



Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 7 September 2022

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Council Antechamber, Level 2, Town Hall Extension

This is a **Supplementary Agenda** containing additional information about the business of the meeting that was not available when the agenda was published

Access to the Council Antechamber

Public access to the Council Antechamber is on Level 2 of the Town Hall Extension, using the lift or stairs in the lobby of the Mount Street entrance to the Extension. There is no public access from any other entrance.

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Meetings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are 'webcast'. These meetings are filmed and broadcast live on the Internet. If you attend this meeting you should be aware that you might be filmed and included in that transmission.

Membership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Councillors –

Reid (Chair), Abdulatif, Alijah, Amin, Bano, Cooley, Gartside, Hewitson, Johnson, Judge, Lovecy, Sadler and Sharif Mahamed

Co-opted Members -

Mr G Cleworth, Miss S Iltaf, Ms K McDaid, Mrs J Miles, Dr W Omara and Ms L Smith

Supplementary Agenda

5. **School Attendance in Manchester** 3 - 30
Report and presentation of the Director of Education

The report covers a presentation reviewing school attendance in Manchester in 2021/2022 and a summary looking at Manchester's plans for the implementation of the new DFE guidance: *Working together to Improve school attendance*. The guidance is non-statutory, and has been produced to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. Following public consultation earlier this year, and subject to Parliament, the Secretary of State has committed to this guidance becoming statutory by September 2023.

The presentation highlights the main implications of the new guidance and summarises Manchester's strategic approach to improve school attendance in 2022/23.

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact the Committee Officer:

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This supplementary agenda was issued on **Friday, 2 September 2022** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 2, Town Hall Extension (Library Walk Elevation), Manchester M60 2LA

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - 7 September 2022

Subject: School Attendance in Manchester

Report of: Director of Education

Summary

This report covers a presentation reviewing school attendance in Manchester in 2021/2022 and a summary looking at Manchester's plans for the implementation of the new DFE guidance: *Working together to improve school attendance*. The guidance is non-statutory, and has been produced to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance. Following public consultation earlier this year, and subject to Parliament, the Secretary of State has committed to this guidance becoming statutory by September 2023.

The presentation highlights the main implications of the new guidance and summarises Manchester's strategic approach to improve school attendance in 2022/23.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to note the changes in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' and discuss the implications, opportunities and challenges it presents for schools and the Local Authority. The committee is asked to comment on the proposed strategic approach and next steps.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
Through the learning and education system children are informed and understand environmental issues and the negative impact of carbon, promoting safe and healthy lives.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

1.0 Introduction

In May 2022 the Department for Education (DfE) published working together to improve school attendance (Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities). The guidance will apply from September 2022.

Nationally, there has been a renewed focus on school attendance since the beginning of 2022:

- The Children’s Commissioner, recognising that school attendance is lower than pre-pandemic levels, has made absence or children missing education one of her key priorities. Her findings were published in *Voices of England’s Missing Children in June 2022*.
- The Department for Education (DfE) published new school attendance guidance in May 2022 which included significant changes in policy with the much sharper focus on a ‘whole system’ response to attendance: *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*.

The new DfE guidance sets out specific requirements for schools, local authorities and partners to work closely together to improve school attendance.

This includes:

- A requirement for all schools to share attendance information and work more closely with local partners informing a stronger multi-disciplinary approach to attendance.
- For the local authority to have a specific Attendance Support Team and provide more support and challenge to schools and settings.
- For partners to help breakdown out of school barriers to attendance.

The presentation in **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the main changes including Manchester’s position in delivering the guidance.

Summary (Unvalidated) Attendance data (2021/2022)

1.1 School attendance in Manchester continues to be strength of the city and significant strides have been made to support improved levels of school attendance over the past year following the disruptions and impact of the pandemic on school attendance and closures.

1.2 The majority of schools have adopted Manchester’s model school attendance policy which has provided them with a robust and structured framework to work with. There is ongoing communication from the Local Authority attendance team with schools throughout the year to support them with a range of attendance matters either through direct support in school, workshops, attendance support helpline, modelling good practices to engage parents and a planned conference for the Autumn term. Successful partnership working with the Early Help Hubs and the school attendance team has also provided schools with an invaluable

resource in supporting with families that have a range of complex issues affecting their children's level of attendance.

