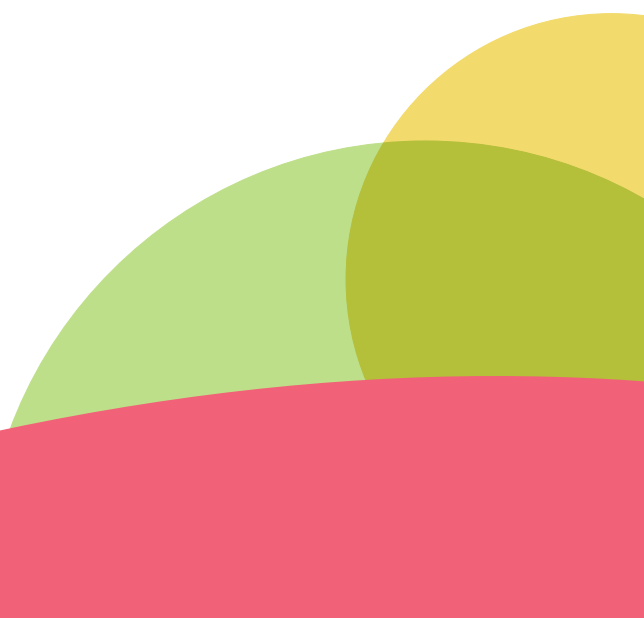# Attend Achieve Succeed
#SLT Swindon Learning Together

Attendance Strategy 2022-2025

A Graduated Partnership Approach to improving attendance

SASH Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers

SAPH Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers

ASHH

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Foreword

Evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key to ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. Missing lessons leaves children more vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning, reducing their grades, and diminishing their self-confidence. Being in school also helps to keep children and young people safe. Good attendance routines start from the earliest stages of education. We know that children who regularly miss school in reception class will most likely go on to have poor attendance at secondary school. Whilst parents are responsible for ensuring their child goes to school every day and is ready to learn, we need to work together in partnership to make this a reality for every child.

Research by Universities UK and the DFE indicates that children with poor attendance are 5 times less likely to achieve five strong passes at GCSE, preventing them from going on to further education and higher education or into employment. Poor school attendance can impact all aspects of a child's future. Children and young people who miss school on a regular basis can become socially isolated; they can lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Children can feel like they 'don't fit in' with their peers, and this can lead to loneliness. We also know that young people who regularly miss school are at greater risk of anti-social behaviour and child exploitation and are more likely to become victims of crime.

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

Children who attend school regularly go on to achieve better outcomes, to live healthier, wealthier, and more enriched lives – and we want to make sure we are all doing everything that we can to make that happen for all of our children.

This attendance strategy clearly outlines what success looks like. Schools in Swindon will be implementing consistent, graduated responses to children and young people who are not attending school regularly and on time. Individual schools will see a reduction in their overall absence figure and a reduction in their persistent absence figure. The overall attendance figure for Swindon schools will be above 96%. Improved school attendance will lead to improved attainment outcomes for all children and young people across the borough, and more will remain in education provision, reducing the number of children and young people not in education, employment, or training. Ultimately, better attainment for all will mean more opportunities for our young people to thrive and succeed in the future.

In Swindon, many children, families, and schools have excellent attendance – we need to do more to celebrate that. We know there are examples of great success happening every day. We know that we have strong partnership arrangements in place, that working to support parents and children is crucial to really make a difference for all of our children. This attendance strategy sets out its commitment to all partners through **Swindon Learning Together** to ensure that all children and young people are given the best possible start in life and that they attend school regularly.

Annette Perrington
Director – Education, Inclusion & Skills

Councillor Ibitoye

Guiding Principles

Swindon Borough Council recognises the importance of parents/carers as a child's first educators and believes that parents/carers should be supported in playing an active and valued role in their child's education.

Swindon Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are given the best possible start in life, and ensuring that they attend school regularly is an important part of this commitment. As part of the **Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 Swindon: Planning for Our Future,** Priority 4 focuses on equipping all of our young people with the education and skills they need through additional and enhanced skills and higher education opportunities:

Working with education providers and businesses to ensure that all children, young people, and adults have access to good-quality learning regardless of their circumstances. Raising aspirations and giving residents access to lifelong learning opportunities to gain the skills, knowledge, and qualifications to fulfil their ambitions.

Ensuring that education provision meets the future demands of a growing town and working with education providers to ensure quality education across a range of settings, placements, and apprenticeship opportunities. Supporting all people to promote an inclusive and safe education environment with access to positive activities that unlock their talents.

In addition to our priorities, there are several pledges which describe how we will meet this priority:

- We will ensure that every child and young person in Swindon has a place at a good or better Early Years (EY) provider, school, and/or education placement or apprenticeship provision.

- Together with EY, schools, and education partners, we will ensure every child and young person is able to access their learning every day.

- We will continue to work in partnership to provide opportunities which support our children and young people to develop life skills while ensuring all residents have access to lifelong learning.

- We will work with partners to unlock the talents of children and young people and strengthen families through positive activities.

We will make Swindon safer, fairer, and healthier by helping people to help themselves while always protecting our children and adults, increasing health and well-being facilities, and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

One of our guiding principles reflects the new DfE guidance on attendance, which will become compulsory from September 2023. In developing this strategy, we have a strong culture of working together to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. In addition, we have built on our existing partnerships, working with education providers, schools, academies, partners, and stakeholders. This will ensure our local approach not only is in line with current government guidance and legislation but also recognises the needs of our community, post pandemic, and seeks to empower and support them.

Why Is Regular Attendance Important?

Regular attendance is an important part of giving children the best possible start in life. The aim should be to attend school 100% of the time. Children and young people who miss sessions at their education provider frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams. Good attendance also shows potential employers that a young person is reliable.

However, in addition to the benefits of regular attendance upon attainment, the impact upon the longer-term benefits for children and young people means that they can make a positive contribution within their community and have economic well-being.

They are the place where children learn, where they make friends, where they find things they are passionate about and talented at. A place that is safe, with adults around them who care about their lives, and that provides routine, structure, and discipline.

Children and young people who attend their education provider regularly could be at lower risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour or crime. Securing excellent attendance is key to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people. Missing education leaves children and young people vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning, and diminishing their self-confidence.

The Swindon Youth Safety Strategy 2022–2026 identifies themes that contribute to incidents of serious youth violence and impact upon youth safety, and one of these is children not attending education, training, or employment through provision through exclusion, off-rolling or unsuitable provision, and the link between attendance and child exploitation. One of

their priorities is to increase the number of children and young adults with achievements in education, training, and employment.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel — It Was Hard to Escape — Safeguarding Children at Risk from Criminal Exploitation 2020 (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-at-risk-from-criminal-exploitation) report states that

our children face a number of challenges to their safety and well-being today – none more complex and damaging than criminal exploitation. Being drawn into exploitative situations, where children can be both victims and perpetrators of serious harm, can have severe consequences for them and their families, friends, and communities.

We know that irregular attendance can lead to children and young people experiencing poor emotional health and well-being. Children and young people who miss education on a regular basis can become socially isolated; they can lack confidence and have low self-esteem, feeling that they do not fit in with their peers, leading to loneliness and isolation.

These are not the life outcomes and experiences we want for our children and young people.

Education is not purely about academic success and attainment; it is about learning about the world, about relationships, and about ourselves. It is about trying new things, making new friends, and finding our place in the world. To miss education is to miss the many experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have, and the quality of life that we lead.

Why Is Regular Attendance Important?

The research shows us that children and young people who attend school regularly go on to achieve better outcomes, to live healthier, wealthier, and more enriched lives, and we want to make sure we are all doing everything that we can to make that happen for all of our children.

The Department for Education (DfE) published statistics in relation to the link between absence and attainment at Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 2018/2019:

- The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

- At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7% compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.

- Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

- At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8% compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41.

- The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

- For care-experienced children, the overall absence rates (2020/21) were 9.1%, for children in need, the absence rates were 13.85%, and for children on protection plans, the absence rates were 17.6%.

In addition, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon attainment has been researched by the Education Endowment Foundation. The Impact of COVID-19 on Learning: Review of the Evidence highlighted the key findings:

- COVID-19–related disruption has negatively impacted the attainment of all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- There is evidence that the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their classmates has grown.

