



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: 5th October 2023

Subject: Attendance, Behaviour & Exclusion Duties

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide information on the Local Authority's duties for Attendance, Behaviour and Exclusion.
- 1.2 The DfE published new guidance in 2022 – [Working together to improve school attendance](#). Setting out responsibilities and expectations for all key stakeholders: schools, multi-academy trusts (MATs), Local Authorities (LA), parents / carers. The initial intention was that the guidance would be statutory from September 2023; although that has now been delayed.
- 1.3 The DfE guidance [Behaviour in Schools](#), sets out clear and comprehensive expectations for schools in relation to managing behaviour. The DfE guidance [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion](#) is the companion piece to Behaviour in Schools and sets out guidance and expectations in relation to pupils who are excluded from school either temporarily or permanently.
- 1.4 In Coventry we continue to work in partnership with all schools. Both attendance and behaviour continue to be key strands of our Education Improvement Citywide priorities.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
 - 1) Consider the content of the information provided in the briefing note and appendix
 - 2) Identify any further questions for officers and Cabinet Members

Information/Background

3 Attendance

- 3.1 Over the last academic year, the LA have worked to enable implementation of the new model from September 2023. LAs locally, regionally, and nationally have made representation to the DfE in relation to the attendance reforms as the view is that they create additional burdens for LAs. There has been no additional resource provided to deliver the reforms.
- 3.2 The guidance sets out new expectations for LAs to:
 - Rigorously track local attendance data;
 - Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through the Virtual School;
 - Have a School Attendance team providing core functions free of charge to all schools (e.g., communication & advice; termly targeting support meetings with every school; support access to multi-disciplinary family support; legal interventions)

- 3.3 The guidance is very clear that prosecution and legal intervention only take place when all attempts to engage with the family at a voluntary and formal support level have failed, or where support has been deemed inappropriate.
- 3.4 Although we have had an effective Attendance Service in place in Coventry, this model has predominantly been a traded model meaning that apart from general advice and support for legal intervention the team have largely worked with schools that purchased the service. The service has been redesigned to cover the expectations of the guidance, and, following feedback from schools, will also continue to offer a traded service to schools. This includes a range of interventions and support including liaison with professionals re: services, supporting meetings with families, late gate, home visits, and Attendance health checks/ audits.
- 3.5 The LA's updated School Attendance Matters document (that has been shared with all school stakeholders), and describes the expectations, service, and offer to schools from September 2023 is included at Appendix 1. The School Attendance Team have always worked closely with Early Help services and will continue to build on this as part of the new model.
- 3.6 In line with the national and regional position, Coventry has seen a worsened citywide attendance position following the pandemic. The local figures for the 22/23 academic year are still provisional, but they are broadly in line with the previous year's position. These will be finalised and available, along with regional and national data, later in the Autumn Term, and will be included in our performance report later in the municipal year.
- 3.7 The LA is part of a pilot project 'LocalEd 2025', which aims to test new locality models for the school system supporting vulnerable pupils. The project has been closely linked with school attendance as a lens for vulnerability and has been working with schools and community partners in the Woodend, Moathouse and Henley Green (WEMH) area to focus on understanding the reasons for attendance difficulties, barriers to learning, and challenges for vulnerable learners. Through this work a number of pilot approaches are being tested, including navigation for practitioners supporting families - Right Help, Right Time, enhanced year 6/7 transition package for children with a social worker, Early Help school link worker model, raising aspirations for children and parents, parental mentoring. This project is small scale, but we will be disseminating learning and good practice to schools across the city.

