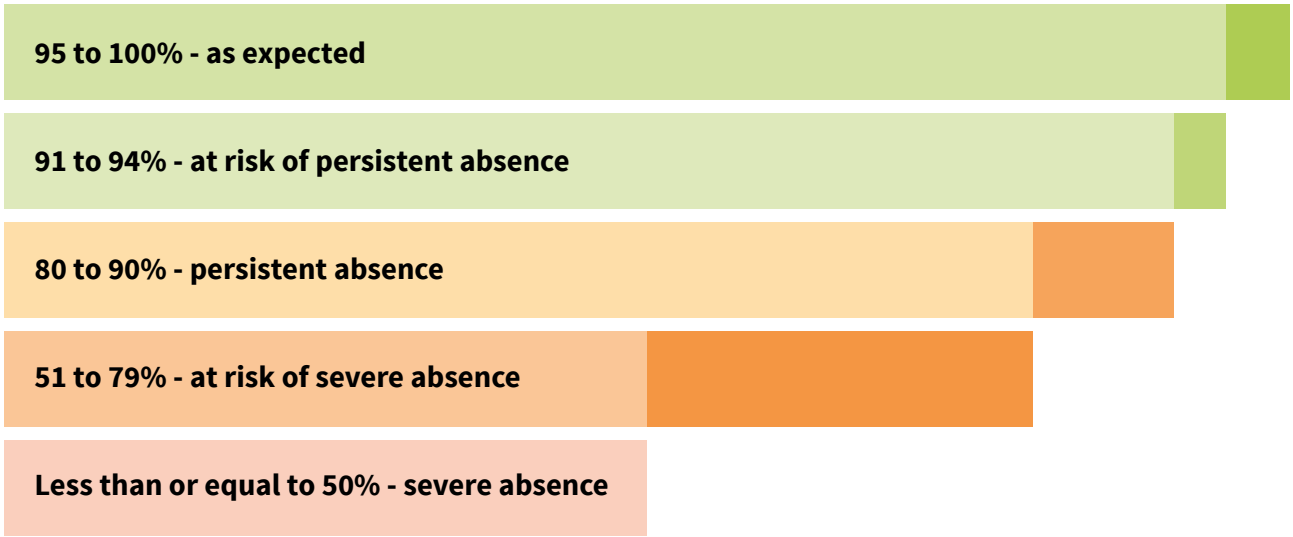
- build strong relationships and work collaboratively to support the wider attendance approach
- help the school identify areas to focus on in their school policies or approaches.

This may include:

- help in analysing their own data
- how they may learn from and work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends

Where barriers to attendance for a child or young person or family are complex and a child is within the severe absence category, the meetings will be an opportunity for the school, with the support of the local authority representative, to identify next steps.

School attendance – boundaries and description



Schools will be expected to report on numbers and percentages of children that fall into the at risk categories at the TSMs.

Children with a social worker

Good attendance at school offers additional safeguarding for vulnerable children. Historically, children with a social worker have had higher absence rates. A quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker are persistently absent. This compares with 10% for those who have never been in need.

Therefore, additional monitoring is required to improve the attendance of this cohort. This will be carried out by the Virtual School as part of their expansion to the role of overseeing the education of pupils with a social worker.

This will include:

- regular monitoring of attendance of children with a social worker including those looked after by the local authority
- setting aspirational targets for attendance within child protection plans and as part of the personal education plans for looked after children
- specific attendance training for designated teachers who support children who have ever needed a social worker
- work across children's social care services to make sure social workers understand:
  - the importance of good school attendance
  - that it is a key part of all children in need and child protection plans if attendance is a concern
- ensure schools inform a child's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school



Attendance is 'everyone's business'

Attendance is ‘everyone’s business’

Where previously, attention to school attendance has been the responsibility of schools and attendance teams, it should now be considered by all those working with children and families.

Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation. Effective practices for improvement will involve:

Close interaction with schools efforts on:

- curriculum
- behaviour
- bullying
- special educational needs support
- pastoral support
- mental health and wellbeing
- effective use of resources, including Pupil Premium

It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation.
It must be a concerted effort across:

- all teaching and nonteaching staff in school
- the trust or governing body
- the local authority
- other local partners

(Working together to improve school attendance)

The expectations are that everyone:

- is supportive of school and school attendance
- is attendance curious and asks why children are not in school
- considers school commitments when making appointments and contacts with families
- is aware of the wider safeguarding risks of a child not being at school (is the child at home alone, or out alone?)
- reminds parents/carers of support available. For example; Early Help
- contacts the school if there is information that they should know (not being at school is a safeguarding concern)
- considers any changes in their organisation’s delivery that may impact positively on the attendance of children

The guidance provides a framework:



Expect

Everyone - pupil, parent/carer, school and other agencies involved should all have the same expectation for attending school. The culture across a school and the local authority should be that attending school is achievable for everyone. Attending every day is the expected aspiration.



Monitor

Early intervention is key and this is possible through early identification of non-attendance. Patterns of attendance for individuals as well as cohorts of children will help schools stop absences becoming entrenched by putting in the right strategies and getting the right people involved early on.



Listen and understand

There is always a reason for non-attendance. Providing possibilities for parents/carers and young people to talk about the reasons in and out of school, will allow all parties to work together to come up with the best solutions that will have the biggest impact.