- There is some evidence that in primary schools, younger year groups (Key Stage 1/KS1 pupils) have been the most significantly affected, with lower attainment than previous cohorts across all subjects. Other recent research shows particularly negative impacts for pupils in Key Stage 3 (KS3) (DfE, 2 021, 2022).

- Most of the evidence shows that despite some recovery by summer 2021, on average, the pupils were not performing as well in both maths and reading as their pre-pandemic cohorts.

- Aside from the impact on attainment, which this report focuses on, teachers have frequently reported concerns around the effect on the pupil's well-being. There is also emerging evidence that suggests the pandemic has negatively impacted children's mental health.

In September 2020, the Children's Commissioner published the report Childhood in the Time of COVID, aiming to set out the key ways in which children's lives were impacted as a result of the

COVID-19 crisis, in particular their attainment.

- Before the crisis, disadvantaged children were 18 months behind their wealthier peers in their learning by the time they finished their GCSEs, with no improvements made since 2017.

- The closures are likely to have worsened the disadvantage gap.

- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds had less contact with their teachers and less work marked than wealthier children.

- In the first month of lockdown, private school children were twice as likely to take part in daily online lessons as those in state school.

- Around 60% of private schools and 37% of state schools in the most affluent areas had an online platform to receive work compared to 23% in the most deprived state schools.

- Some schools went above and beyond to offer good-quality remote education to their pupils and stay in touch with vulnerable children at home; many did not have a digital offer, and it tended to be poorer pupils who lost out.

- Teachers estimate that their pupils are, on average, three months behind, and over half report that the learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has widened since the previous year.

A Ministry of Justice report published in June 2018 (Examining the Educational Background of Young Knife Possession Offenders) shows that 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. The 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).

It is true that many children and families in Swindon have regular attendance and good punctuality, and we want to do more to celebrate that. We know that there are examples of great practice happening every day in our schools. We are committed to learning from this.

We know that we have some strong partnership arrangements in place that we can strengthen to really make a difference together. We believe that by improving attendance, we will do the following:

- ensure more children and young people have a happy and enriched life experience;

- enable children and young people to achieve more at their education provider academically, emotionally, and socially;

- overcome some of the challenges we have all faced during and after the pandemic;

- help children build positive, long-lasting friendships and lead happy lives;

- improve the mental health and well-being f children and families;

- reduce child exploitation and abuse, anti-social behaviour, and knife crime on our streets;

- help children and families prosper socially and economically;

Why Is Regular Attendance Important?

- regular attendance supports[1];

- increase the chances of success in further or higher education or apprenticeships;

- improve the employability of young people;

- reduce the demand for support services; and

- improve lifestyles and better prepare our young people for adulthood and the world of work.

[1]regular attendance is defined as above 94%

National Context

Attendance has been an issue of concern to the Government since 2012. The findings from the 2012 Charlie Taylor (Government Expert Advisor on Behaviour) report 'Improving Attendance at School' highlighted the link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement.

Irregular school attendance is of concern in the United Kingdom. In 2019/20, absence was reported as 4.9% overall, with special schools showing a higher rate equal to 10.5% and persistent absence at 13.1% in England (Gov.UK 2020). These are the last full years' data as the following years have been further impacted by COVID-19.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had and continues to have an impact upon the lives of children and young people and their families. It has interrupted their development and learning and resulted in reduced opportunities for children and young people's futures. Attending school regularly has become more challenging for all, and we know that a stable education is key to reducing the impact of the many risks that children and young people face daily.

The disruption to learning created by the closure of education providers and settings and the creation of remote learning packages is unprecedented. It is important that we work together to overcome the challenges created by the pandemic and make sure all of our children and young people are supported to return to their education and catch up on missed learning.

We know that children and young people's emotional well-being has been affected by the lockdown periods and the pandemic and that, for some, they felt isolated and unmotivated and that returning to education was an anxious time. It is important to work together to ensure the correct support is in place and provide this when children and young people need it most.

The impact of the pandemic upon attendance has seen unprecedented levels of persistent absence and overall absence. Recent publication of the whole year of attendance data 2020–2021 shows the following:

- Around 21.3% of possible sessions during the 2020/21 academic year were recorded as not attending in circumstances related to the coronavirus. This includes pupils self-isolating and shielding, including when a class or bubble was required to stay at home, and includes the period of national restrictions in the spring term of 2021, when 57.5% of sessions were recorded as not attending.

- A further 4.6% of sessions were recorded as absences in 2020/21, and this equates to over 58 million days of missed education.

- Around 12.1% of enrolments missed 10% or more possible sessions in the 2020/21 academic year.

Source: Pupil Absence in Schools in England Academic Year 2020–2021

Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic Year 2020/21 – Explore education statistics – GOV. UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

This attendance strategy will be reviewed in April 2023, when the government attendance guidance becomes statutory. The strategy will direct our work in improving school attendance until 2025 and be reviewed annually.

The Importance of Attendance Post-16

Post-16 Participation in Education, Employment, and Training

This strategy covers attendance for young people up to 18 (and up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities/SEND). The importance of attendance and the impact of non-attendance are the same for all ages; however, the post-16 requirements for attendance (referred to as participation in learning) are covered by different legislation, and young people are able to participate in a wider range of education, employment, and training.

The statutory guidance is outlined in the 'Participation of Young People in Education, Employment, or Training' Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (2016) and was issued under Sections 18 and 68 (4) of the Education and Skills Act (2008).

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, although in practice, young people attend and are encouraged to attend school until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. Participation can include full-time education, apprenticeships, traineeships, supported internships, full-time work, or self-employment with training/part-time education.

Local authorities are required to secure sufficient suitable education and training to enable and assist young people to participate and to track young people's participation, identifying those young people who are NEETs and providing support.

Education providers have specific duties – including collating destinations and providing careers education, information advice, and guidance (CEIAG) – and these duties are outlined in 'Careers Strategy: Making the Most of Everyone's Skills and Talents (December 2017). The 'Gatsby Benchmarks' outline the expectations for CEIAG, and the Careers and Enterprise Company has been commissioned by the DfE for the last 4 years to deliver support for schools and colleges to achieve them through the Careers Hub.

The publication of the Government's new attendance guidance in May 2022, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, has now given the direction to maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. The guidance will become statutory from September 2023 and gives clarity about the expectations and actions required to ensure that children and young people attend school regularly.

The overall message is very clear that securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, SEN support, pastoral and mental health and well-being, and the effective use of resources, including pupil premium. In summary, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school

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gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Swindon Learning Together — Our Partnership Approach

Working together to improve attendance is the focus for all partners who form Swindon Learning Together throughout this attendance strategy. We know that successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance at home or at school requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against, families. This means that all partners should work together to do the following:

- **Expect —** Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can and want to be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

- **Monitor —** Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at the individual and cohort levels) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

- **Listen and Understand —** When a pattern is spotted, encourage pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree on how all partners can work together to resolve them.

- **Facilitate Support —** Remove barriers in schools and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

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

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

This strategy is intended to ensure the delivery of a greater consistency of support for families across Swindon and focus better, more targeted multi-agency support on pupils who need it most.

Local Context

The Indices of Deprivation 2019 show that Swindon ranks 98 out of 151 upper-tier local authorities for average deprivation score, with the upper-tier local authority ranked first being the most deprived relatively. This means Swindon has become relatively more deprived since the 2015 indices, where it ranked 108 out of 152. Despite this, Swindon is relatively less deprived than most of England's upper-tier local authorities.

There are pockets of deprivation in Swindon, with 12 of the borough's 132 local super output areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10% nationally (compared to 8 in 2015).

These LSOAs are located in the Gorsehill & Pinehurst, Walcot & Park North, Liden, Eldene & Park South, and Penhill & Upper Stratton wards:

1. Penhill central (ranked 701/32,844 LSOAs in England)

2. Pinehurst west (ranked 806/32,844)

3. Penhill north (982/32,844)

4. Penhill east (1,382/32,844)

5. Walcot East northwest (1,670/32,844)

6. Pinehurst south (2,544/32,844)

7. Park South central (2,722/32,844)

8. Park North north (2,757/32,844)

9. Upper Stratton southeast (2,783/32,844)

10. Park South southwest (2,794/32,844)

11. Walcot East southwest (3,016/32,844)

12. Walcot East east (3,022/32,844)

Penhill central in the Penhill & Upper Stratton ward is the most derived LSOA in Swindon. Five LSOAs in Swindon (Pinehurst west, Park South central, Penhill north, Penhill central, and Walcot East northwest) are the most highly deprived across 4 different domains: income; employment; education, skills & training; and crime.