Phase	Percentage Persistent Absenteeism (PA) pupils	Percentage Overall Attendance
Primary	20.3%	94.0%
PRUs	74.7%	64.5%
Secondary	24.7%	92.5%
Special School	54.0%	82.0%
All Schools	23.5%	93.0%

- Half Term 1 (September – October) showed a demonstrable increase from Summer 21 with 94.2% overall attendance.
- Reasons for absence show disproportionately high levels of 'illness' and medical absences which will be due to ongoing cases of COVID across the city in late Autumn and Spring term. The use of the X code was disallowed in Spring 22 and schools used the 'illness' code to record and monitor covid related illness and absences.

Persistent Absenteeism

1.3 Despite Manchester's strong position on overall attendance a significant proportion of our pupils were persistently absent (PA). PA is 90% attendance or lower, the equivalent of missing 19 school days):

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) Percentage (%)	
Primary School	20.3
Secondary School	24.7
Manchester Overall	23.5

1.4 The impact of percentage absences can be reviewed in slide 4 for further information. DfE research shows that overall absence had a negative link to attainment, with every extra day missed associated with a lower chance of achieving 5 or more good GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C including in English and Mathematics or gaining the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

2.0 Manchester's Strategic Approach

The implementation of the guidance provides an opportunity to further develop good practice and work with school leaders to reset our priorities for school attendance. The Local Authority will work in partnership with the DfE to develop its strategic response and monitor the impact of intervention in the preparation for September

2023. This will incorporate a request for a persistent absence action from each school causing concern.

Key focus in 2022/2023 will be:

- **Implementation of a stakeholder engagement strategy** to increase communication and review of impact across services; in support of raising school attendance. This will include working closely with our internal front-line teams as well as external partners to raise awareness of school attendance and provide them with the tools to support families.
- **Ensure schools, education teams and front-line services work more closely** to tackle poor attendance.
- Work closely with schools and ensure more pupils who are persistently absent or severely absent return to school.
- Increase accountability within schools in terms of monitoring and evaluation of impact of intervention and action. Schools will have the opportunity to seek support through targeted support and network meetings which will be district led.

3.0 Challenges

There are key challenges linked to implementing the new guidance in Manchester and successfully tackling long term absences. Some of the poor attendance can be linked to holidays taken in term time and this will be addressed through revised school policy and practice. However, there are a significant proportion of our pupils with more complex needs who have not returned to full time education post COVID, which reflects the national picture and is a concern raised by the Children's Commissioner. Although there are no quick or easy solutions for tackling the out of school barriers which include for example, anxiety-based school avoidance or continued parental concerns about COVID over the last year we have been developing and implementing strategies with schools to ensure that pupils who are severely absent will have more targeted support to enable them to access a full offer of education and remain safeguarded through a graduated approach.

These include:

- **Targeting severely absent pupils not known to frontline services:** We expect schools to be proactive in tackling severe absence. We are therefore developing models and forums that will provide schools with opportunities to more easily access support, advice and guidance from front line teams such as early help or social work. These include Advice and Guidance Service 'drop ins' and school cluster meetings. Ultimately where a school is concerned about the welfare of a pupil not attending school they should follow Manchester safeguarding procedures.
- **Wythenshawe Attendance Pilot:** In Wythenshawe these approaches are being tested through a pilot between primary schools and the 'front door' that looks to support schools where they have done all they can to improve school attendance and where severe absence is continuing to cause concern.
- **Targeting Families with Social Workers:** A minority of severely absent pupils are already known to social work teams. Where this is the case we can break down the data and target families with high absence already known to

social work teams. We have held education sessions for these social workers to help them in their work to support the family to ensure the children return to full time school.

- **Coproduced and disseminated an Anxiety based school avoidance pathway:** This is a tool which sets out early indications of anxiety based school avoidance and a graduated response for schools which has been implemented over the last 2 years.
- **Team Around the School:** Developed over the last 2 years, this is an approach whereby a multi agency team is convened around a school in response to specific issues. This approach includes where there are identified cohorts of children with poor school attendance. In addition to this the Secondary PRU was successful in bidding for grant funding to establish a multi agency 'taskforce around' the school which includes ensuring young people are accessing education.
- In the next academic year termly **Targeted Support Meetings which are a requirement of the new DFE guidance** will also provide support and challenge on attendance, but specifically on severely absent pupils.
- **SAFE programme:** Manchester will receive £1.2m funding from government for the next 3 years to implement this programme whereby on behalf of schools, the Local Authority will commission a suite of evidence based interventions to secure regular school attendance and positive outcomes for young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