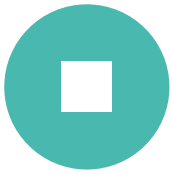
Facilitate support

Early intervention to facilitate change, through early assessment and identification of appropriate provision in and out of school, will have a positive impact on removing the barriers to attending. Support should not only be around the child in school but around the whole family especially when there are wider issues and ones that can impact on other children in the family.



Formalise support

Where parents/carers are not engaging with the support offered or are uncooperative, all partners must work together to explain the consequences of this, whilst support continues. Partners should consider who may be the right person to pursue this to try to establish good relationships and trust. Parenting Orders and Education Supervision Orders may be considered at this stage.



Enforce

Where all strategies have been exhausted, enforcement may be the only option that remains to protect the right of the child to an education. The school and partners must be confident that there are no other strategies to try.

Expected attendance

Children who are attending school for more than 95% of the possible sessions are considered as attending as expected.

Where no other services are involved, the school will provide universal support which includes:

- first day of absence contact
- following school absence process
- regular communication with parents/carers
- input to pupils on attendance– assemblies, tutor time
- regular monitoring of attendance data
- regular sharing of attendance data to all staff
- attendance a feature of parent evenings
- system or praise for recognising improvement in attendance
- reference to attendance in any Early Help assessment
- For children on a Child in Need (CiN) or a Child Protection (CP) plans or Children in Care (CiC) regular updates to agencies involved of improved or falling attendance
- school attendance discussed at Team Around a Child (TAC), CiN, CP and CiC meeting as regular feature
- For children with special educational needs, medical needs and Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) regular monitoring of attendance including days of illness, medical appointments to ensure all needs are met



Persistent absence

Children who have attendance at 89% or below are considered to be persistently absent. There is potential at this point to consider legal intervention once all other avenues of support have been explored.

Schools should consider:

- complete an Early Help assessment
- consider a Team Around a Child (TAC)
- consider whole family support especially if factors are impacting on more than one child's attendance
- review pastoral support increasing family and child contact if appropriate
- keep detailed chronology of visits, contacts and outcomes
- ensure parents are fully informed of the consequences of non-attendance focusing on the detrimental impact on child's achievement and wellbeing as well as the legal implications
- consider a parenting contract or education supervision order if appropriate
- consider a Fixed Penalty Notice if absence is linked to a family holiday that has been unauthorised
- consider submitting a legal report if attendance is not improving and is unlikely to improve, even if the level of support is increased

For children on Children in Need or Child Protection plan, or who are Children in Care: attendance is a feature of plan meetings and actions of plan and their impact on attendance is discussed

For children with special educational needs, medical needs or an Education Health Care Plan: attendance is a feature of any needs review meeting and impact of needs not being met on attendance is discussed

Severe absence

Children who are severely absent are attending for less than 50% of the sessions. They are therefore at very high risk of further long-term absences and exposure to safeguarding situations unless a concerted effort is made across all partners. Children with severe absence will be discussed as a priority at the termly Targeting Support Meetings.

Schools should consider:

- escalating through the Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) pathway if all steps have been taken
- escalating with Virtual School if child is in care or has a social worker
- a consultation with Early Help to discuss a whole family plan
- a prosecution for non-attendance if absence is unauthorised
- a safeguarding referral

The local authority should consider a case of neglect if absences continue to be unauthorised once all avenues of support including appropriate educational support or placements have been facilitated by schools and the local authority.

Who is responsible for ensuring good attendance?

- Ultimately it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure that their children receive appropriate full-time education according to their age, ability and aptitude.
- This usually means making sure a child is registered at a school and attends regularly and on time.
- The term “parent” can include anyone who has parental responsibility for the child, or who has care of the child – in other words, lives with and helps provide day to day care for the child.
- Whilst regular school attendance is predominantly the responsibility of parents and carers, schools must play a central role in ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly.
- This involves playing a proactive role in the promotion of regular attendance, following a graduated response and making the necessary reasonable adjustments to removing the barriers to attendance.
- Many other stakeholders are involved in helping to ensure good attendance, for example the Childrens Services at the Local Authority, Social Workers, Health Care professionals and the Police.

Derbyshire Advocates for a “No blame” Approach to Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) involves schools and families working together to address the underlying emotional and psychological needs of a child, rather than penalising them for non-attendance. This collaborative strategy focuses on understanding the child’s distress, implementing supportive plans, and addressing the root causes of their barriers to attendance rather than treating it as wilful truancy. Key elements include open communication between the school and family, support for both the child and parents’/carers’ mental health, and tailored support plans that reduce uncertainty for the child. It is essential that families difficulties are heard and understood.

Key principles of a no-blame approach are:

Recognise and validate feelings:

Acknowledge the child’s anxiety and distress as real but avoid over-reassuring or dismissing their feelings. The goal is to make them feel heard and understood.

Focus on collaboration:

Parents/carers and schools should work together to support the child. Schools should not treat EBSA as truancy and should not penalise parents for their child’s non-attendance.

Identify underlying issues:

Work to identify the root causes of the avoidance, which may include mental health difficulties, anxiety, or other trauma.

Implement tailored support:

Create individualised support plans that are detailed and flexible. This can include a specific plan for entering the classroom, managing anxiety, and having an “exit plan” if needed.