4 Behaviour and Exclusions

- 4.1 The LA statutory responsibilities largely centre on ensuring pupils are accessing education and the associated safeguarding responsibilities where children and young people miss education. As a champion for all children, we also work with the partnership to ensure we share a collective moral purpose and have the right systems/infrastructure in place to support children and young people in education.
- 4.2 All pupils should access appropriate 6th day provision if they are suspended or excluded. The LA currently manage this duty through placement into another mainstream school via the Fair Access Protocol (largely in the primary sector), and through placement into Coventry Extended Learning Centre (CELC) in the secondary sector.
- 4.3 The LA also has oversight of temporary part-time timetables which schools may put in place to support individual needs when in the best interests of the pupil. Schools should advise the LA each time a part-time timetable is put in place providing a start and end date.
- 4.4 The LA's Behaviour Support Service 'the Key' supports and works in partnership with the primary sector in this area. The Key Intervention is part of Coventry SEND Service, delivered by the specialist teachers of the Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Learning (SEMHL) Team. It offers a part-time intervention for primary-aged pupils, who are struggling to meet the behavioural expectations of their mainstream school, or who are at

risk of exclusion. There is also a pathway within the Key intervention for pupils who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school and allocated to another school. The Key works closely with parents/carers and professionals to ensure better outcomes for pupils.

- 4.5 The secondary sector also operates a 'supported transfer' process where pupils at risk of exclusion can have the opportunity to access another mainstream school provision over a set period of time to support them with their behaviour. Following increased challenges behaviour over the last couple of years the Coventry Education Partnership (secondary) are reviewing Alternative Provision and the Behaviour Pathway. This is with a view to increasing the diversity and capacity of the offer for pupils with challenging behaviour to reduce suspensions and exclusions. This will build and further develop the work that Coventry Alternative Provision (CAP) and the CELC already do in the city.
- 4.6 CAP is a well-established service formerly known as Work Related Learning, which is run by the LA. The service is responsible for ensuring that a high-quality, diverse offer of Alternative Provision is made accessible to schools in Coventry to support pupils on the roll of the school where appropriate. Schools are supported to secure successful part-time placements for students in conjunction with school onsite provision.
- 4.7 In line with the national and regional position, Coventry has seen higher rates of suspension/exclusion following the pandemic. The local figures for the 22/23 academic year are not included as they are still provisional but show a further increase in rates. Anecdotal feedback is that behaviour challenges have also increased both regionally and nationally in 22/23 academic year. These will be finalised and available, along with regional and national data, later in the Autumn Term, and will be included in our performance report later in the municipal year.

Appendix 1: School Attendance Matters

Name: Rachael Sugars

Job Title: Head of Service Education

Contact Details: Rachael.Sugars@Coventry.gov.uk

Appendix 1: School Attendance Matters

In Coventry it is our belief that good school attendance provides our pupils with the best chance of a bright and successful future. We do however realise that for some pupils there are barriers to attending school.

Why school attendance matters

Regular school attendance is an important part of giving children the best possible start in life. The aim should be to attend 100% of the time.

Research shows that pupils who attend school regularly achieve at higher levels than those who do not attend regularly, and they also have wider life chances. Attending school on a regular basis also helps to develop: Friendships, Social skills, Life skills, Career pathways.

Missed days in school can have a significant impact on all the above.

Yearly attendance	Yearly days missed	Yearly learning hours missed	Learning hours missed during school life (YR-Y11)
100%	0	0	0
97%	6	30	360
95%	10	50	600
90%	20	100	1200
80%	40	200	2400
50%	100	500	6000

In Coventry the overall absence rate for the academic year 2021/22 was 7.6%. This was 0.1% higher than the national average and 2.7% higher than the previous year in Coventry.

Those classed as disadvantaged (in receipt of Pupil Premium) have lower attendance than those classed as non-disadvantaged. For the academic year 2021/22 disadvantaged pupils in Coventry had an overall absence of 9%. This is an increase of 1.7% on the previous year. 27.4% of these pupils have a SEN provision.

Persistent absence (those pupils who miss 10% or more of school) was 23.5% in Coventry for the academic year 2021/22. This is an increase of 9.9% from the previous academic year and equates to 4,979 more pupils being persistent absentees in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. This is also 1.0% higher than the national average in 2021/22.

What are we doing in Coventry?

