The White Paper and New Non-Statutory Guidance on Improving Attendance

The new non-statutory guidance on improving attendance sets out the following expectations for schools, governing bodies and academy trusts and local authorities.

1. Expectations of schools

To manage and improve attendance effectively, all schools are expected to:

• Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
 • Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
• Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
• Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
• Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
 • Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

2. Expectations of academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools

• Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
• Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
• Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
• Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

3. Expectations of local authorities

• Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
• Have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):

a. Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area. o Targeting Support Meetings: hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.

b. Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.

c. Legal intervention: take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.

d. Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School