Address health and wellbeing:

Emphasise the long-term benefits of school attendance and support the health and wellbeing of the child and family. This can include referring to mental health support services if necessary.

Shift the system focus:

Understand that EBSA may indicate a mismatch between the child’s needs and the school environment. The system needs to adapt to support the child, which can include providing a suitable alternative education if necessary.

Practical strategies for schools and families

Early intervention:

Be alert to early signs like a change in attitude, distress around school, or decreasing attendance, and act proactively.

Consistent communication:

Maintain open and consistent communication between the child, parents/carers, and school staff to discuss worries and strategies.

Positive and proactive outlook:

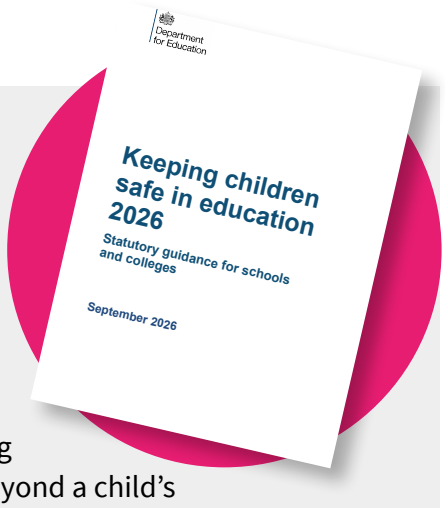
Stay positive and proactive in your approach. Track progress and use review meetings to identify what else might be needed to support the child's journey back to school. It needs to be recognised that small steps are often potentially big successes and this should be acknowledged.

Professional support:

Refer to external support services for both the child and the parents, such as mental health services or educational psychology teams.

Safe return plan:

Develop a gradual and supportive plan for the child to return to school, which can include strategies like starting with a shorter day or being in a specific, comfortable classroom setting.



"26. Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone"

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Attendance - What can schools do?

- Have high expectations for every pupil's attendance
- Communicate these expectations clearly and consistently
- Make sure staff, pupils and families understand that absence is a potential safeguarding risk
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes
- Have an 'attendance champion' in the senior leadership team
- Use clear and consistently applied systems to improve, reward and incentivise attendance
- Reasonable adjustments need to be a key element of all school policies
- Analyse the data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking)
- Schools need to be proactive in their use of data, identifying vulnerable groups and ensuring plans are in place
- Follow the delivery model and expectations for Local Authorities set out by DfE
- Work with children, families, schools and partners to find new ways to celebrate great attendance
- 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
- Have a clear strategy to capture the pupil voice and having a solution focused approach to removing the barriers to attendance
- Ensure there is a clear "no blame" multi-agency policy that enables the school to engage with families in order to identify Early Help and resourcing needs, using a solution focused approach

Attendance - What can the Local Authority do?

- Listen to parents/carers to find out why their children are not attending
- Ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- Make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school
- Understand there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the curriculum, ethos and behaviour
- Proactive communication with parents/carers is key to support parents to make sure that their children attend
- Provide data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to identify those at risk
- Work with health partners to better support children and families with complex health needs
- Proactively review SEND practices to ensure poor attendance and the reasons for it are considered at multi agency meetings, individual reviews and SEND assessments.
- Develop a comprehensive training programme for school staff, headteachers, governors, health and care professionals, and key partners to ensure a unified approach to defining and promoting good attendance and how best to secure it
- Develop a communications campaign
- Revise safeguarding practices so we respond to the risks associated with poor attendance and escalate appropriately
- Ensure governance systems and processes are in place to manage key issues such as the attendance of vulnerable students



Inclusion Support Services

The Inclusion Support Services actively aims to work with all Derbyshire schools to remove barriers to inclusion. Inclusive schools should be places where every child is valued, understood, and empowered. By breaking down barriers to participation and championing diversity, environments will be created where all pupil's unique strengths and aspirations are recognised. This commitment to inclusion not only fosters a deep sense of belonging and engagement in learning, but also lays the foundation for lifelong wellbeing, achievement, and success into adulthood.

What do we do?

- Increase the understanding of inclusive practice and expectations around children with SEND at a senior, strategic level, including leadership teams and governors.
- Advise and support on clarity of need and provision required.
- Provide county-wide training, development and support for SENDCOs and school staff.
- Reduce the volume and frequency of exclusions, suspensions and part time-timetables to ensure inclusion and best outcomes for all children and young people.
- Advise and support on statutory attendance. Derbyshire County Council has taken a multi-layered approach to embed the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance. ISATS are now the single point of contact for schools.

How do we do it?

- Engaging in co-production with children, young people, and their families, so they can participate in decision making.
- Supporting the development of inclusive policy and practice.
- Engaging and linking support across other DCC Services and external agencies.
- Strengthening and aligning offers and approaches to develop inclusive practice.
- Analysing, measuring and regularly responding to the impact of support.

Whole School Inclusion - This area aims to develop inclusive practices and policies at a strategic level, including leadership teams and governors. The goal is to increase understanding of inclusive practices and expectations around children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) at a senior level.

Targeted & Specialist Support - Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers provide specialist advice and strategies for children with specific needs as those described in the Code of Practice. This includes individual and small group support, as well as professional development for school staff. The focus is on upskilling and advising school staff on best inclusive practices.

