

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)**
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- **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.

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

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

WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

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

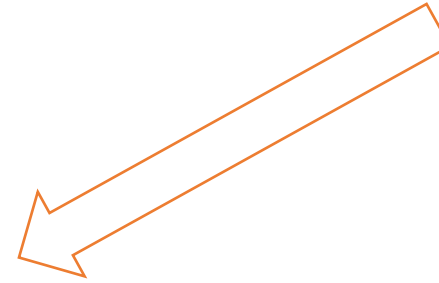
In primary schools less than 65% of children achieve good results in English and Maths with an average of 15 days absence a year compared to almost 90% where the average is less than 8 days.

In school children are safe.



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	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%

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

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.

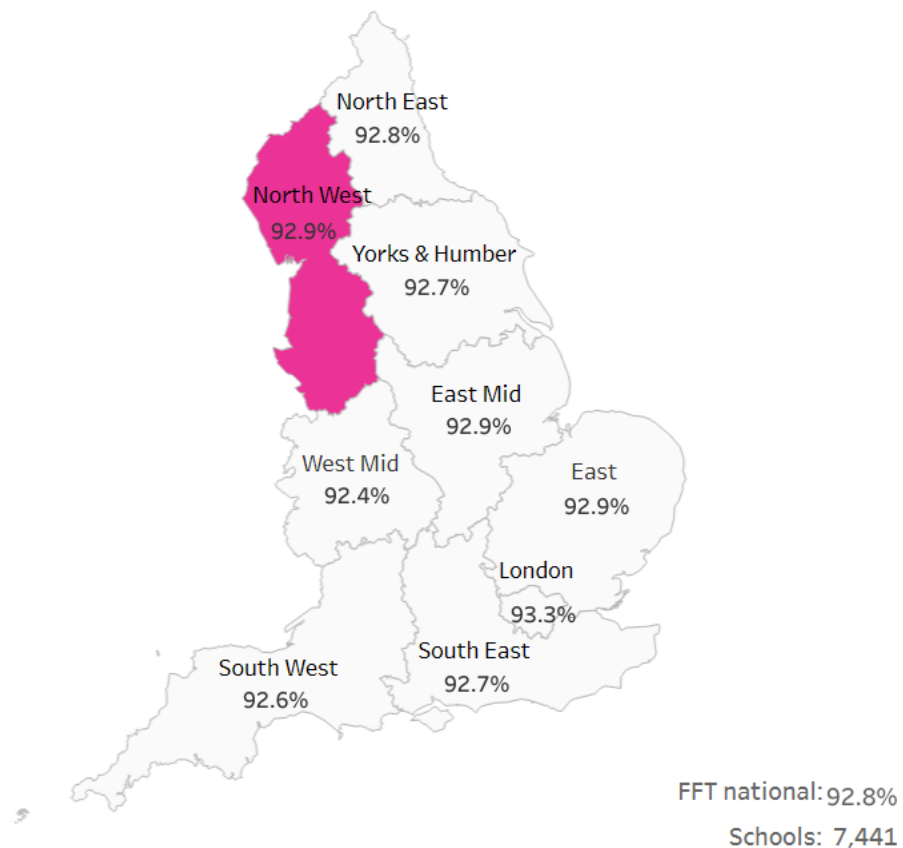
Primary Schools: Academic year attendance

(1 Sep 21 - 22 Jul 22)

North West

92.9%

0.1% pts above
FFT national



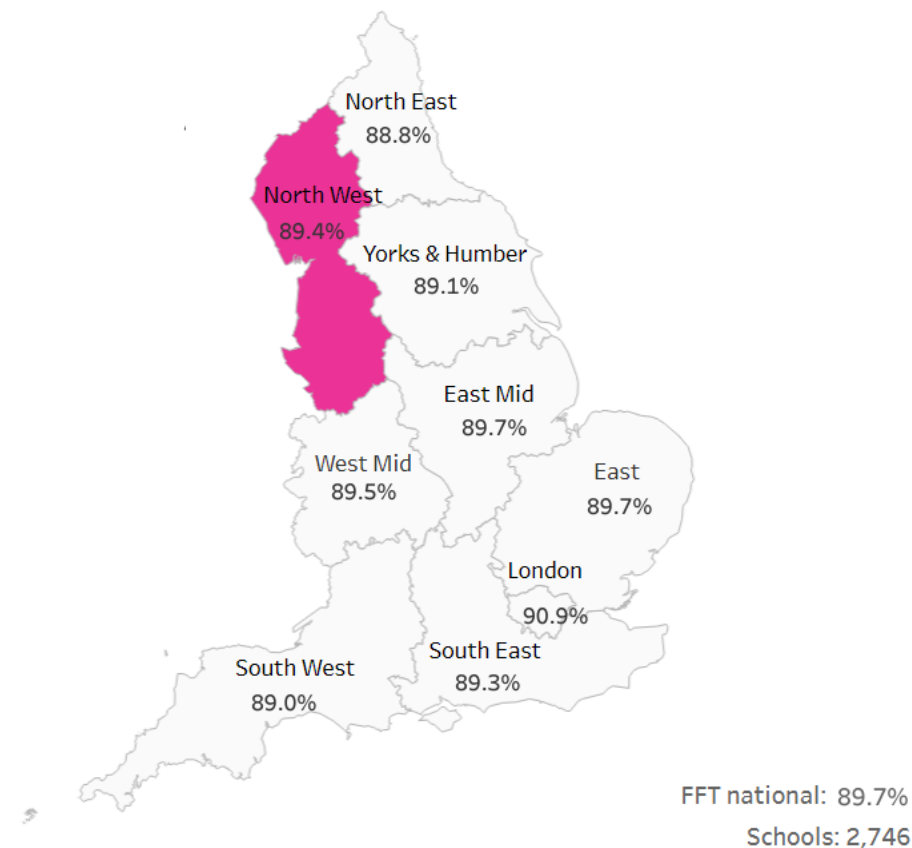
Secondary Schools: Academic year attendance

(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'.

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.



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'.

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

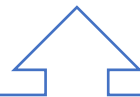
For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an **important protective factor** and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of 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).



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.**

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.

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

“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.”



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.