4.0 Next steps

To deliver an effective strategic approach and to help improve school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

The following next steps have been implemented:

- Deliver a Manchester strategic approach that forms part of our Inclusion Strategy which recognises that Attendance is Everybody's Business.
- Create a 'joined up' approach with internal front-line services - such as social care, Youth Justice and early help- education services and schools improving communication and partnership working.
- Promote the importance of school attendance to external partners and ensure they know where to go for support.
- Monitor our city-wide data and target schools who need additional support through targeted support meetings or network meetings.
- Host an Attendance Conference for all schools on 6th October 2022

5.0 Recommendations

- The committee is asked to note the strong attendance data for 21/22 and the areas for improvement in 22/23
- The committee is asked to note the renewed national focus on attendance and our Manchester strategic approach to deliver the new DfE guidance
- The committee is asked to actively promote school attendance in their day to day work at ward level

- The committee is asked to comment on the proposed approach and next steps to support raising school attendance across the city and reduce persistent and severe absenteeism.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

School Attendance in Manchester

September 2022

School Attendance in Manchester

Content of presentation slides:

- **Why is school attendance important?**
- **The Current Climate in Manchester 2021/2022 (Attendance Data)**
- **National Policy Context & New Guidance**
- **Local Context**
- **Strategic Approach**
- **Next Steps & Recommendations**



"Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education" DFE Guidance.

Parents have a legal responsibility for making sure their children go to school.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and sudden changes in patterns of attendance are a key indication that something is wrong.

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WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships.

In primary schools less than 65% of children achieve good results in English and Maths with an average of 15 days absence a year compared to almost 90% where the average is less than 8 days.

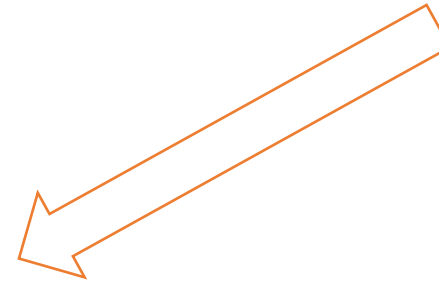
In school children are safe.



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Is 90% attendance (persistent absence) that bad? More days are lost than you think....

90% attendance still means almost a month of education is lost every academic year



0 days absent 190 School days in the year Page 14	10 days absence 180 days in school	19 days absence 171 days in school	29 days absence 161 days in school	38 days absence 152 days in school	47 days absence 143 days in school
100% attendance	96% attendance	90% attendance	85% attendance	80% attendance	75% attendance
Best chance of success		Poor attendance less chance of success		Very poor attendance leading to serious impact on educational and life chances	

The Current Climate in Manchester 2021/2022 Attendance Data

School Attendance in Manchester 21/22- what does the data tell us?

Please note this is Cumulative Data for Half Terms 1 to 5 in 21-22

Phase	Percentage of Persistent Absenteeism (PA) pupils	% Overall Attendance
Primary	20.3%	94.0%
PRUs	74.7%	64.5%
Secondary	24.7%	92.5%
All Schools	23.5%	93.0%

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What we know....

- GOOD:** School Attendance is doing well in comparison to unvalidated national data
- GOOD:** School leaders have worked incredibly hard to get pupils back into school through the pandemic

What we know....

- Area for improvement :** Our attendance has not hit pre-pandemic levels
- Area for improvement :** Persistent and severe absenteeism

Appendix 1, Item 5

School Attendance in Manchester 21/22- SEND Data

Please note this is Cumulative Data for Half Terms 1 to 5 in 21-22

Phase	Percentage of Persistent Absenteeism (PA) pupils	% Overall Attendance
Special School	54.0%	82.0%
All Schools	23.5%	93.0%

What we know.....
GOOD: Covid had a disproportionate impact on SEND pupils through illness, medical need and anxiety. Therefore 90.7% of those with an EHCP attending primary and 85.4% attending secondary is a strength

Phase	Category	Percentage of Persistent Absenteeism (PA) pupils	% Overall Attendance	Phase	Category	Percentage of Persistent Absenteeism (PA) pupils	% Overall Attendance
Primary	EHCP	30.9%	90.7%	Secondary	EHCP	38.9%	85.4%
	SEN				SEN		
	Support	26.2%	92.4%		Support	36.4%	88.8%
	No SEN	17.3%	94.5%		No SEN	21.5%	93.4%