The **Sensory and Physical Support teachers** work with children, young people, their families, and schools, offering information and support where difficulties may impede learning or development. The SPSS has 3 specialist areas: Teacher of the Deaf Team, Physical Impairment Team, Vision Impairment Team. The vision impaired teachers and teachers of the deaf work with children from birth.

Engagement - This area supports the social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs of children and young people through tailored interventions like Positive Play, Nurture, and Outdoor learning. The aim of the Engagement Service is to embed these interventions into Derbyshire school practice and to create and further develop inclusive environments in schools. The Service is led by experienced practitioners trained in child development, SEMH strategies and therapeutic interventions. The service provides a holistic, child-centred, approach that empowers children and young people to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Key Areas of Focus and Development

Attendance: The DfE's Local Authority Attendance Toolkit has been shared with schools. It includes examples of effective practice, interactive planning tools, and case studies. Updated guidance on part-time timetables, managed moves, and temporary provision panels has been integrated into Derbyshire's inclusion offer. Derbyshire's graduated response to inclusion is soon to be published outlining the Local Authority's, schools and parent roles in supporting attendance.

Inclusion framework: The Inclusion Framework is designed to support discussions that contribute to the development of schools and educational settings. Its sections address leadership and management, ethos and environment, curriculum, teaching and learning, identifying needs and monitoring impact, pupil voice, staff health and wellbeing, targeted and specialist support and intervention, and parents and carers. Each school has an impact plan aligned with the inclusion framework, focusing on specific areas where the Inclusion Support Advisory Teacher provides assistance to help implement inclusive practices across the whole school.

Whole school provision mapping: A strategic framework that enables schools to systematically identify, plan, and evaluate the range of support and interventions available to all pupils. It reflects a graduated response model—Universal, Targeted, and Specialist—ensuring inclusive, high-quality teaching for all, while also addressing specific needs through evidence-based interventions. Provision maps are bespoke to each setting, informed by annual audits of pupil needs, and grounded in robust assessment and tracking systems. They serve as a dynamic tool to align staffing, resources, and practices with the evolving needs of children and young people, promoting transparency, consistency, and shared understanding across the school community.

Support and Planning Meetings: (starting from Autumn 2025) are structured, collaborative discussions facilitated by Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers to help schools navigate the complexities of their pupil populations. These meetings provide tailored advice on how best to support individual, group, and whole-school needs The meetings explore appropriate support pathways, including whole-school approaches, targeted and specialist referrals, inclusion panel funding, or Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs). The aim is to ensure that provision is thoughtfully matched to need, enabling inclusive practice and equitable pupil development.

Moving on Together meetings: (starting Autumn 2025) Facilitated by Derbyshire's Inclusion Support Service (ISS) as a supportive next step following a decision not to proceed with an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). These meetings offer families and schools a structured opportunity to understand the rationale behind the decision and collaboratively plan provision and support for the child or young person within the graduated response framework.

Inclusion Support Service (ISS) - Derbyshire Local Offer

How will we know the strategy is working

How will we know the strategy is working

Getting it right for children is our primary aim as we seek to increase attendance at school and support children in Derbyshire to aim high, access their education and reach their full potential. Using local and national data we will understand our progress in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence across the county.

Some of the performance indicators which will help us understand and measure success are:

- Improved overall school attendance in primary, secondary and special schools
- Upward movement of pupils in the persistent absenteeism category (90% and below)
- Upward movement of pupils in the severe absenteeism category (attendance 50% and below)
- Reduction in % of pupils missing school with unauthorised absence
- Improved punctuality
- Stronger family relationships
- Prioritising pupil voice to underpin the strategy
- Increased Early Help Assessments completed by schools where attendance is a factor
- Improved levels of attendance for specific vulnerable groups of children
  - children with a social worker
  - looked after children
  - children with SEND
  - children who have been permanently excluded from school
- Reduction in the number of part-time timetables being used
- Reduction in the number of suspensions and exclusions
- Reduction in penalty notices issued and prosecutions



Derbyshire's Graduated Response to School Attendance

Derbyshire's approach is a five-step graduated response for supporting and improving school attendance in Derbyshire for pupils up to Year 11:

1. Universal Support (95% and above)

- Schools aim for high attendance standards for all pupils, using data to spot patterns of poor attendance early.
- Senior leaders ensure an inclusive, supportive school culture.
- Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers conduct attendance check-ins throughout the year.

2. School-Based Support (90–95%)

- When attendance drops, schools work with pupils and parents/carers to understand and address barriers.
- Pastoral leads and advisory teams use relational and restorative approaches, including the Derbyshire EBSA Toolkit.
- Support is tailored, and families may be signposted to additional services.

3. Targeted Support (Below 90%)

- Schools remove in-school barriers and help families access wider support, such as Early Help or whole-family plans.
- Reasonable adjustments are made all of the time, and multi-professional approaches are used.
- Individual plans (e.g., PACT, MAP) are developed, and specialist referrals may be made.

4. Complex Support (Below 50%)

- For persistent absence, partners formalise support.
- Alternative provision and multi-agency approaches are considered.
- Person-centred planning and referrals to specialist services are emphasised.