Swindon's relative deprivation is most severe in the education, skills & training domain (ranking 60 out of 151 for the average score), with Penhill central ranking the 59th most deprived in England for this domain (out of 32,844 LSOAs).

In recent years, collaborative approaches between services within education and social care and voluntary services have been undertaken to bring about improvements to children and young people's outcomes. For example, one of the outcomes from the Swindon Health and Well-being Strategy 2017–2022 outlines its response to ensuring that every child and young person in Swindon has a healthy start in life:

All children and young people in Swindon deserve the best start in life, and we want them to enjoy life, establish [healthy] relationships, achieve, stay safe from harm, be [healthy], and grow up to reach their full potential, making a positive contribution to society.

The commitment to improving levels of attendance and reducing levels of persistent absence aligns itself within this collaborative approach to ensure better outcomes for children and young people. We know that whilst there are many examples of children and young

Local Context

people attending school on a daily basis and achieving education well, too many remain persistently absent from our schools. We believe that when our 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.

It is also important that, when considering irregular attendance, a holistic approach is taken. This should consider the emotional, social, economic, and academic reasons as to 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.

What Do We Know About Attendance Already?

There are lots of positive examples of good practice in schools, teams, and organisations in relation to the management of attendance. However, there is more we can do to join this up to really make a difference for children and families.

We are taking a strategic approach across the full range of services for children and families and schools to support attendance, to ensure that they operate sufficiently in the post-pandemic world, and to look for new and innovative ways to work with children, young people, and families.

For children with complex health needs and their families, the difficulties in securing good attendance can be more challenging. It is important that all agencies and teams working with families are familiar with best practice and guidance and work in a solution-focused way to minimise absence from school.

We know that many schools and agencies do this work very effectively; however, our analysis tells us that there is more we can do together to make sure that this approach is consistently applied across the borough.

We know that following a review with Swindon schools, there are many strengths:

- There has been a range of significant improvements in the systems and processes across secondary schools, and this has led to improvements in attendance over several years.

- The involvement of pastoral teams when working with children and young people with poor attendance is evident in all schools; internal referral procedures and collaborative approaches have clearly been developing over a considerable period and are now well established.

- All schools have a policy and set of procedures to address and improve attendance, with high expectations placed upon parents, children and young people, and members of staff.

- Schools have allocated resources at the senior leader and operational levels to secure these procedures.

- 'Hard to improve' pupils have identified interventions in place; staff know these pupils well, even if, in many cases, there is a lack of confidence that these interventions will have the desired impact.

- The participation of young people in education, employment, and training at 16–18 is stable (92.8% compared to 93.2% nationally for 2020/21), and our NEET numbers are low (1.9% compared to the national 2.7%). However, we have too many young people who classify as 'unknown' (4.8%). We are improving our processes with education providers to ensure we receive the intended and actual destinations on time and can confirm all destinations early in the autumn term.

What Do We Know About Attendance Already?

- Too many young people are dropping out of learning before completing their courses, and a significant number of young people do not progress to further learning after Year 12.

- NEET numbers are high for some of our vulnerable groups, and there is continued work to ensure they are able to participate in education, employment, and training.

Through conversations with our schools, parents, partners, and stakeholders, we have identified some key priorities to shape our work.
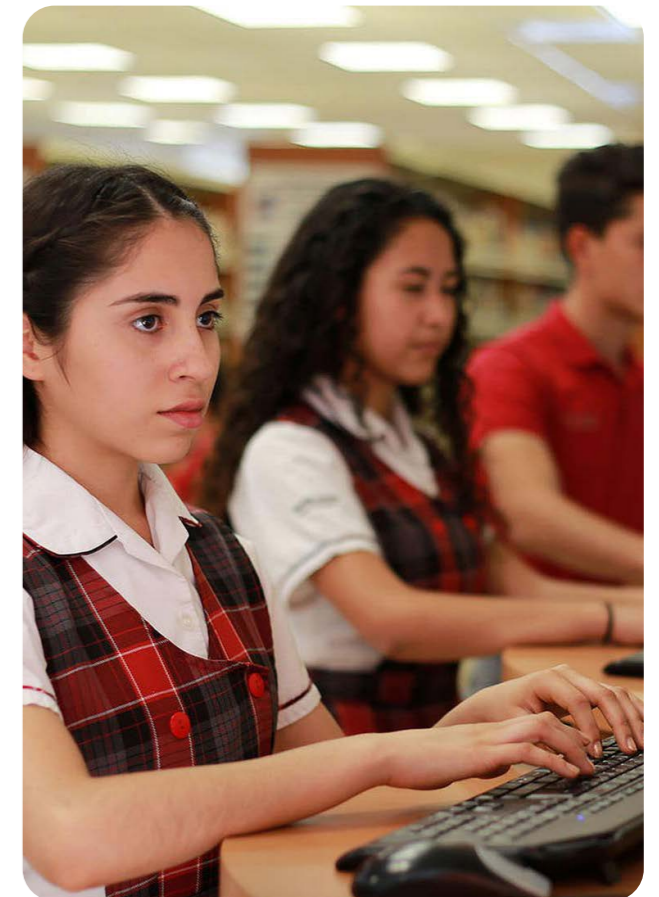
How We Are Going to Improve Attendance?

We will do the following:

- Develop and implement a borough-wide attendance strategy.

- Identify a coordinated approach from all partners to understand significant factors that are affecting pupil absence.

- Consider and implement the recent government consultation recommendations into improving attendance and apply this within our own strategy and interventions.

- Introduce attendance-specific briefings with our schools.

- Set up regular networking meetings for school attendance leads to share good practice and provide support for one another.

- Develop resources and training to support EY providers to encourage good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's educational journey.

- Design and embed a comprehensive training package that supports the work of the Education Welfare Service, school attendance leads, and a wider range of stakeholders and services.

- Reflect the way that the borough collects and uses the plethora of pupil data and identify suitable forums for this information to be disseminated to.

- Secure borough coordination and intervention for children and young people with attendance below 20% with an aim not only to secure individual improvement in attendance but also to inform working practice.

- Establish and promote clear lines of responsibility and positive relationships with schools so there is an understanding of where impact is taking place, providing support and challenges as appropriate.

- Implement a multi-agency approach so that children and families get help from the right person or service at the right time and so that attendance is not just seen as an issue for schools.

- Review our practice guidance in relation to early help and social care practices to make sure that a consistent approach is taken to the management of poor attendance.

- Ensure the processes for pre- and post-16 are joined up and opportunities to ensure sustained attendance after transition from Year 11 are maximised.

- Develop model policies and proformas for schools to adopt to bring a consistent approach to managing attendance at school.

- Introduce a handbook into our schools and partners that provides all practitioners with the resources they need to promote good attendance and intervene quickly when attendance is a cause for concern.

How We Are Going to Improve 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.

- Develop a communications campaign that helps raise awareness of good attendance and why it is important.

- Ensure governance systems and processes are in place to manage key local issues such as the attendance of vulnerable students and that, where appropriate, alternative delivery models are secured to meet the needs of children, families, and schools.

- Review our existing service level agreements for Education Welfare Service traded delivery and refresh them so that they remain fit for purpose in a post-pandemic world and in line with the new government attendance guidance.

Staged Attendance Intervention Model

The staged attendance intervention model is a framework of 3 staged interventions that mirror the Swindon Borough Council 'Right Help Right Time' Early Help threshold document. Interventions begin with effective whole-school approaches to managing the attendance of all children and young people.

In addition, there is an EY stage that outlines the expectations of all of our Swindon providers in regard to promoting the benefits of regular attendance and developing good habits.

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school provides a safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

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

An effective whole-school approach will include regular monitoring and reviewing of practice. The approach enables the school to identify opportunities to work with other agencies as attendance becomes a concern and to implement other individual school-based strategies to support with improving attendance.

Rapid and efficient early intervention will help prevent long-term absence from school.