The barriers to accessing education are far reaching and complex and do not solely begin and end with the school. Often these barriers extend further than school and are specific to individual pupils and their families.

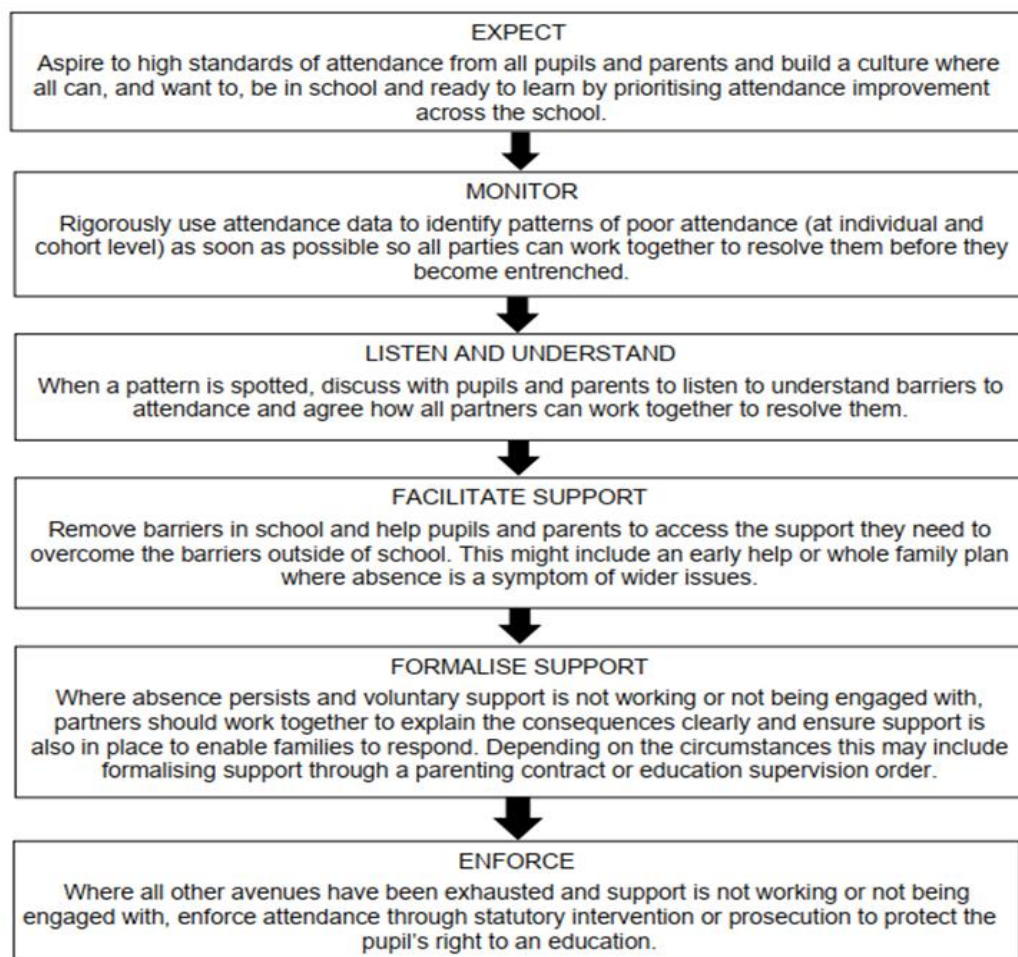
With our One Coventry approach we will work alongside and in partnership with schools and services across Coventry to ensure all pupils are supported to be able to attend school and will work to remove the barriers to school attendance.

Good attendance is not something to be viewed in isolation and it is the role of all involved to work with and support pupils and their families as a collective.

Our key stakeholders in Coventry are

- Pupils and their families
- School Attendance Team
- Schools
- SEND
- Early Help
- Virtual School
- Social Care
- Health

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



How are we delivering attendance support in Coventry?

