

Attendance Matters

FAO Headteachers, Governors, Designated Attendance Leads and key professionals

In this newsletter:



Liverpool Attendance Quality Mark

- Key messages to start the school year
- Key actions for Spring term
- Information from Amanda Spielman
- Government scraps Schools Bill
- Advice for parents
- Parental responsibilities
- Advice from NHS and School Health
- Child performance and licencing
- Information about School Admissions
- Forthcoming attendance training for schools
- Project Group information

Happy new year! Wishing all colleagues a healthy, peaceful and happy 2023.

Key Messages:

The end of autumn term 2022 was particularly challenging for attendance across the city and nationally. The north west had some of the highest rates of scarlet fever, strep A and chicken pox. The absence rates caused by illness were reflected by the increase in authorised absence rates both locally and nationally.

Key actions for spring term

- Analyse autumn data and action plan for specific cohorts and individuals.
- Analyse and act upon margin data at least weekly.
- Continue weekly meetings for SA, PA and margin children.
- Start/continue to modify/adapt your school process in response to what worked during autumn term and in response to good practice shared at training.

Be Proactive, Prevent absence

Government scraps Schools Bill Legislation- What does that mean for attendance?

- During an education committee meeting on Wednesday 7th December 2022, Education Secretary Gillian Keegan confirmed that the Schools White Paper, also known as the Schools Bill, would not progress in its current format.

- The discontinuation of the bill has been long speculated due to months of uncertainty regarding its progress and strong opposition from the education community.
- The attendance elements of the white Paper are expected to continue.
- **DEF -Working Together to improve school attendance is the guidance that all schools should now be working from.**
- Gillian Keegan said, “We do remain committed to the objectives, the very many important objectives that underpinned the Bill, and we will be prioritising some aspects of the Bill as well to see what we can do.”
- The attendance alliance group established by Nadhim Zahawi has not been discontinued. Ms Keegan stated the group will meet in January to continue to take action to ‘get children back in school’

It is still expected that the guidance will become statutory in September 2023.

DEF -Working Together to improve school attendance:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

Ofsted

Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman described ongoing school absences as a “deep and concerning problem”.

Pupil attendance is running “persistently” lower than before the pandemic after lockdowns broke the “clear social contract” on children going to school daily, an education leader has said.

School closures amid the pandemic broke down the structure and routine of “getting children up and to school every day”, she said, as she warned that a minority of families appear to have “lost sight” of the expectation that children should be sent out every morning to be educated in person.

Amanda went on to say “Schools can’t be expected to provide education remotely if the parent feels that they would prefer to keep the child at home more of the time.”

Attendance advice for Parents

The DFE released some guidance for parents on 12.12.22 which schools may wish to add to their bank of resources and information.

Click below and select the first result to download the document.

[Guide for parents on school attendance](#)

Is my child too ill for school?

The NHS has produced guidance for parents who are finding it difficult to decide whether or not to keep a child off school.

It would be useful if this was shared with parents and staff so that consistent messages are given.

[https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/Is My Child too ill to attend school?](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/Is-My-Child-too-ill-to-attend-school?)

New information and updates from School Health

- The school nurses now operate in teams via a central inbox system.
- The link to the school health website provides the details for each team and what schools they cover.
- Individual nurses will still carry a caseload, but this may be across a number of schools and now incorporates whole family working.
- Check the link below for up to date information.

<https://www.merseycare.nhs.uk/our-services/liverpool/school-health-service>

Education Welfare Service-SLA

EWS service information is available via the link below

<https://www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/Products-Service-Agreements>

Child Performance and licencing

During the festive period there were many enquiries about attendance of pupils taking part in pantomimes etc.

Tracy Moore is safeguarding licencing manager for Liverpool.

Working together to improve school attendance p57 states:

Leave of absence can be granted for a pupil to undertake employment during school hours for the purpose of taking part in a performance.

Legislation sets out that a local authority license must be obtained before a child can take part in a performance.

Schools should be sympathetic to requests for leave of absence supported by a license as long as school remains satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on a pupil's education.

Specific enquiries can be addressed to Tracy and her team at the email address below.

childemployment&performance@liverpool.gov.uk

Data sharing

Have you signed up to share your attendance data daily with DFE?

This will become statutory by September 2023

Approximately 93% of schools have now signed up.

www.gov.uk/guidance/share-your-daily-school-attendance-data#full-publication-update-history

Admissions Process

(This information was previously sent out in a Safeguarding E-Briefing)

The Local Authority and EWO Service Manager have confirmed that if schools are notified that a child has been allocated a place at their school then legislation states the school should place the child on their roll within 10 days of this letter. (For children transitioning between key stages e.g. primary to secondary then the child should be placed on roll at the start of the new term).

The new school should always have a conversation with the previous setting and gather information, particularly about any safeguarding concerns or risks. Any safeguarding and child protection files should be transferred with 5 days of the child being placed on roll.

Sometimes, despite being allocated a place, a child and family don't actually take up the place. The child refuses to attend or the parent has no intention of sending the child to your school.

In the past some schools haven't undertaken to place the child on roll until the child and parent have attended an admissions meeting and the child then actually attends for the first day at their new school. This practice is at odds with the requirements of the legislation and doesn't best serve the needs of the child. Hence, the child must be placed on roll within 10 days of the Local Authority's notification letter.

We appreciate that some children may quickly become non-attenders and a burden for the school's resources whilst also impacting upon the school's attendance figures. However, the child will be better safeguarded by having these issues addressed by the school rather than not being placed. The school is able to follow its normal robust practices and work with other agencies to challenge and improve the situation.