Early Help is everyone's responsibility. Early Help in Swindon is a collaborative approach, not a provision:

By working together effectively and earlier, we will reduce the number of children and young people requiring statutory interventions. Early Help enables children, young people, and their families that have become overwhelmed by difficulties to make better choices, learn new skills, and improve aspirations to turn their lives around. Each individual is accountable and responsible for the child – if a need is identified that can be met, the requirement to take action with the confidence to intervene and challenge positively when appropriate must be taken.

Children and Young People are at the centre of our work.
We need to ensure they receive the Right Help at the Right Time.

1

Level 1 - Universal

Children are making good overall progress and are thriving, through appropriate universal services, which are available to all children living in Swindon. No additional unmet needs are identified or there is a single need unidentified which can be met by a universal service.

3

Level 3 - Early help intensive support

Children where there is an increasing level of complex/and or multiple unmet/unclear needs where more intensive co-ordinated support is required to prevent concerns escalating. An early assessment and family plan must be completed and a multi-agency team around the family (TAF) should be in place to develop a robust multi-agency family plan to prevent further escalation of concerns.

Level 2 - Early Help Additional Needs

Children whose needs cannot be met through universal services working independently and may require additional support. This includes those children who have needs that are currently unclear. Additional support can be provided by a number of different universal services working together. An early help assessment is essential and a lead professional should be identifies to co-ordinate a family plan of support.

Level 4 - Statutory Specialist Support

Children who have experienced significant harm, who are at risk of signification harm (section 47) and includes children where there are significant welfare concerns (section 17) A statutory assessment will be completed to determine the level of support/intervention that is required.

2

4

The Graduated Approach to Improving School Attendance

Early Years Staged Attendance Intervention

Although attendance in EY and reception provision is not statutory until the term after a child's 5th birthday, EY providers have a very important role to play in encouraging and establishing good attendance habits.

Development Matters, the DFE's non-statutory guidance for the EYFS, states, 'Children learn and develop more from birth to five years old than at any other time in their lives.' The guidance also stresses, 'Gaps by the end of the early years will, on average, double by the end of primary schooling. The early years are the crucial years for making a difference.'

Even for very young children, there are huge positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance, whatever the weekly pattern of childcare. This includes not only coming to every planned session but also being there on time. It is important that all staff understand the principles of good attendance practice and the importance of good attendance by children.

At the very least, good attendance practice promotes good outcomes for children, including accessing their educational entitlement and forming secure attachments. In a small minority of cases, good attendance practice may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for a child or family and may have a vital part to play in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.

EY providers will have access to training and resources to support good attendance habits.

The expectation is that providers will do the following:

- Communicate the importance of regular attendance with parents and carers

- Maintain an expectation that parents/carers inform the provider of any absences and the reasons for them

- Consider ways of celebrating good attendance

- Contact parents/carers when there are instances of unexplained absence, seeking assurance about the child's safety and welfare

- Where children's absence falls below the expected level, discuss any support that the providers may be able to offer (this may include support for the family, such as early help or referral to other services as appropriate)

- Have access to and regard for the EY attendance toolkit

The Graduated Approach to Improving School Attendance

The Graduated Approach

Stage 1 (Level 1)
Universal

Children are making good overall progress and are thriving through appropriate universal services which are available to all children living in Swindon. No additional, unmet needs are identified, or there is a single need identified, which can be met by a universal service, e.g. schools, nurseries, childminders, youth projects, police, midwives, health visitors, GPs, libraries, housing, voluntary and community groups and organisations.

Attendance Criteria: Attendance Level Is Above 95% over a 12-week Period

Primary Responsibility: Schools, Academies, and Independent Schools

Children and young people with levels of attendance of 96% and above will usually receive support from the school's attendance officer through a mixture of telephone calls, letters, and informal meetings with parents. This process is encapsulated via the Stage 1 Attendance Intervention Model Process (below). The expectation is that schools will do the following:

- Have in place a first-day contacting system

- Administer their own school attendance monitoring process when absence and/or punctuality become/s a concern (this may include identifying children and young people who are a priority for first-day calling)

- Regular communication to parents via weekly bulletins, letters, emails, texts

- Tutor sessions focusing purely upon regular attendance

- Attendance focus during parent evening discussions

- Meetings between the school attendance officer and key staff members regularly to track trends

- One-on-one tutor meetings focusing upon attendance

- Sharing attendance data with tutors weekly to monitor and track trends, cohorts, and individual children

- Have a praise/reward system in place for children who exceed the school's attendance target or who enter Stage 1 from Stage 2 or 3

- For care-experienced children and those on child-in-need/protection plans, welfare call commissioned by the virtual school to collect this data and for contact

- Cycles of 'plan, do, and review' in line with the SEND Code of Practice 2014 to identify if there are any 'unmet' needs for those who are on SEN support or have an EHCP

Stage 2 (Level 2)
Early Help Additional Needs

These are children whose needs cannot be met through universal services working independently and may require additional support. This includes children who have needs that are currently unclear.

Additional support can be provided by a number of different universal services working together. An early help assessment is essential, and a lead professional should be identified to coordinate a family plan of support.

This level includes targeted support for SEND, which is called SEND support and requires that a child or young person be identified as requiring more than quality first teaching to make good levels of progress, and will be on the school SEND register (or an equivalent in further education).

Attendance Criteria Level: Below 95% over a 12-week Period

Primary Responsibility: Schools, Academies, and Independent Schools

Children and young people with attendance below 95% will require additional support to return this rate to over 95%. The support may include elements of Stage 1 interventions, but the provider may employ external services to provide this in conjunction with school-based interventions.

In Swindon, it is expected that the following interventions will be undertaken at this stage:

- Early Help Assessment and Plan

- Team around the child/family meeting

- Pastoral support

- Mentoring support

- Referral to support services

- Home visits

- Parenting contract meeting

- Attendance panel meeting

- Specialist assessments, e.g. from an educational psychologist, to support a holistic analysis of factors (e.g. child, family, school factors) influencing attendance as well as evidence-based recommendations and interventions

- Mental health interventions (trailblazers/ELSA)

For children and young people who already have been identified with SEN, the graduated approach should be applied with a tighter focus, with clear consideration of the identification of any unmet needs and provision to meet those needs.

There is an expectation that an early help assessment and plan is completed if any child or young person has attendance below 90%, i.e. a persistent absentee. In addition, all children and young people who have allocated social workers will have their attendance reviewed via a school attendance plan during all scheduled meetings as part of the child-in-need and child protection process.

Pastoral/supportive interventions are important to continue in this stage, as is working with parents and their child/young person to reach a positive outcome. The combination of a multi-agency input is critical to successfully understand what may be underpinning the causes of absence and removing barriers to regular attendance.

Towards the end of Stage 2 and when it is evident that attendance is not improving, absence persists, and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, it is important that all those partners working alongside the family communicate the same message. This message is about the consequences of continued non-engagement and absence. This ensures that the family has an opportunity to respond. At this point and depending upon the circumstances, it may be necessary to formalise support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

At this point and before progressing a child's attendance to Stage 3 action, it is important that the school be able to provide evidence that supports this and that various interventions be offered and undertaken where an additional need has been identified. Pastoral support underpins any enforcement action and vice versa.

There should also be evidence that the parent/carer(s) have failed to effectively engage with Stage 1 and 2 interventions. For this purpose, a Stage 2 tracking form can be used to record general contacts with the parent, together with dates of when actions are completed.