5. Non-Attendance (Enforcement)

- If all support avenues are exhausted, statutory intervention or prosecution may be used as a last resort to protect the child's right to education.
- Legal processes are only pursued after all other interventions.

Additional Provisions:

- The section also covers support for medical absences (e.g., Out of School Tuition), alternative and virtual provision, and re-engagement strategies for exclusions.
- The approach is multi-agency, with a focus on early intervention, inclusion, and safeguarding, escalating to enforcement only when necessary.

Appendices

Derbyshire's Graduated Response

Pupils of school age up to year 11 in Derbyshire

Step 1: Universal Support 95% and above

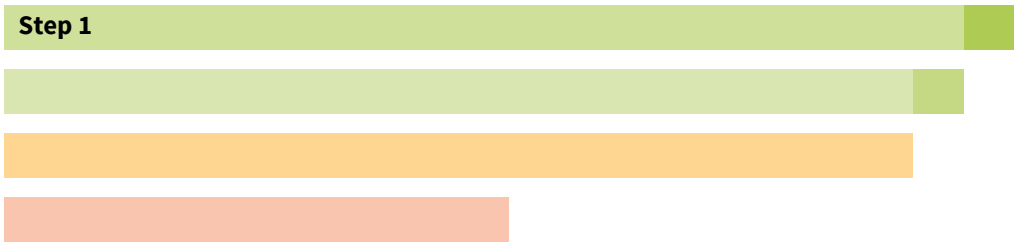
School to aspire to high standards of attendance for all pupils and to work with parents/carers to build a culture where all can and want to be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

DFE: Expect

School Attendance Lead to rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns or poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

DFE: Monitor

- SLT to make sure that the school culture is inclusive, engaging and has supportive environments
- SLT to ensure that all pupils have a sense of belonging – vision and values are embodied in the school ethos
- School ethos is supported by the Inclusion Framework (Schools Attendance Policies to be reviewed)
- School to look at and employ strategies from the Derbyshire Behaviour Box to build resilience and improve school systems
- Inclusion Support Advisory Teacher to support the school with an attendance check-in at 3 points in the year
- Maintained schools to work with their School Improvement Advisor



Step 2: School-based Support 90 to 95% Attendance

When a pattern is spotted, school to work with pupils and parents/carers, listen and understand their barriers to attendance.

Agree how all partners can work together to remove the barriers.

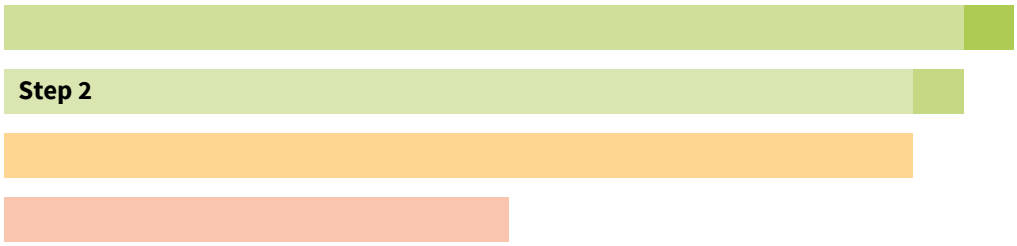
Explore pastoral support for families and pupils to increase attendance.

School understands the context of absence, is reflective and uses a relational approach to respond appropriately to individual circumstances

- School to make sure they have a robust pastoral support offer
- School to look at and employ strategies from the Derbyshire Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Toolkit
- ISAT to work with the school in an advisory capacity using the Inclusion Framework and offer advice regarding the relational and restorative approaches

EBSA Toolkit

DFE: Listen and Understand



Step 3: Targeted Support Under 90%

Remove barriers in school, help pupils and engage with parents/carers to enable them to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

School to make appropriate reasonable adjustments in line with the attendance policy.

School to use a relational and restorative approach to encourage attendance.

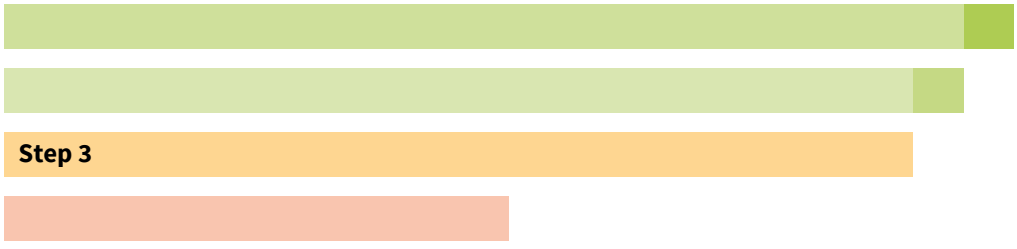
School to use a multi-professional approach with education, health and social care professionals.