What we know.....
Area for improvement : PA for SEND pupils was low in special and mainstream schools. We will work with schools as part of our strategic approach to improve SEND attendance

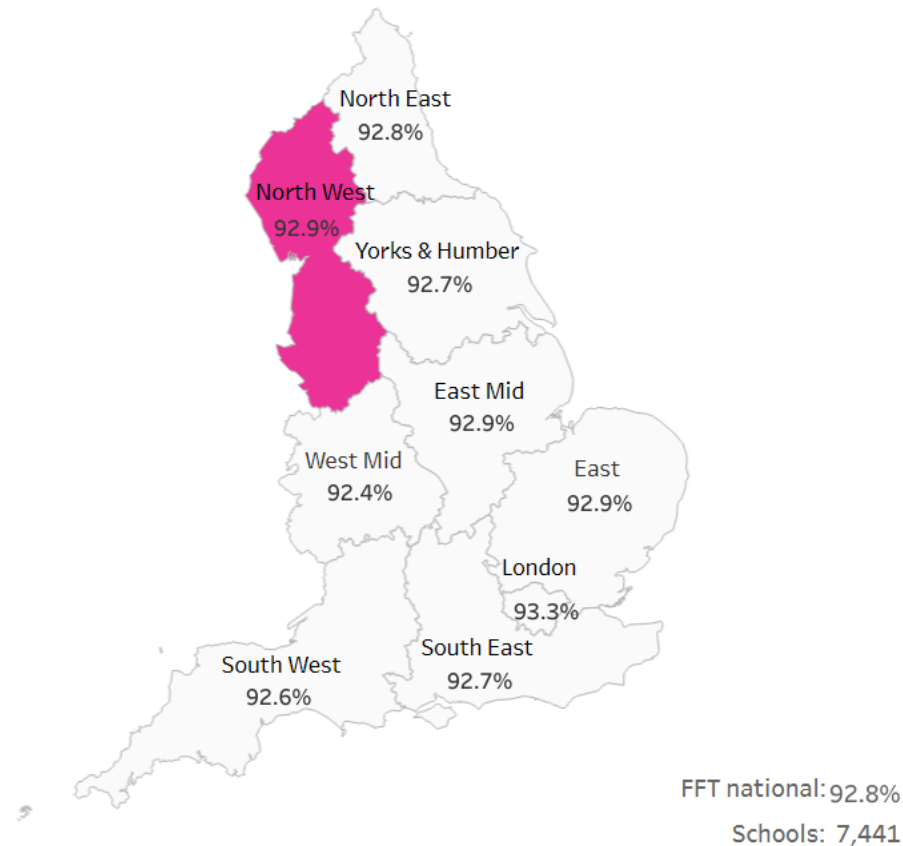
- Attendance at Special Schools was lower than mainstream with persistent absence particularly high. More than half of pupils in special schools missed 10% or more of school in 2021/2022
- Attendance for our SEND pupils was lower in mainstream settings than those with no SEN. Again, persistent absence was high.

Primary Schools: Academic year attendance (1 Sep 21 - 22 Jul 22)