Any contact made between the school (including phone calls/meetings/home visits) should result in a note being kept of the contact, detailing who was involved, what was discussed, any actions agreed, and what the outcome was. The note should be kept securely and will be asked to be presented as part of the Stage 3 process.
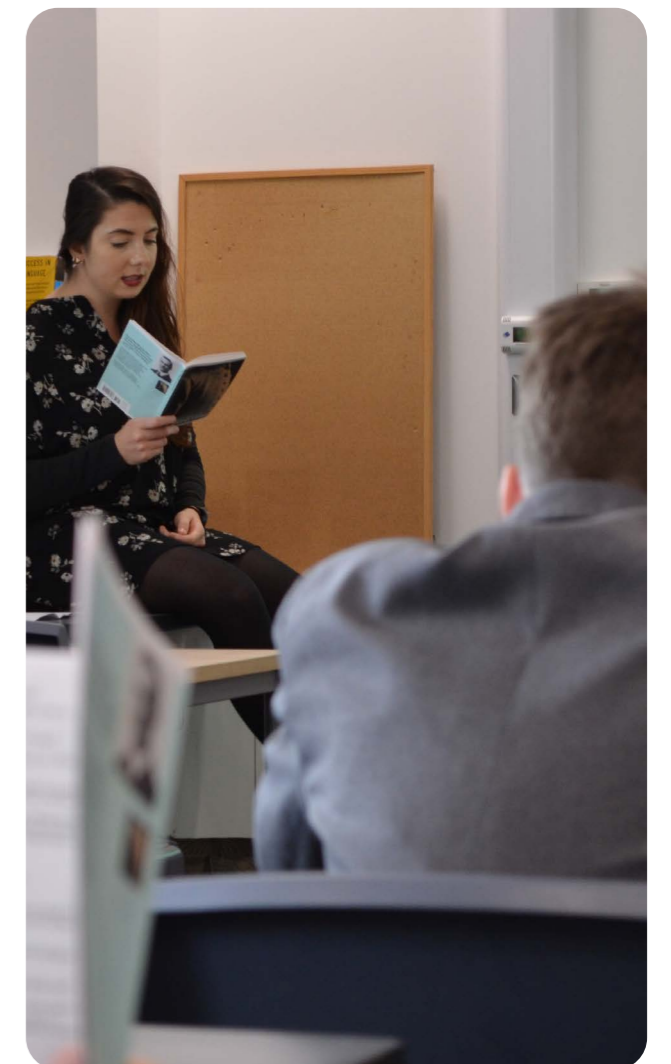
Stage 3 (Level 3)
Early Help Intensive Support

Intensive coordinated support is required to prevent concerns escalating. An early assessment and family plan must be completed, and a multi-agency 'team around the family' (TAF) should be in place to develop a robust multi-agency family plan to prevent further escalation of concerns. Support that is more intensive might include family services, parenting hubs/parenting programmes, youth engagement workers, and voluntary agencies.

Progress or lack of progress on the plan can be used to evidence escalation of need and where more specialist/statutory support may be required to prevent further risk to the child.

For children and young people with SEND, this will still be SEND support but at an enhanced level with the support of other outside agencies, e.g. educational psychologists, specialist advisory teachers.

Attendance Criteria — Attendance Level Is Below 80% with 20+ Sessions of Unauthorised Absence in a 12-week Period

Primary Responsibility: Local Authority (Following Request from School)

When all attempts to engage with the family at intervention stages 1 and 2 have failed, all avenues have been exhausted, and support is not working or not engaged with, it is possible to enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

The school can refer to the local authority to undertake a Stage 3 intervention, which initiates a criminal investigation in line with the criminal investigation process.

To ensure that the investigation can progress as quickly as possible, the school should ensure the Stage 3 request is completed thoroughly, ensuring as much information and evidence of previous interventions is included as well as naming any other professionals or services who are currently involved with supporting the family. A Stage 2 tracking form should also be attached, which details the support/challenge put in place with the family.

The criminal investigation process is a minimum 2-step process which involves the examination of evidence presented to the local authority by the school together with the questioning of the parent. The aim of the investigation is to establish whether or not an offence has been committed, and if the LA establishes that an offence has been committed, the parent/carer(s) will then be formally made aware (notified) of this and requested to attend an 'interview under caution' meeting as a last opportunity to disclose any further information before the LA instigates legal action.

If at any point during the criminal investigation process, an additional need is raised that is currently unmet or support for that need has not been sought, then the investigation will cease and the case returned to Stage 2 intervention.

If the LA proceeds with legal action, a witness

statement may be taken from the head teacher and members of staff from the school outlining what intervention has preceded Stage 3 intervention. In all instances, the head teacher would, as a minimum, have to sign a prepared attendance certificate and submit a statement authenticating the process around how absence codes are recorded and in what circumstances any changes in attendance/absence codes were made.

Stage 4 (Level 4)
Statutory Specialist Support

These are children who have experienced significant harm or who are at risk of significant harm (Section 47 — Child Protection) and where there are significant welfare concerns (Section 17 — Child in Need). It is likely that a referral to MASH is needed by completing an RFI or contacting MASH 01793 466903 (Option 2).

A statutory assessment will be completed to determine the level of support/intervention that is required.

These are also children who may need specialist support given the impact of disability. The parents/carers of a child with a disability or a young carer can request a Section 17 assessment. This will be triaged by MASH and allocated to the appropriate team using the threshold guidance and DCT eligibility criteria.

This level also includes children in specialised services in residential, day patient, or outpatient settings for children with severe and complex health problems and children who are remanded into custody.

These children may also be identified as having complex SEND and their needs unmet by SEND support. They may require provisions that are additional to or different from those of the majority of children their own age. It may be necessary to request a statutory education healthcare needs assessment (EHCNA). There will need to be clear evidence of a graduated approach to meet the child/young person's needs and evidence of all interventions/strategies that have been in place to support the child/young person at SEND support. The evidence will need to demonstrate that the child/young person's needs are not being met.

Service Provider: Everyone Has a Responsibility to Promote and Protect the Welfare of Children and Young People

Attendance Level Criteria — Attendance below 50% — Children have experienced significant harm or are at risk of experiencing significant harm (Child Protection Section 47) or significant welfare concerns (Child in Need Section 17).

Working Together in Partnership

Securing good attendance is everybody's business – if we are to achieve our ambitious goals, we all need to work together.

The local authorities, statutory safeguarding partners, and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term. As a minimum, however, Swindon Borough Council is expected to undertake some core duties.

Rigorously Track Local Attendance Data

Swindon Borough Council recognises the importance of raising awareness of good attendance across the council's areas of responsibility, including how attendance improvement is everyone's responsibility and how it is reflected and understood across wider services where appropriate.

We will make attendance a key feature of all frontline council services but especially access to education services, early help, statutory social care, and the virtual school. Alongside this, we use attendance data to identify pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods on which to focus our efforts.

It is important that we benchmark against neighbouring local authorities – both geographical and statistical, regional, and national averages – to monitor our progress and identify patterns and trends of concern.

Analysis of the data will help to set a clear vision for improving attendance across Swindon; it will assist in identifying tangible short- and longer-term aims and priorities.

School Attendance Support Team

All local authorities are expected to have a school attendance support team, and Swindon Borough Council will ensure that this team works with all schools in its area, regardless of type. There are 4 core functions that are free of charge to all schools, and these functions cannot be traded or require the need for a service level agreement. We will include the post-16 tracking of attendance, NEETs, and unknown in this process. The local authority has developed a small focused EET team with an officer link for each school to support attendance and the sharing of information.

The core functions provided to schools are as follows.

Communication and Advice

Good communication and sharing of effective practice are essential to good multi-agency working. Our attendance strategy gives clear guidance on how schools, the school attendance support team, and other partners will work together to provide intensive voluntary and/or formal support for individual pupils and families.

The Staged Model of Attendance Intervention clarifies what support schools are expected to offer and the point at which the local authority will become involved in individual cases. This includes how the local authority and school will share responsibility in line with the 'summary of responsibilities' table (see Appendix 3).

Each school will be provided with a named point of contact in the school attendance support team who will provide support with queries and advice and with whom targeted support meetings will be held.

As part of the Behaviour and Attendance Forum, there will be opportunities to maintain relationships with school leaders and offer opportunities for all schools regardless of type to come together to share effective attendance practice. In addition, there will be regular termly newsletters, webinars, and virtual drop-in sessions.

These communication opportunities can also demonstrate our leadership and commitment to working together to improve attendance by agreeing on common practices for issues such as term time holidays or follow-up for persistent lateness so that families receive the same approach if they have children and young people at several schools.

Targeted Support Meetings

As patterns of attendance are habitual, early identification and support is essential for individual pupils in need of help. Where barriers go beyond the classroom, this requires schools, local authorities, and other partners to work together to put joint support in place as quickly as possible.

In line with the DfE guidance, local authorities are expected to organise termly targeted support meetings with each school in their area. The school's attendance leads and their point of contact in the school attendance support team can identify, discuss, and agree to join targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so.

These meetings, where possible, will not be additional meetings, but if a team around the school meeting is being held, then the named contact in the school attendance support team will attend it to avoid duplication. This will include agreeing on what support Swindon Borough Council will provide and which, if any, other statutory or voluntary services should become involved.