- School to utilise the Derbyshire EBSA Toolkit
- School to signpost families to support groups: Parent Carer Voice group / Derbyshire Information, Advice Support Service
- School may need to involve the Family Support Worker
- Carry out structured conversations with ISS looking at an individualised graduated response, adaptations to environmental factors (physical, curriculum, communication, sensory) and Partnership for Inclusion and Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project
- If a pupil has an EHCP, review and notify SEND
- Consider an individual pupil plan. For example, PACT (Planning a change Together) and MAP (Making Action Plans)
- Discuss if a targeted and specialist referral to Inclusion Support Services is appropriate

Graduated Response - Derbyshire Local Offer

Derbyshire Parent Carer Voice (DPCV) - Derbyshire Local Offer

DFE: Facilitate and Support



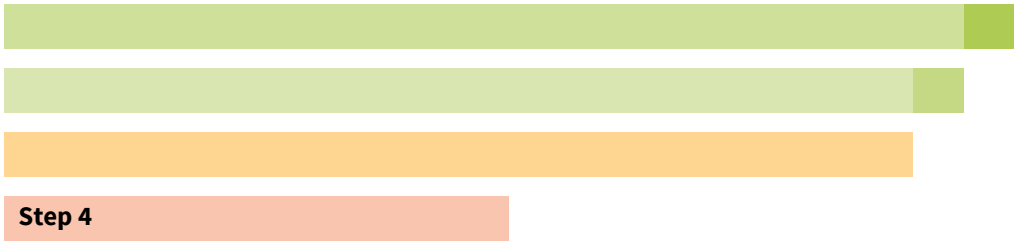
Step 4: Complex Support Below 50%

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

- School to utilise alternative provision where appropriate
- School to make a referral to Early Help when appropriate
- School to make a referral to Inclusion Support Service (Advisory Teachers, Engagement Team, Sensory Support Teams) and Alternative Provision Team (including Section 19 offer)
- Ensure a person-centred plan in place; for example, PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope), Relational Plans, PACT (Planning a Change Together)
- Engage in a multi-agency approach across Childrens services due to risk in the wider community
- An Education Supervision Order can be applied for where work can be undertaken with the family to help them re-engage with their child's education (Sections 7 and 144)

Education and learning - Derbyshire Local Offer

DFE: Formalise Support



Step 5: Non-Attendance

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to education.

DFE: Enforce

Education Act 1996

- Submitting an application to prosecute is the absolute last resort; school is expected to exhaust all other possible interventions to support attendance
- School to engage in a multi-agency approach across Children's services due to risk in the wider community
- Where non-compliance continues the school will follow the statutory interventions. School must have consulted with partner agencies before considering any legal processes

Derbyshire's Section 19 Offer

Section 19 Local Offer

Medical

- School can apply for temporary education support for a pupil who is unable to attend school for medical or other reasons. The pupil must be a Derbyshire resident. Where a pupil is on roll at a school in another local authority, the school may make a referral under Section 19 of the Education Act
- Schools can get support from the Alternative Pathways Team when they need help to manage the learning of a pupil who is unable to attend school for medical reasons. Where a pupil's medical needs lead to regular or recurrent short absences, the Local Authority anticipates that the school will respond to the pupil's need without their involvement

Visit the Local Offer website to find out more

Other Reason

- Schools may also refer to the Alternative Pathways team for support with pupils. This is a short-term, child centred, and focused on a pupil returning to school. Programmes are planned and overseen by qualified teachers. Sessions may be delivered by a teacher or teaching assistant and can be in person and/or online
- Referrals can be made to the Alternative Pathways Team from other agencies and services, and from the school when a pupil has been absent for more than 15 days, who is temporarily without a school place, waiting for an agreed placement, or where there are other factors which make school attendance difficult

Visit the Local Offer website to find out more

Step 5: Non-Attendance *(continued)*

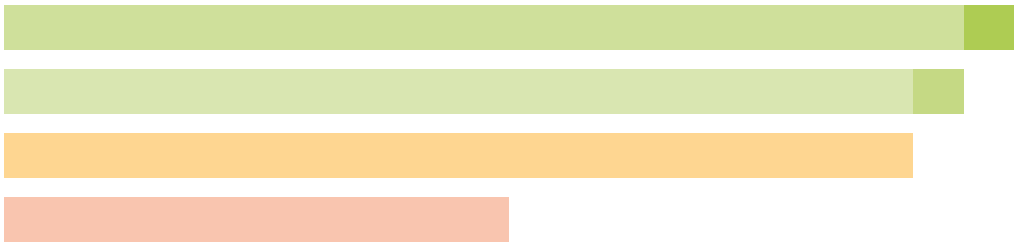
- The Virtual Classroom works in partnership with the Alternative Pathways Team with virtual and online educational provision. This includes live online lessons, supported self-study packages accessed via our own learning platform, or a blend of both, prepared and delivered by qualified subject teachers.
- The Local Authority has a developing and much improved Alternative Provision strategy to support the new guidance issued by the DFE. A Derbyshire Alternative Provision Framework will also be established to give the Local Authority and schools a network of providers with established standards for how placements are made, supported and evaluated.

Exclusions

- The Local Authority is currently reviewing the Section 19 offer in relation to Exclusions. It is proposed that the Local Authority will provide day 6 education through an online accredited provider to allow the pupil to be triaged.
- Pupil and parent/carer voice will be gained
- Pupil will be assessed to establish what would be the most appropriate education provision.
- Pupil will be fully supported through a dedicated transition programme to ensure their next placement will meet their needs

Visit the Local Offer website to find out more

DFE: Enforce



Step 5

Roles and Responsibilities Summary

Step 1 - Expect and Monitor

For all pupils.