North West

92.9%

0.1% pts above
FFT national

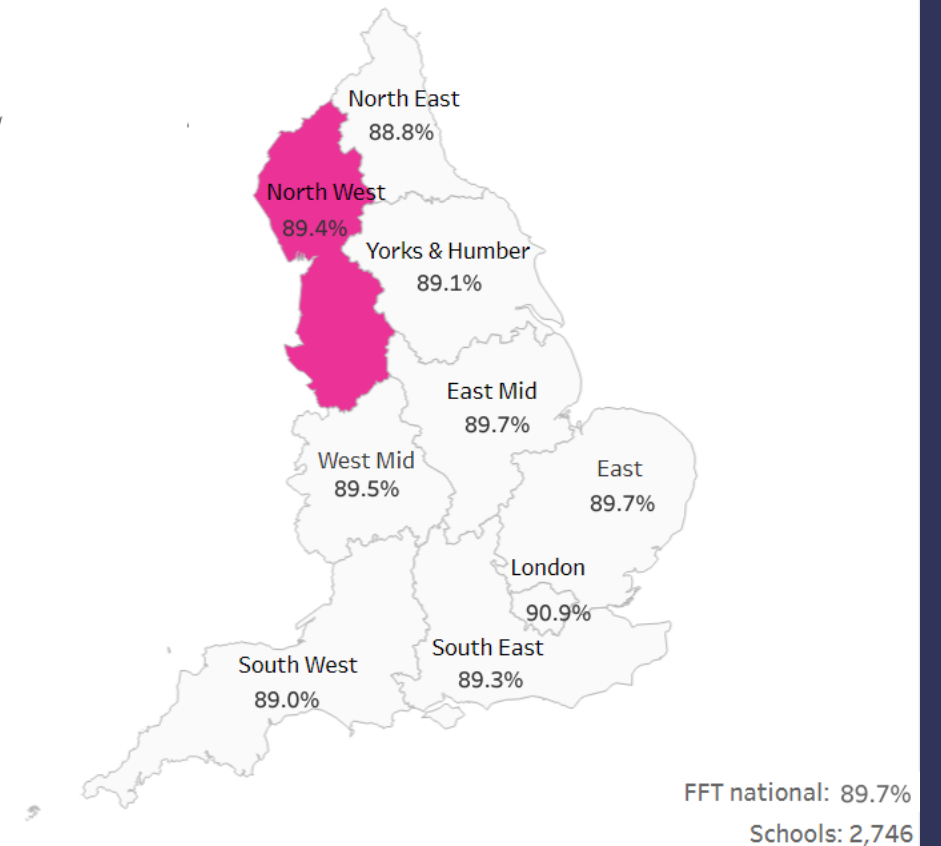


Secondary Schools: Academic year attendance (1 Sep 21 - 22 Jul 22)

North West

89.4%

0.3% pts below
FFT national



Data Source: Year 1-11 attendance data is collected daily from 9,500 participating Fisher Family Trust * (FFT) Schools. This provides an early indication for the national data from the Department for Education (DfE).

**FFT is a non-profit organisation established in 2001 as part of the Fischer Family Trust. They provide accurate and insightful information to schools which enables schools to improve.*

School Attendance in Manchester 21/22- what does the data tell us?

- School Attendance in Manchester overall in 2021/22 was strong and although national data is not yet available we believe we are above the national average as the regional data demonstrates
- Given the challenges schools have faced in 2021/2022 Primary Schools and Secondary Schools should be really proud of their hard work.
- It will be difficult to improve our school attendance further without tackling persistent absence. For example, a quarter of all secondary school pupils missed 10% or more of school this year.
- Reasons for unauthorised absence vary but we know that many pupils have struggled with adjusting to normal school routines after disrupted years. For example, Year 9 pupils have completed their first full year of secondary school post pandemic.
- Anxiety and poor mental health also had a significant impact on pupil's ability to engage with education. In addition, the evidence suggests pupils with SEND have had more difficulty re-engaging across schools and settings which has impacted on their attendance.
- 2021/22 has seen a significant rise in the number of families taking holidays in term time.

Although there were no lock downs Covid still had an impact on absence through illness

453 pupils had 20% or lower attendance since January 2022

Good school attendance is a habit and repeated breaks in education break those good habits

Tackling anxiety & mental health will be one of the biggest challenges for 22/23

The national policy context – The Children's Commissioner

Children's Commissioner for England:

- The Big Ask Survey where 600,000 children responded. In summary, children want to be in school.

Leading a national enquiry into pupil absence the resulting report is called 'Voices of England's Missing Children'.

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There has been a significant focus on attendance this year. School attendance has not reached pre-pandemic rates both locally and nationally.

Attendance is everyone's business, and everyone involved with the care of children is equally responsible for ensuring children's attendance. This means schools, Local Authorities, Social Care, NHS workers and Community partners all have a responsibility to see the child in school every day and to wrap support around that child. All partners should make children's attendance a key priority.



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Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

Working together to improve school attendance
Guidance for maintained schools, academies,
independent schools, and local authorities

Published: May 2022

Applies from: September 2022

The national policy context

The Department for Education (DfE) :

- **'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'** new guidance from September 2022 . The guidance is currently non-statutory but will be statutory by September 2023.
- Guidance for schools & Local Authorities but a **clear challenge** to partners and the 'whole system'.

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There has been a significant focus on attendance this year. School attendance has not reached pre-pandemic both locally and nationally

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an **important protective factor** and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).



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The National Policy Context – The DFE cont....