These meetings will be an opportunity to build strong relationships and work collaboratively together and include advice on recording in the register and accessing services or the 'wider area–wider attendance' approach. There is also an opportunity in these meetings to help the school identify areas to focus on in their school policies or approaches to seek them. This may include help analysing their own data and how they may learn from or work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends.

Where barriers to attendance for a pupil or family are complex and signposting to services is not sufficient, schools, local authorities, and other services should work together to provide more intensive whole family support to address them as soon as it becomes clear they would benefit from it. Schools and local authorities are also specifically expected to have a joint approach for all severely absent pupils.

Working Together in Partnership

Multi-disciplinary Support

In line with early help principles, the family should receive an early help assessment and plan and, where necessary, a single lead practitioner. This should be from the team or service best placed to support the family and their needs, which may be the school, a local authority team or service, or another statutory partner such as a health professional. For example, in the case of a pupil experiencing barriers to attendance because of a housing issue, the lead practitioner may more sensibly be the family's housing officer.

Role of the School Attendance Support Team

To facilitate effective multi-disciplinary support for families, the school attendance support team will also do the following:

• Provide schools with information on how to raise concerns and make referrals to early help (and other services) outside of their targeted support meetings so families receive the support they require as quickly as possible.

• Build strong relationships with a range of services and partners that can help with specific barriers to attendance and how to access them. In Swindon, this will include health, youth justice, the voluntary and community sector, early help, children's social care, local safeguarding partnerships, SEN, educational psychologists, and housing support. The team should meet regularly with leads from these services and ensure they know what their role is in attendance support, why it is important, and how they fit into the local authority's wider strategy on attendance. They should also help coordinate strategies and messages on attendance with other partners to improve the consistency of the approach.

• Build effective data-sharing opportunities with different partners as part of the overall data sharing/governance arrangements in the local partnership to ensure a joined-up approach. Where this is not possible, the team should facilitate opportunities for professionals to come together to coordinate support (such as via case conferencing).

• Work closely with local mental health services, school-level senior mental health leads (including school-based mental health support teams), the local school nursing service, and the local authority's SEND team(s) to ensure joined-up support for families facing health- or disability-related barriers to attendance.

To secure effective multi-agency work on attendance, there are several key principles in place for this to be effective:

• A collaborative culture across all early help services that puts the needs of the pupil and wider family at the core of its action (not the service delivery).

• Combined staff training and development across early help services so all staff understand the importance of absence as a symptom of wider need and the benefits of improving attendance to effective outcomes for the whole family.

• Common systems and processes across all local authority family-facing teams, including early help assessment, statutory assessment, planning, and case management.

• Setting clear 'success measures' as part of individual and family plans and jointly owning these across all services working with the family.

• An integrated management structure between the local authority's school attendance support team and other early help services outside of the local authority.

• Where families have multiple needs, aligning of the routes to support to ensure that they receive a holistic, coordinated package of support so as to increase the chance of successful outcomes.

Promoting Attendance as Everyone's Business

As absence is so often a symptom of wider issues a family is facing, schools, trusts, and local authorities should always work together with other local partners. In Swindon, we know that children who have social workers have experienced some elements of non-school attendance. By working together on this across the partnership, we will be able to improve academic achievement for Swindon's most vulnerable children and young people.

Where that is not successful or is not engaged with, the law protects pupils' right to an education. Under the terms of the United Nations Convention Rights of the Child, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential as every child has basic fundamental rights. These include the right to

• life, survival, and development;

• protection from violence, abuse, or neglect;

• an education that enables children to fulfil their potential;

• be raised by or have a relationship with their parents; and

• express their opinions and be listened to.

Article 28 says that every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence.

Article 29 says that children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents, and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights and to respect other people's rights, cultures, and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

There are a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, these can be enforced through prosecuting parents. Attendance legal intervention can only be used for pupils of compulsory school age, and decisions should be made on an individual case-by-case basis.

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority's school attendance support team should liaise with school and the early help lead practitioner or social worker (where applicable) to take forward attendance legal intervention in line with Section 5 to formalise support and/or enforce attendance. All local authorities are therefore expected to do the following:

• Understand and make use of formal support options, including parenting contracts and education supervision orders, and use them fairly and consistently.

• Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where voluntary support is not appropriate or where absence was not for legitimate reasons and support has not been engaged with and/or been successful.

Promoting Attendance as Everyone's Business

• Secure effective joint work between the school attendance support team and statutory children's social care services where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe. This should include building attendance expectations into children in need and child protection plans where appropriate or considering developing a plan as an intensification of support where formalised attendance support (such as an education supervision order) is no longer sufficient or has not been effective.

• Issue fixed penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

• Take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.

Schools, trusts, and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family.

The Extended Role of the Swindon Virtual School for Children with a Social Worker

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school provides a safeguard for
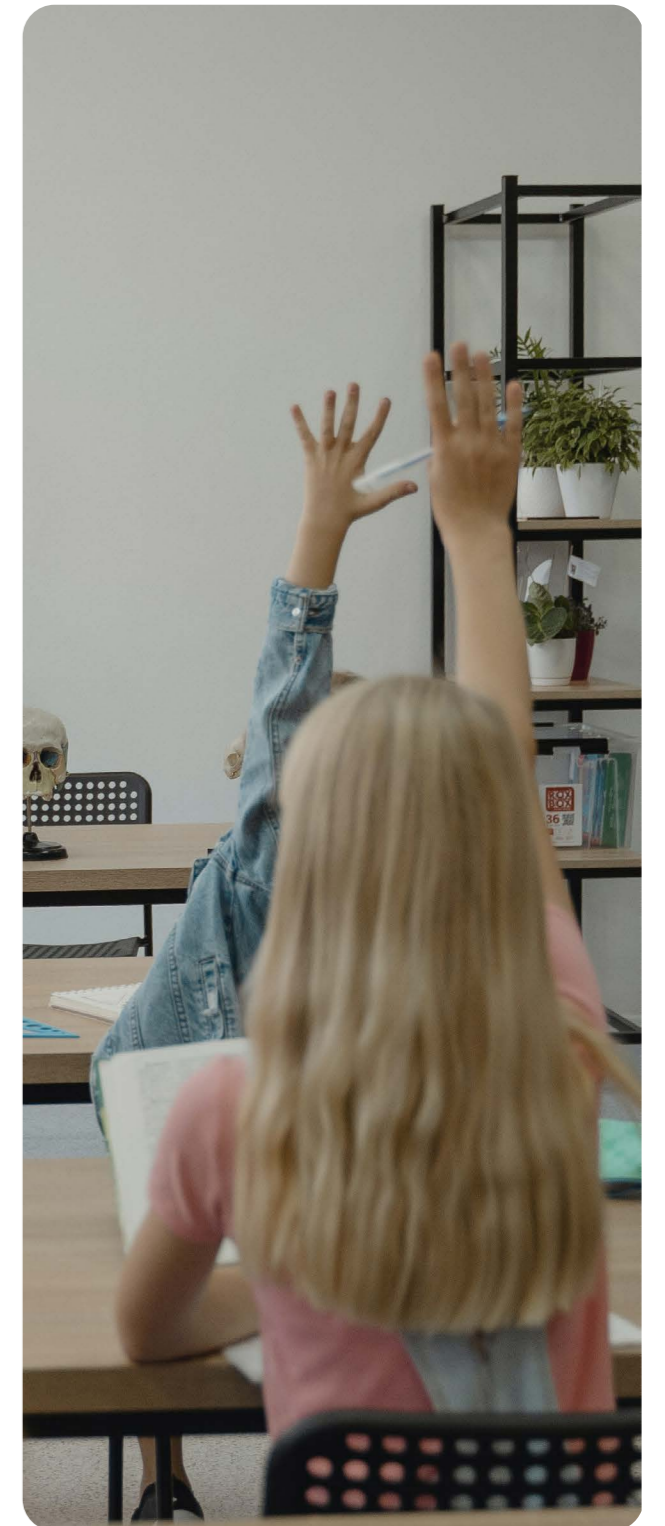
Promoting Attendance as Everyone's Business

vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, however, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who have never been in need.

It is therefore important that we redouble efforts to improve attendance for this group and build on the progress made by virtual school heads since the expansion of the programme to provide strategic oversight of the education of pupils with a social worker. As such, local authorities are expected to make use of their virtual schools to do the following:

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with social workers in their area, including those looked after by the local authority.