Placing a child on roll doesn't prevent schools from having an admissions meeting once the parent and child agree to attend. Whilst there are natural concerns with placing a child on roll before the school has seen them, there is a huge benefit to a child's non-attendance being addressed by the school's robust practices.

Addressing this issue should prevent a large number of children being identified as being without a school placement.

Spring Term Training and Briefings

Training details can be found on the School Improvement Liverpool website: www.schoolimprovementliverpool.co.uk/Training

Attendance Briefings

- Primary and Special networks- organised by network leads (not bookable on SIL)
 - **Link Network- Monday 20th February 1.30-3.30pm**
 - **West Derby Collaborative- Tuesday 21st February 1.30-3.30pm**
 - **South Liverpool Learning Network Wednesday 22nd February 1.15-3.15pm**
 - **G10 Learning network- Friday 24th February 1.30-3.30pm**
 - **North Liverpool learning network-Monday 27th February**

- **DGT- Wednesday 1st March**
- **North Liverpool Collaborative-tbc**
- **Fiveways Network-29th March 1.30-3.30pm**
- Secondary and Special Attendance Briefings-
 - **Thursday 2nd March 1-3pm Toxteth Annexe. Book on via SIL.**
- New to the Role of Designated Attendance Lead- This training took place twice during autumn term. If you attended, you do not need to attend again.
 - **9th March 1.30pm 16th March 1.30pm. Book via SIL. Both sessions must be attended.**
- Governor Training on Attendance- Wednesday 15th March at Toxteth Annexe 10-12pm. Thursday 16th March via zoom 6-8pm. Book on via SIL.

Attendance Review/ Health Check

If you would like to commission a review of the school's key attendance practice and process then please contact [**Carolyn.harkness@si.liverpool.gov.uk**](mailto:Carolyn.harkness@si.liverpool.gov.uk)

Coding- some key points....

- Reduced timetable coding
 - Code "C" must be used at all times when a child is not expected to attend.
 - Code "X" must not be used at all for a child on a reduced timetable.
 - Reception children on a reduced timetable **MUST** be reported to the local authority via online notification form.
 - Pupils above SSA (Year 12/13)- it is not necessary to inform the local authority.
- Code I: Illness
 In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is ill can be accepted without question or concern. **Schools should not routinely request that parents provide medical evidence to support illness.** Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily as it places additional pressure on health professionals, their staff and their appointments system particularly if the illness is one that does not require treatment by a health professional. **Only where the school has a genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.**
- Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided
 Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code should be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, **but no more than 5 working days after the session.** Code N should not therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established after 5 working days, schools should amend the pupil's record to Code O.

Best Practice guidance tips

- Leave of absence should only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Holidays taken during term time **should not be authorised.** All schools should consider if it is appropriate to request a penalty notice from the local authority. Requests must be submitted within ten school days.
 If all schools do not act consistently then situations arise which are unfair. (For example, Primary school fine, Secondary school don't.)

- If you remove a child from roll and the destination is known, an exit form must be completed. (Not just a CTF) If the child has left the school and the school have been unable to ascertain the family's whereabouts a CME referral will need to be completed.
- Your EWO is the school's professional point of contact for all individual attendance and coding queries. Many cases are complex and require knowledge of context and circumstance.
- **Consideration of issuing a penalty notice warning.**
A copy of the updated form can be found [here](#).
- **Remote Learning:**
The DFE do not currently permit remote learning to be attributed with a code that denotes a present mark.
- **EHE- Elective Home Education**
Schools must inform Liverpool EHE Team of all children who are being removed from roll to be home educated. This includes children who are under statutory school age and children who reside in another authority.

Attendance Project Group

The first meeting of the Attendance Project group will take place on Friday 20th January.

- In response to the Working Together guidance and the responsibilities of local authority, a multi-agency group, with representation from schools has been established and will begin to meet from 20th January.
- Schools will be updated through attendance briefings in February and early March.
- Any themes you wish discussed please feed to your representatives:

Jonathan Jones - Director of Education

Elizabeth Van De Waal - Headteacher St Cecilia's Infant School

Laura Hancox - Assistant Head Four Oaks Primary School

Kim McGee - Deputy Head Dixons Fazakerley

Clare Carter - Assistant Head Archbishop Blanch

Niccie Jones - LCSP Training Officer

Jacquelyn Taylor - LCSP Manager

Jane Woodward - SEND Partnership Co-Ordinator

Suzanne Metcalfe-Assistant Director Early Help

Carol Jones - Service Manager Children and young people(health)

Nicola Horn - Social Care

Alan Nuttall - Merseyside Police

Owain Forsyth - LCSP Education Engagement Officer

Carolyn Lawler - Virtual School Head

Allison Cain - EWS Service Manger

Carolyn Harkness - SIL SIO Attendance

Educational Neglect

Educational neglect continues to be widely discussed by school leaders and wider agencies. A reminder of the information sent in July 2022 can be found below.

SIL July 2022 Safeguarding Briefing

Chronic non-attendance at school is 'Educational Neglect' and the responsibility of all agencies who make up the 'team around the child'. Whilst chronic non-attendance may be symptomatic of other forms of neglect and harm, it must be recognised that chronic non-attendance is in itself a form of neglect without any additional factors. As a child's attendance begins to fall, schools and other agencies should always offer the family support through an early help assessment before a referral to children's services for statutory intervention becomes necessary. Educational neglect continues to be widely discussed by school leaders and wider agencies. A reminder of the information sent in July 2022 can be found below.