Parents and Carers are expected to

- Understand that there is a legal responsibility for parents/carers to ensure that their child receives a full-time education.
- Be aware of the school's attendance policy.
- Ensure their child attends school every day that it is open.
- Notify the school straight away when their child is unexpectedly absent. (e.g., illness)
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Where possible, book any medical appointments before the start and close of the school day.
- Where there are issues, including medical and health needs, that may affect their child's attendance, discuss these matters with a member of school staff.

Schools are expected to:

- School to ensure that the school culture is inclusive, engaging and has supportive environments.
- School to ensure that all pupils have a sense of belonging – vision and values are embodied in the school ethos.
- School to use a relational and restorative approach to encourage attendance.
- With pupils, promote the benefits of good attendance through systems and recognition.
- Have a clear school attendance policy, that is accessible to all, that is shared with all staff, pupils and parents/carers. This should include information on the graduated response to improve attendance, legal processes for non-attendance and unauthorised leave in term time.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance data and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. This includes using DCC Local Authority attendance reporting procedures.
- There is a dedicated Senior Leader with overall responsibility to champion and improve attendance.
- School to ensure that all departments (SEND, Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance) work together to improve attendance across the whole school.
- Attendance Lead to regularly monitor and benchmark attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional and national levels. Implement proactive strategies for improvement and liaise with the Local Authority.
- Have a nominated Governor or a MAT Trustee to monitor the school's responsibility for attendance.
- Attendance Lead provides data and reports to support the work of the Governing Body or MAT Trustee.
- Facilitate staff training on attendance and direct staff to online training e.g. Relational Schools - Introductory Level Course via the S4S.
- Maintained schools to work with School Improvement Advisors.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- School to use a self-assessment tool and DCC Inclusion Framework to evaluate their whole school approach to managing school attendance.

Local Authority is expected to:

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance and make it a priority for all frontline services.
- Attendance Focus group to monitor progress of strategy and analyse data.
- The Focus group will benchmark against neighbouring local authorities (both geographic and statistical) and regional and national averages to identify trends.
- The Focus group will use attendance data analysis to set a vision for improving attendance with tangible short and longer term aims for particular cohorts of pupils, schools, neighbourhoods or towns to focus efforts.
- The Focus group will track local school attendance data to determine a strategic approach to prioritise pupil, cohort and school support.
- Education and Inclusion services in Derbyshire to triangulate support following analysis of data to improve attendance. It is a key focus for all frontline services.
- Inclusion Support Service (ISS) and Educational Psychology Service to offer training related to potential barriers to attendance e.g. EBSA, Restorative Practice, Anxiety.
- Through the Inclusion Framework, the Inclusion Support Advisory Teacher (ISAT) will discuss and advise on attendance practice and policy.
- ISAT to facilitate termly targeted attendance support meetings. Attendance data will be collected and used to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance. Actions and proactive strategies will be agreed.
- In conjunction with Lead Officers, ISATs will support schools to analyse their attendance data and how it compares locally and nationally.
- School Improvement Advisors to liaise with the Lead Officers and ISATs for maintained schools.
- Virtual School to support with pupil relational plans.
- Through Attendance Network Meetings, facilitate opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice, updates, emerging patterns and trends.
- Share updates, effective practice and success stories through a termly newsletter.

Step 2 - Listen and Understand

For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (90-95%).

Parents and Carers are expected to

- Work with school and the Local Authority to understand barriers to their child's attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.
- Attend meetings, where necessary, working in collaboration with school.

Schools are expected to:

- SLT and Attendance Lead to proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of persistent absence.
- Nominated Governor or MAT Trustee to regularly review attendance data and support school leaders to focus support on pupils and cohorts.
- School to employ strategies from the Derbyshire Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Toolkit.
- Meet with pupils and parents/carers, listen and understand their barriers to attendance. Agree how all partners can work together to remove the barriers.
- School to make appropriate reasonable adjustments in line with the school's attendance policy and with regard to their legal duties under The Equality Act 2010.
- Signpost to other services/agencies if out of school barriers are identified. Act as the lead practitioner.
- School to signpost families to support groups: Parent Carer Voice group / Derbyshire Information Advice Support Service.
- Pastoral Support to work with the pupil and parents/carers. Keep detailed chronology of visits, contacts and outcomes.
- Pupil voice activity to be facilitated by a member of school staff.
- School to ensure that all departments (SEND, Safeguarding, Pastoral and Attendance) work together to improve attendance across the whole school.
- Take an active part in a multi-agency approach with the Local Authority and other agencies.
- If the family meets the local threshold and not already known to Social Care, carry out an Early Help assessment and act as the lead professional, where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. If it does not meet threshold, involve the school's Family Support Worker. This can include home visits.