- Set aspirational targets for the attendance of pupils with social workers in the area and put in place personal education plans for pupils looked after by them.

- Provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have ever needed a social worker.

- Secure the regular attendance of children looked after social workers as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after by them.

- Work across children's social care services

to make sure all social workers recognise the importance of good school attendance and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where attendance is a concern.

To facilitate effective work across the local authority, schools are expected to inform a pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences from school. 'Children missing education' officers or a school's point of contact in the school attendance support team should also inform a pupil's social worker if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), maintained schools and multi-academy trusts and Swindon Borough Council will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils.

In doing so, we will collectively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties. We will not immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

We are committed to making a concerted effort across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners will work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health, and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, multi-academy trusts and Swindon Borough Council, and other partners and the appropriate educational support or placements

(e.g. an education, health, and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect.

As part of our commitment to ensure the well-being and safety of all children and young people in Swindon, we will be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and, where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment.

In all cases, we will make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible. Both persistent and severe absence should also be central to school-, trust-, and local authority–level strategies for improving attendance.

What Does Success Look Like?

We will ensure that promoting regular attendance has a high profile within our community and local services and that council services across the community understand that attendance is everyone's business. This will be particularly the case in our wider contextualised safeguarding work and within children's services generally.

The launch and implementation of our attendance strategy and attendance campaign – 'Attend. Achieve. Succeed. #SLT' – will be the platform from which our success begins and where we will see outcomes that benefit children, young people, and their families.

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

The attendance strategy has an early help and prevention approach at its heart. The introduction of the early help approach ensures that issues and difficulties faced by children and families are identified early and dealt with holistically and in a timely manner by services from across the local area, including schools.

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

Schools will be implementing consistent graduated responses to children and young people who are not attending school regularly and on time. Individual schools will see a reduction in their overall absence figure and a reduction in their persistent absence figure. The overall attendance figure for Swindon schools will be above 96%.

Improved school attendance will lead to improved attainment outcomes for all children and young people across the borough, and more will remain in education provision, reducing the number of children and young people not in education, employment, or training. Ultimately, better attainment for all will mean more opportunities for our young people to thrive and succeed in the future.

Stronger school attendance will lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, which will benefit all Swindon communities.

The involvement of parents/carers in planning, delivering, and recording success both at home and at school is crucial to the development of regular attendance. Parents/carers' participation in early discussions about their children's attendance can promote a collaborative and consistent approach to responding to children's needs. There is a need for a two-way process: school staff should know what children are like in school, but parents\carers have unique insights into their children's development.

It is important that parents/carers understand how to access support services and feel at ease in doing so. We want to see the influence of parents/carers develop in relation to the way

What Does Success Look Like?

support is delivered and will ensure systems are in place for them to provide feedback and contribute to service development. We particularly want to engage those parents/carers whose own educational experiences result in them not engaging with their children's education.

The local authority will have succeeded when the gap between southwest region and national attendance and attendance rates in Swindon reduces for all children and young people, including those who are most vulnerable.

Governance and Monitoring

We will monitor and evaluate the impact of this strategy via the developing council ecosystem, school-based forums, and attendance improvement groups and monitor progress against the Swindon Borough Council Plan and associated pledges.

Summary

Children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation, and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation, including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse, or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022

Glossary of Terms

Persistent Absence

Pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year).

Severe Absence

Pupils are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

Targeted Support Meetings

Termly targeted support meetings are held with each school in their area so the school's attendance leads and their point of contact in the local authority's school attendance support team can identify, discuss, and agree to joint targeted actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so.

Attendance Support Team

All local authorities are expected to have a school attendance support team that works with all schools in its area (regardless of type). There is no requirement for a specific service delivery model or name, but each local authority is expected to provide the 4 core functions outlined below free of charge to all schools.

Parenting Contract

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school (with the exception of independent schools and non-maintained special schools) or local authority to address irregular attendance at school or alternative provision. A contract

is not legally binding but allows a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.

Education Supervision Order

ESOs are made through the Family or High Court rather than the Magistrates Court. They give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping, and directing the pupil and parent(s) to ensure the pupil receives an efficient, full-time, suitable education. For the duration of the ESO, the parent's duties to secure the child's education and regular attendance are superseded by a duty to comply with any directions given by the local authority under the ESO.

Parenting Order

A parenting order is an ancillary order that can be imposed by the court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/or community order. The parents' agreement is not required before an order is made. They may be appropriate where the parent has not engaged in support to improve their child's attendance and where compulsion to do so would help change parental behaviour.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attend the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Glossary of Terms

Fixed penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where a fixed penalty notice is deemed likely to change parental behaviour, and where support to secure regular attendance has been provided, not worked or not engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

Attendance Prosecution

If a child of compulsory school age fails to regularly attend a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

The Child Safeguarding Review Panel

This is an independent panel commissioning reviews of serious child safeguarding cases to focus on improving learning, professional practice, and outcomes for children.

Early Help

Early help describes any service that supports children and families as soon as problems emerge and/or where families need some support.

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

MASH is the front-door service, a team made up of social workers, police officers, and health and education staff who aim to protect vulnerable children and young people. The service aims to provide a rapid and effective response to all new safeguarding concerns. This might be where someone needs support, is concerned about the safety or well-being of a child or young person, or thinks a child or young person may be at risk of harm.

Early Years

From pre-birth until starting school – is a critical period in terms of a child's development, as they form bonds with their parents, develop language skills and other cognitive functions and establish behaviour patterns.

Early Years Foundation Stage
Ages 3-5 (nursery and reception)

Key Stage 1
Ages 5-7 (Years 1 and 2)

Key Stage 2
Ages 7-11 (Years 3-6)

Key Stage 3
Ages 11-14 (Years 7-9)

Key Stage 4
Ages 14-16 (Years 10-11)

SEND

A child or young person aged from 0 to 25 years has special educational needs or disability (SEND) if they:

- have a learning difficulty or disability which makes it much harder for them to learn than other pupils of the same age

- they require special educational provision to be made for them

Appendix One — Absence from School and the Impact on Learning

Attendance during one school year	Equals - day's absent	Which is approximatively weeks absent	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
75%	48 days	10 weeks	250 lessons
70%	57 days	11 1/2 weeks	290 lessons
65%	67 days	13 1/2 weeks	340 lessons

Days off school add up to lost learning

175 Non School Days a year

175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments

0 DAYS ABSENCE (190 SCHOOL DAYS) 100% EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE — Best chance of success	6 DAYS ABSENCE OR MORE 96.99% SATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE — Harder to make good progress	15 DAYS ABSENCE OR MORE 92.99% REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT — Less chance of success	19 DAYS ABSENCE OR MORE BELOW 90% CAUSE FOR CONCERN — Serious concern possible Court Action

Stage one - School Attendance Staged Intervention Model

A Pupils Attendance falls below school Attendance Target (i.e attendance drops below 95%)

Are there unresolved "N" Codes due to absence? → **NO**

First day Absence Contact
Telephone contact made with parent/carer on the first day of a child's absence from school. (Safeguarding duty)

Ongoing Procedures

Lates
Letter "L" sent after 5 sessions of lateness

Improved
No further action monitor

No Improvement
School Meeting with Parent

YES
- School Letter N sent to parent/carers(s)
  - "N" codes changed to "O' if no explanation given two weeks after the absence occurred

Reason given and improved attendance

No further Action - monitor

No reasons given OR the reasons given are unsatisfactory OR attendance tails to improve

School letter 1
- Sent to parents of pupils whose attendance drops below schools attendance target (i.e. below 95%)
- Sent by Senior Member of staff i.e. Head Teacher Year of Head.

Improved
No further action monitor

School letter 2
Sent after 2 weeks if no improvement and no satisfactory explanation have been received to explain the absence

NO ← **Is absence due to illness/medical reasons?**

YES
School letter MED sent if patterns of illness and medical absence exist and no explanation why

No Improvement
Arrange to meeting with parent and send School Letter 3

No improvement, concerns still exist and no medical evidence received

Improved or reason known
No further Action and monitor

Child's attendance falls below 90% over the last 12 weeks

Attendance is below 60% and/or the child has a child in Need/Child Protection Plan?