Expectations for schools (summary)

- Clear lines of accountability for attendance including a champion on SLT, published policy etc.
- Proactively use data to target pupils and to share with the LA
- Clear strategies for dealing with PA- to work with pupils identified at risk of PA and break down in-school barriers
- Act as lead practitioner where appropriate to break down out of school barriers or to work closely with partners supporting the family
- Use all legal powers available such as penalty notices
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care if appropriate

There is a much clearer ask of schools to use and share data on attendance as well as being proactive in providing and coordinating 'whole family' support.



The National Policy Context – The DFE cont....

Expectation of Local Authority (summary)

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance and make it a key focus of all frontline council services
- Have a School Attendance Support Team
- Hold a termly conversations with every school.
- Where there are out of school barriers to attendance, ensure identified pupils have access to the multi-agency support they and their family need
- Support schools with the legal powers available to them – penalty notices, education supervision orders etc.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners
- Data monitoring and impact of Intervention

There is more emphasis on the LA to work alongside schools on attendance and this includes using data to target specific groups. All LA's will be expected to have a dedicated Attendance Team and hold termly meetings with schools, social work teams and partners are integral to the support provided- *'attendance is everyone's business'*.



The Local Context

Manchester Children's Services

*A Strategic Response to working together to improve
school attendance across the city in 2022-23*

The Local Policy Context

In Manchester, schools and the LA work closely together and meet much of the new DfE guidance...



An established School Attendance Support Team.



All schools share attendance data with the local authority.



Most schools use the legal powers open to them with the support of the LA Attendance Team.



An established offer of multi-agency support through the Early Help Assessment Strengths Based Conversation.



Half-termly attendance clinics providing an opportunity to ask questions and share good practice.



Manchester's Strategic Approach. *Next Steps*

What to expect for September?

- An Attendance Conference in October which will aim to bring local professionals together with a focus on school attendance and setting the vision for ALL Manchester schools in terms of attendance.
- **A local authority approved model attendance policy.**
- Improved half-termly data reports including individual school data for benchmarking.
- A tiered approach for the delivery of the 'Targeted Support Meetings' for every school through either individual meetings or through **Attendance Support Networks**.
- Education service support to front line teams including social work to improve the broader understanding of education.
- **A named officer in the Attendance Support Team allocated to each school.**

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What will be developed through the Academic Year?

- Use new data reports to proactively target pupils who are 'severely absent' and already known to services (e.g. social work).
- A 22/23 joint education and children's service approach which will include networks such as AGS drop-in, School Clusters and learning circles which will improve school and front-line service communication about families of concern.
- Improve front line worker knowledge of education services to help their understanding and work with families and ensure 'Attendance is everyone's business'.
- Target schools not already using all their legal powers (such as penalty notices) and provide appropriate training and support.
- Introduce 'Targeted Support Meetings' and continue to improve and adapt these as the year continues. This include using the strength of our Quality Assurance Partners
- Specific and targeted work with schools and SENDcos on supporting families with SEND pupils who are persistent or severely absent
- Talking to and listening to pupils who are absent from school– what prevents them from attending? what supports them to attend etc.? Using pupil voice to inform intervention.

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Our Strategic approach to support schools and improve attendance will reflect the principles and approach of the City's Inclusion Strategy as well as including the actions outlined above.

MANCHESTER'S INCLUSION STRATEGY TOOLKIT

LA

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“We believe it is important that every child and young person in our early years’ settings, schools and post 16 provisions, whatever their age, identity, circumstance or ability, has a sense of belonging, feels respected and is valued for who they are.”



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In conclusion....

We are committed to working together to raise attendance across schools. We aim to reduce persistent and severe absenteeism which contributes to building a safe, happy, healthy, and successful future for children and young people in Manchester.

The Strategic Approach in Manchester will achieve this by...

- Treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home and in school
- Adopting a relentless approach to persistent absence using targeted reporting and targeted meetings with schools
- Recognising our strengths and sharing best practice across the City, the region and the country through network meetings and regular communications for all stakeholders
- Building on our existing partnership arrangements and working together from the earliest opportunities to help parents/carers meet their legal duty
- Understanding that SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS and developing our partnership work to improve attendance

Recommendations

- The committee is asked to note the strong attendance data for 21/22 and the areas for improvement in 22/23
- The committee is asked to note the renewed national focus on attendance and our Manchester strategic approach to deliver the new DfE guidance
- The committee is asked to actively promote school attendance in their day to day work at ward level
- The committee is asked to comment on the proposed approach and next steps to support raising school attendance across the city and reduce persistent and severe absenteeism.