Coventry's Staged Intervention model works to support schools, pupils and families to secure the right help at the right time.

Schools will provide a named school attendance officer who will act as the main point of contact for the named Local Authority School Attendance Officers (LAAO) and named Early Help Coordinators (EHAC).

Schools should seek support from Social Care if the child is known to be under a Child Protection plan or Child in Need plan. School attendance should inform part of the plan and social workers would be expected to be involved in any concerns raised around school attendance where they are already involved.

Stage 1: Prevention

Criteria: Attendance is between 91% and 100%

Lead practitioner: School

Pupils who have attendance between 91% and 100% will receive support from school and other universal services they may be accessing i.e., GP.

Schools should follow their school attendance policy when a pupil is recorded as absent i.e.

- First day absence contact.
- Letter sent if absence falls below schools' attendance target
- If attendance does not improve request a meeting with parent/carer

Schools can contact their LAAO via phone or email for advice and guidance around attendance issues.

Stage 2: Early Intervention

Criteria: Attendance is between 81% and 90%

Lead practitioner: 1st school – 2nd EHAC if criteria is met

Pupils who have attendance between 81% and 90% may require support from other services outside of school and universal services at stage 1.

LAAO will attend termly meetings with the school and the EHAC to discuss pupils of concern and signpost the school to other services. *(See Appendix 1 for details of the Targeted Support Meetings)*. If the pupil is looked after the Virtual School and Social Worker should be invited to attend the Targeted Support Meeting if the pupil is due to be discussed.

Schools should consider.

- Letters home
- Meeting with parent/carer in school
- Home visits
- Pastoral support
- Mentoring/counselling
- Reduced timetable
- SEMH&L
- SEND
- Extended School Non-Attendance Advisory Panel (ESNAAP)
- Social Care/Supporting Families teams (Children's Service)

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Schools must initiate an Early Help Assessment and, if required, access support from an EHAC, who will be able to support to undertake the Early Help assessment and deliver the Early Help plan. The support may include joint home visits, attendance at Team Around the Family meetings, making necessary referrals, signposting and navigating to available services and advice and guidance relating to Right Help Right Time (RHRT) thresholds.

If during the completion of the Early Help Assessment, it is identified that the child and their family meet the Right Help Right Time level 3 i.e., multiple issues requiring a multiagency plan, the professional from school should request their Early Help Assessment Co-Ordinator progress the family to Supporting Families team. The professional who completed the request may be contacted by the supporting families team for a further discussion about the family and being part of the team around the family (TAF).

In most situations, the Children's Service Supporting Families team will be best placed to take the role of the Lead Professional and deliver a whole family plan, when the family's needs meet Right Help Right Time level 3. However, there will be some occasions where schools are the best placed agency to be the lead professional. The decision for this will be made following the Early Help Assessment.

If a family does not meet 3 of the supporting families criteria Children's Service Family Hub Teams will be able to offer interventions such as groups and activities and these can be included in the TAF as part of an Early Help plan that is led by a school.

At this point schools may also request a monitoring letter be sent out via the LA. Should the pupil's attendance not improve then a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued following the monitoring period. *(See Appendix 2 for details on Fixed Penalty Notices)*

A Fixed Penalty Notice can only be issued by a head teacher, or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police.

Stage 3: Targeted Support

Criteria: Attendance is below 80%

Lead practitioner: LAAO

Pupils who have attendance below 80% may require multi-agency support in addition to that provided at stage 2.

When all attempts to engage with the pupil and family at stages 1 and 2 have failed school can discuss legal intervention with their LAAO. Schools will be asked to complete the Attendance Intervention form with attached evidence that everything has been done to support the pupil in improving their attendance at school.

If the LAAO is satisfied that the criteria have been met for legal intervention, they will support the school to complete one of the following.

- Parenting Contract
- Attendance Prosecution
 - School Attendance Order (only used where a pupil is not on a school roll)
 - Section 444(1) or 444(1A)