Yes → **Warning Letter 1 issued and home visit announced jointly with lead professional**

No → **Warning Letter 1 issued**

Home Visit Takes Plan - Action Plan Completed

3 Week Review Period

Pupil Attendance Improves?

No → **Attendance Panel Meeting (APM) Parenting Contract Completed**

Announced/ Unannounced Home Visit - Parenting Contract Completed

No ← **Did Parent Attend?**

Yes → **3 Week Review Period**

Pupil Attendance Improves?

No → **Can a penalty notice be requested?**

Yes → **Penalty Notice Request**

No → **Final Warning Letter Issued Complete Statutory Intervention Request**

Compile Statutory Intervention Evidence

Stage Two Intervention Tracking Form QR System generated Chronology

Statutory Intervention Request Form → **Submit request for Statutory Intervention**

Yes → **No further Action Attendance Monitored**

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

All pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open expect when a salutatory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness) Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Have a robust daily processes to follow up absence. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set the whole school cultures. Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. Have a school attendance support team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. Provide each school with a names point of contact in the school attendance support tea who can support with queries and advice. Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Pro-actively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Pro-actively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence. Including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as a the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

Persistently absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Pro-actively engage with the formal support offered - including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care. Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contacts and education supervision orders. Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where the support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort)

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

Severely absent pupils

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Pro-actively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Pro-actively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence. Including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as a the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Not applicable	Pro-actively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low antecedence and develop strategies to support them. Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance..	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Pro-actively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring provision outlines in the pupils EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, education psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families. Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)
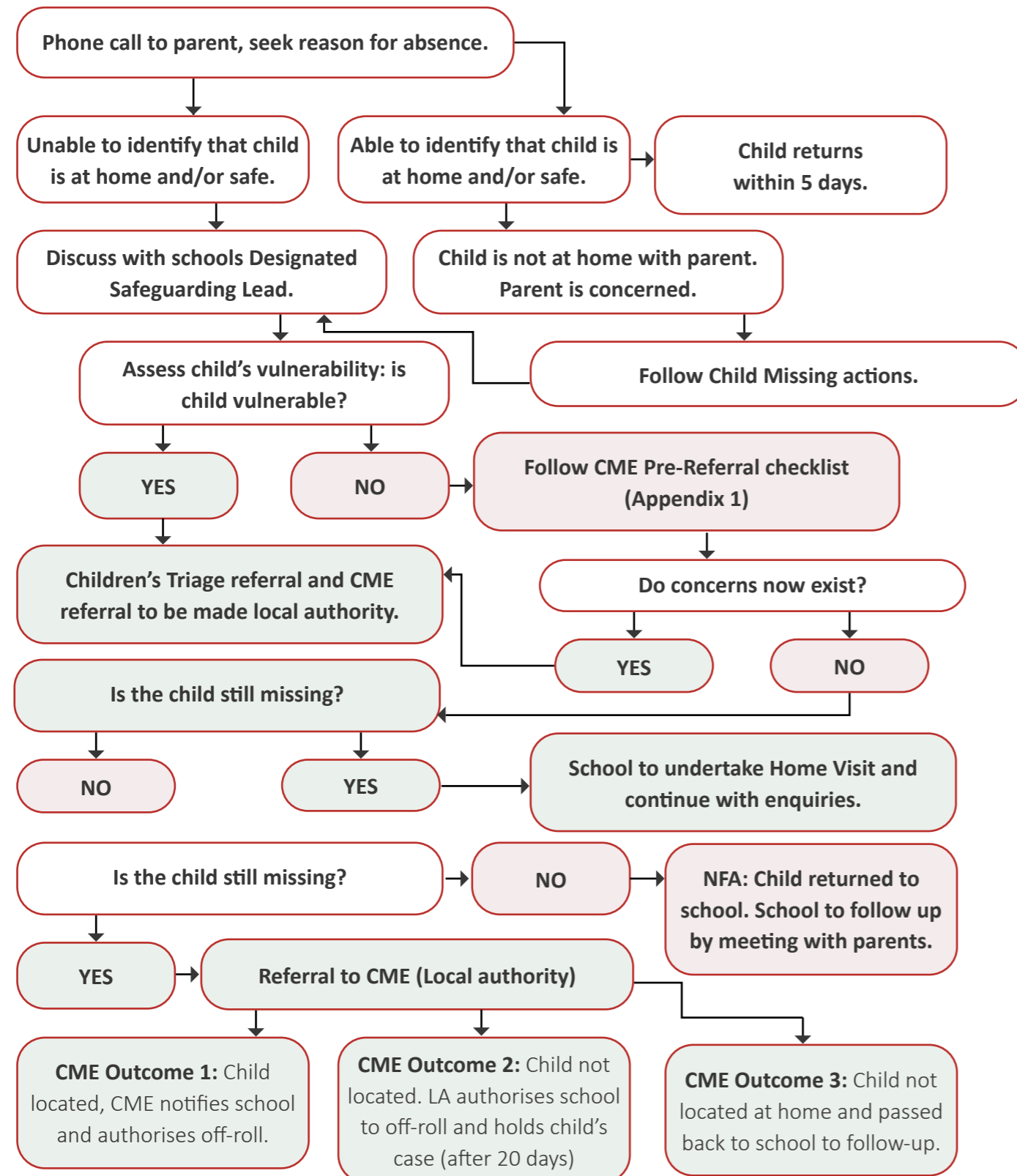
Support for Pupils with a social worker

Parents are expected to:	Schools are expected too:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies are expected to:	Local authorities are expected to:
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Pro-actively engage with the support offered.	Inform the pupils social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.	Regularly monitor attendance of children with a social worker in their area. Put in place personal education plans looked-after children. Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.

Appendix Four — Summary Table of Responsibilities (DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022)

Monitoring

Parents:	Schools:	Academy Trustees and governing bodies:	Local authorities:
Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.	Ofsted considers schools efforts to improve or sustain high attendance as part of inspections. Multi-Academy trusts regularly review attendance data and support schools.	Dfe Regions Group considers multi academy trusts efforts on attendance as part of decision making. Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.	Dfe Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.

Appendix Five — Children Missing Education (CME) — School Guide

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Phone call to parent, seek reason for absence.
  │
  ├─────────────────────────────────────┐
  │                                      │
Unable to identify that child      Able to identify that child is    Child returns
is at home and/or safe.            at home and/or safe.              within 5 days.
  │                                      │
Discuss with schools Designated    Child is not at home with parent.
Safeguarding Lead.                 Parent is concerned.
  │                                      │
Assess child's vulnerability: is   Follow Child Missing actions.
child vulnerable?
  │
  ├──────────────┬──────────────────────┐
YES            NO                    Follow CME Pre-Referral checklist
  │                                  (Appendix 1)
  │                                      │
Children's Triage referral and CME     Do concerns now exist?
referral to be made local authority.    │
  │                                  ├──────────┬──────────┐
Is the child still missing?        YES        NO
  │
  ├──────────────┬──────────────────────┐
NO            YES                    School to undertake Home Visit and
                                     continue with enquiries.
  │
Is the child still missing?  ──►  NO  ──►  NFA: Child returned to
  │                                        school. School to follow up
YES          Referral to CME (Local authority)   by meeting with parents.
  │                  │
CME Outcome 1: Child    CME Outcome 2: Child not    CME Outcome 3: Child not
located, CME notifies school  located. LA authorises school  located at home and passed
and authorises off-roll.  to off-roll and holds child's  back to school to follow-up.
                          case (after 20 days)
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Appendix Six — Relevant Legislation and Guidance

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007 (legislation.gov.uk)

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (legislation.gov.uk)

Education Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk)

Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)

Relevant Government Guidance

Working together to improve school attendance — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

School behaviour and attendance: Parental responsibility measures — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Children missing education — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Keeping children safe in education — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Working together to safeguard children — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Elective home education — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Alternative provision — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

School suspensions and permanent exclusions — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Promoting and supporting mental health and well-being in schools and colleges — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Approaches to preventing a nd tackling bullying — GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Swindon Local Guidance

Swindon Local Offer — Early Help

Educational Welfare Services | Swindon Borough Council

Swindon Local Plan 2026 | Swindon Borough Council

Child Exploitation Initial Screening Tool — Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

Referral Form- RF1- Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

Neglect Screening Tool — Swindon Safeguarding Partnership

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub | Swindon Borough Council