

Trafford School

Attendance Strategy

*Working Together to Improve
Attendance*

September 2024

Introduction

Excellent attendance is important for children and young people to get the most out of their school experience and achieve positive outcomes. Research shows those who attend school regularly benefit from improved emotional wellbeing, stronger social relationships, better educational outcomes and future employability. Improving school attendance is everyone's responsibility.

We strive for all Trafford schools to be inclusive. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school. At all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Our vision

Our vision is for every child and young person to be supported to attend school every day, so they can reach their full potential.

We will achieve this by increasing overall school attendance and reducing the number of pupils who regularly miss school.

Trafford Context

Children, families, schools and partners in our area have worked hard to achieve excellent school attendance and we are proud that attendance in Trafford schools is amongst the best in England. Overall absence from school and persistent absence has been consistently below the national level for many years. The most recent published data from the last academic year (23/24) reflects this.

SCHOOL TYPE	MEASURE	NATIONAL %	TRAFFORD %
Primary	Attendance rate	94.5	95.3
	Persistent Absence (below 90%)	15.2	10.9
Secondary	Attendance rate	90.9	93.0
	Persistent Absence	26.7	18.2

SCHOOL TYPE	MEASURE	NATIONAL %	TRAFFORD %
Special	Attendance Rate	87	88.3
	Persistent Absence	37.6	32.3

We know that some of our most vulnerable children are more likely to be absent from school. This could include those who have a social worker and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Key principles

Our strategy is based around 3 key principles:

- Strong and trusting relationships.
- Clear, graduated response built on early intervention.
- Collaboration to provide families with the right support at the right time.

In developing this strategy, one of our guiding principles has been to build on our existing good practice working with schools, multiagency partners and families. As well as our approach meeting current legislation and guidance, it is important it recognises the needs of our children, young people and families and seeks to empower and support them.

Through surveys and conversations, we have identified what is important for our children and families when it comes to school attendance.

Parents and carers

- Trust
- Compassionate professionals who listen
- Nurturing, safe environment
- Clear communication, jargon-free
- Reasonable adjustments in school
- Flexible approach to meet children and young people's needs
- Knowledgeable, well-trained professionals
- Effective signposting to other services and peer support

Children and young people

- Sense of school belonging
- Positive relationships with peers
- Consistent relationships and support from adults

- Positive transition, particularly when starting secondary school
- Positive experience of learning
- Emotional wellbeing

What we are going to do

Theme 1 – Strategic approach

- Develop attendance dashboard and reporting, including neighbourhood attendance profiles to identify trends and consider issues in local areas.
- Make sure governance and systems are in place to monitor attendance of vulnerable groups, including those in out of borough placements and post 16 students.
- Share data with key partners termly via strategic boards, working groups, school attendance hub.
- Promote consistent messaging using communication toolkit.

Theme 2 - Support for schools

- Deliver statutory advice and support offer for all schools via a telephone helpline, email and portal requests.
- Develop guidance and model policy for schools so they can promote good attendance and intervene quickly when there is cause for concern.
- Develop school attendance hub providing digital resources, proformas, letters, case studies and training materials.
- Deliver training and network meetings for school staff and governors so there is a shared understanding of good attendance and forums for sharing good practice and what works, including Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) guidance.
- Termly targeted support meetings for all Trafford schools, delivery model linked to RAG ratings.
- Deliver Belong programme to promote relational approaches in schools.
- Implement revised policy for legal intervention as a last resort.

Theme 3 - Support for families

- Commit to our Trafford Team Together early family help approach across all schools in Trafford ensuring that attendance is a key focus.
- Have a relational, strengths-based approach when supporting families, taking the needs of the whole family in to account to understand the underlying reasons for any issues with attendance.
- Ensure families have access to timely support across the family help partnership, with a focus on providing support at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide bespoke packages of support for children and young people and their families who are experiencing emotionally based non-school attendance.
- Recognise and ensure that children and young people with SEND and their families may need more tailored and specific support to help improve attendance.