Local Authority is expected to:

- As part of the termly targeted attendance support meeting, ISAT to discuss pupils who are at risk of persistence absence or severely absence and signpost to further support and services.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance e.g. DCC Local Offer, Neuro Hubs and services in the school's locality.
- If the family meets Early Help threshold and there are multiple needs, the ISAT will speak with the school regarding a referral to ISS and whether this is appropriate. Lead practitioner to be agreed.
- Derbyshire provides additional support to schools through the Inclusion Panel Funding process. Where appropriate schools may wish to apply for this funding to provide a bespoke intervention package. Inclusion Panel Funding Offer

Step 3 - Facilitate and Support

For pupils who are persistent or severely absent (less than 90%)

Parents and Carers are expected to

- Work with school and the Local Authority to understand barriers to their child's attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered - including any parenting contract or voluntary Early Help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Schools are expected to:

- Schools should continue to support pupils who are at risk of becoming peristenly absent (refer to Step 2).
- School to use their own internal provision offer. e.g. Forest School, Nurture, Positive Play, Bushcraft.
- Review pastoral support and increase and adapt support offer, where applicable. Keep detailed chronology of visits, contacts and outcomes.
- Consider a parent contract and/or Early Help referral to support the family with actions to improve attendance.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the school/s of any siblings.
- Speak to the school's ISAT and discuss whether a targeted and specialist referral should be made.
- School to use a multi-professional approach and work collaboratively with education, health and social care professionals. Create an action plan with short-term targets to improve attendance.
- School may wish to consider applying for additional funding through the Derbyshire Inclusion Panel process.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through a referral to statutory children's social care.
- If there is a lack of engagement, hold formal conversations with parents/carers of the potential legal interventions.

Local Authority is expected to:

- Schools should continue to support pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (Refer to Step 2).
- ISAT to facilitate structured conversations regarding the school's graduated response for a pupil. This can include: the environment, curriculum, sensory, communication, SEND. If applicable, the PINS project and ND Advocates can be referred to.
- ISAT to consider whether a targeted and specialist referral is needed to support improving attendance and liaise with school. If applicable, triangulate support within Derbyshire Services.
- If applicable, facilitate a pupil voice activity. For example, Ideal/Not Ideal School, MEP cards (Multi-Element Plan), PACT (Planning a Change Together), PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope).
- Begin to consider a multi-agency approach across Education and Inclusion Services due to risk in the wider community. This can include ISS, Early Help, Social Care, SEND, Virtual Schools, Educational Psychology, etc. When appropriate, include Health professionals. A plan will be written, monitored and reviewed by a lead professional.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Derbyshire provides additional support to schools through the Inclusion Panel Funding process. Where appropriate schools may wish to apply for this funding to provide a bespoke intervention package.
  Inclusion Panel Funding Offer

Step 4 - Formalise Support

Complex Support (less than 50%).

Parents and Carers are expected to

- Work with school and the Local Authority to understand barriers to their child's attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered - including any parenting contract or voluntary Early Help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Schools are expected to:

- Continue support as for persistently absent pupils (See steps above)
- School to formalise the attendance process with parents/carers in order to improve attendance.
- School to utilise internal and/or external alternative provision, where appropriate, and to ensure attendance and engagement is accurately recorded and monitored.
- It is expected that when school commissions external support, they use the DFE guidance when quality assuring provision.
- School may wish to consider applying for additional funding through the Derbyshire Inclusion Panel process.
- School to make a referral to the Inclusion Support Services depending upon the needs presented.
  – Inclusion Support Advisory Teachers.
  – Sensory Support Team.
  – Engagement Team.
  – Alternative Pathways.
- Links to these services can be found on the Derbyshire Local Offer website
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.

Local Authority is expected to:

- Continue support as for persistently absent pupils (See steps above)
- All Children's Services must consider school attendance as part of their work around the CYP and to ensure that all relevant services are engaged in supporting the CYP, school and family.
- ISAT to consider whether a targeted and specialist referral is needed to support improving attendance and liaise with school. If applicable, triangulate support within Derbyshire Services.
- Ensure a pupil voice activity is facilitated. For example, Ideal/Not Ideal School, MEP cards (Multi-Element Plan), PACT (Planning a Change Together), PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope).
- When the ISAT is actively involved, ensure that all relevant information is communicated clearly between Derbyshire services.
- Engage in a multi-agency approach across Local Authority Services due to risk in the wider community. This can include ISAS, Early Help, Social Care, SEND, Virtual Schools, Educational Psychology, etc. When appropriate, include Health professionals. A plan will be written, monitored and reviewed by a lead professional.
- Depending on the circumstances, work jointly with the school to formalise support including attendance contracts or education supervision orders.
- The Local Authority should consider a case of neglect if absences continue to be unauthorised once all avenues of support including appropriate educational support or placements have been facilitated by schools and the local authority.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).
- Derbyshire provides additional support to schools through the Inclusion Panel Funding process. Where appropriate schools may wish to apply for this funding to provide a bespoke intervention package.
  Inclusion Panel Funding Offer

Step 5 - Enforcement

Non-attendance.

Parents and Carers are expected to

- Work with school and the Local Authority to understand barriers to their child's attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered - including any attendance contract or voluntary Early Help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Schools are expected to:

- School should exhaust all other options prior to referring a case to the Local Authority for legal intervention.
- Where it can be evidenced that a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure their child receives a suitable education, the school should follow the guidance provided and refer to the Local Authority attendance team for legal intervention.

Local Authority is expected to:

- Process requests for legal intervention received from school in line with the DfE working together to improve school attendance 2026 guidance.
- Provide schools with clear guidance and documentation to ensure successful outcomes including referral forms and template letters where appropriate.
- Undertake all legal processes related to school attendance on behalf of schools.
- Provide schools with updates and outcomes of legal processes to assist their ongoing attendance management procedures.

Request for Legal Action Flow Chart

