# Supporting School Attendance – Reflection and Planning Tool

Education Endowment Foundation

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to improving attendance, but there are some common themes that support the successful engagement of pupils and families in school. This tool is intended to support school leaders to consider different approaches to attendance, providing a potential scaffold for discussions within leadership and attendance teams.

| Approaches to support school attendance | Questions to consider | Reflections and next steps |
|---|---|---|
| **1 Build a holistic understanding of pupils and families, and diagnose specific needs** | • Is your attendance data up to date and accessible, and do tracking and reporting systems support staff to understand and act on the data?<br>• Who is involved in monitoring and reviewing attendance data to identify patterns and priorities?<br>• What processes do you have in place to go beyond the headline data and 'dig deeper' into factors affecting attendance for individuals and families? As there are likely multiple staff involved, are these processes structured and consistent?<br>• Do school structures ensure that every pupil has an adult in school who knows them well, and is this knowledge used to support attendance? | |
| **2 Build a culture of community and belonging for pupils** | • Are systems for managing behaviour clear and consistently applied?<br>• Is behaviour management data monitored and reviewed to identify patterns such as pupils being caught in a cycle of negative consequences?<br>• Does the school's approach to behaviour include explicitly teaching, modelling and reinforcing positive learning behaviours, and is this consistent across the school?<br>• How do you know if pupils feel safe, seen, understood and heard within the school? Does pupil voice represent the full diversity of pupils?<br>• How are achievements celebrated, and is this valued by pupils?<br>• Are there systems in place to track pupils' engagement with social and extra-curricular opportunities, and are potential barriers to engagement understood and addressed? | |

Further information about each approach, and additional resources, can be found on the Supporting School Attendance webpages

## 3
## Communicate effectively with families

- How frequently, and in what ways, is the school communicating with families? Does communication seem clear, helpful and supportive?
- How do you know if families feel positive about the communications received from school? Do families find communications clear, supportive and appropriate in **frequency**, **timing**, **language**, **tone** and **medium?**
- Are automated communications used sensitively? How are you mitigating the risk that families with significant challenges (e.g. illness or bereavement) might receive inappropriate automated communications?
- How are accessibility, literacy and language needs considered in the medium and language of communications?
- Are communications about attendance understood as you intend by families, or might there be misunderstandings? Are parents supported to understand and contextualise attendance data?
- Do families have clear and reliable ways to communicate with key staff, and do they feel they are heard and valued as partners in their children's school journey?

*Consider all communications from school – individual, whole cohort and class/phase/department. This might include emails, letters, newsletters, texts, app notifications and phone calls.*

## 4
## Improve universal provision for all pupils

- Do all teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' learning needs, and how is this information shared regularly?
- Do teachers have the expertise and support to meet these needs in the classroom so that all pupils can learn successfully?
- Is professional development effective and structured in a way that supports staff to change and develop their practice? (See the Effective Professional Development guidance report for more information about a balanced approach to effective PD).
- What systems are in place to seek and hear pupils' views about their school and learning experiences, and do you use this to help identify potential barriers to pupil learning and engagement?

## 5
## Deliver targeted interventions to supplement universal provision

- Do you have a complete and up to date picture of local external agencies and services that may be able to support pupils and families?
- Do interventions precisely target a specifically identified need for pupils?
- Is there clear and consistent provision mapping, providing an accessible overview of which interventions are in place for pupils?
- Are the right people involved in delivering interventions, and do they have the necessary expertise to deliver the intervention(s) effectively?
- Is the intended impact of targeted interventions clear, and is this tracked, monitored and reviewed periodically so that you are confident interventions are effective or can adjust the approach if needed?