Theme 4 - Monitor and improve attendance of vulnerable groups

- Develop a robust multiagency approach for all severely absent children.

- Identify and monitor children who are at risk of missing education.
- Monitor attendance of children with a social worker through the virtual school.
- Multiagency panels for children with a social worker will identify children where attendance is of concern and allocate support and resource.
- Make sure attendance concerns are always addressed within personal education plans and social care plans.
- Review our SEND practice to make sure poor attendance and the reasons for it are considered at multiagency meetings, individual SEND reviews and assessments.
- Training for multiagency professionals linked to workforce strategy so there is a shared understanding of good attendance, partners can intervene quickly when there is cause for concern and impact can be measured. This includes mandatory training for any social worker who is supporting a child who is severely absent.

Who is going to help us

Improving school attendance is everyone's responsibility and key partners across the system need to work together to achieve our objective.

Pupil absence team	Schools	School governors
Alternative provision	School nurses	Mental health
Commissioning	Family Help	Social care
Virtual school	Trafford team together	First response
Parents and carers	Children and young people	Families
Educational psychologists	Youth engagement service	SEND
Early years	Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations	GPs
Police	Housing	Dentists

Role and responsibilities

Parents and carers will:

- Make sure their child attends every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent, for example due to sickness.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Where there are concerns, work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support.

Schools will:

- 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 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.

Academy trust boards and governing bodies will:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Make sure 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.
- Make sure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

Trafford Council will:

- 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 the area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a point of contact for support with attendance queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.
- 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.

A Graduated Approach for School Attendance

Level 1 - Low Level Late / Irregular / Non-Attendance	
Attendance between 90% and <100% over four weeks	Child / family needs being met by universal services
Support Interventions	• School to contact parent to determine reason for pupil's absence on first day of absence and expected date of return. • Attendance and monitoring process to identify when absence or punctuality becomes a concern. • Support from the school's own attendance officer through telephone calls, letters, emails, and home visits. • Praise and reward scheme for children entering level one from any higher level. • Parents to be offered access to other sources of support if necessary, for example signposting via Trafford Directory.
Legal Interventions	• In cases of parental non-engagement, absences should be unauthorised, pupil attendance should be closely monitored, and a warning letter sent reminding parent of legal responsibility.

Level 2 - Medium Level Late / Irregular / Non-Attendance	
Attendance between 80% and <90% over four weeks	Child / family may require or would benefit from additional input or support from an agency or agencies
Support Interventions	- Identifying pattern of absence - School meeting with parents - Individual attendance plan - Request for advice form Trafford School Absence Team - Request for medical evidence - Involvement from school nursing team - Emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) toolkit - Family help assessment / involvement of Trafford Team Together - In-school pastoral and mentoring support and counselling - Home visits - Individual healthcare plan - Referral to external support services / alternative provision such as the Medical Education Service - Referral to Trafford Virtual School for children with a social worker - Referral for specialist assessment (e.g. SEND / CAMHS / EP)
Legal Interventions	- Notice to improve - Attendance contract

Level 3 - High Level Late / Irregular / Non-Attendance	
Attendance below 80% over four weeks	Child / family are experiencing multiple or complex needs. They are struggling to effect change without the support and intervention of services.
Support Interventions	As at Level 2
Legal Interventions	When all attempts to engage with the family at levels 2 and 3 have failed, referral to pupil absence team for: - penalty notice to be issued by Trafford Council. - prosecution in the absence of the penalty being discharged within 28 days. - consideration of Education Supervision Order (ESO)

Unauthorised Absence after Request for Leave of Absence Refused	
8 sessions or more	Any level of child / family vulnerability
Legal Interventions	- Headteacher requests penalty notice to be issued by Trafford Council. - Prosecution in the absence of the penalty being discharged within 28 days.