

MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BULLETIN

JUNE 2024 – HALF TERM (6)

Written by The Attendance Specialist Team for Schools

Welcome back, we hope you had a restful break. With just 1 half-term left we are fast approaching the end of this academic year. It certainly has been a busy one! The AST would like to thank you all for your hard work and dedication to ensuring as many young people are in school regularly as possible. The work you do to ensure children are attending and accessing all the wonderful opportunities school can offer will have a major impact on their learning, development, choices and chances as they mature into adults.

Thank you!

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Data update

Please see below the latest update from DfE (11th September to 3rd May):

Release Date	PRIMARY				SECONDARY				SPECIAL			
	ATTENDANCE		PA		ATTENDANCE		PA		ATTENDANCE		PA	
	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT
16.5.24	94.6	94.6	14.1	15.3	91.2	91.2	24.8	25.3	89.4	87.2	32.1	36.9
	=		1.2		=		0.5		2.2		4.8	

The data shows both Essex primary and secondary schools are both in line with national averages in terms of overall attendance. Special schools in Essex continue to outperform the national average attendance by a significant margin.

What is particularly pleasing is that Essex primary, secondary and special schools all have lower levels of PA than most schools nationally. Thank you again for all your hard work.

HT6 Attendance Focus

HT6 has always proven to be a crucial period for attendance during the academic year – tying up loose ends, preparing for the next year, transition work, exam time etc. With so much to pack in, in just a few weeks the AST have devised a checklist that we hope will support your work this HT:

Action	Completed
<p>Ensure all staff has read the revised 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance (August 19th 2024). Is everyone aware of the key changes for Sept 2024?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together to improve school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024 • Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance: applies from 19 August 2024 	
<p>Review school attendance policy and ensure it meets the expectations as outlined in the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance 2024 (<i>Please see EPHA Model Policy which has been amended for Sept 2024</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance leaflet for parents September 2024 • Attendance Policy ECC EPHA model September 2024 	
<p>Book onto the Attendance Compliance National Framework for Penalty Notices: Preparing for Sept 2024 via Education Essex (1st July 2024)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Essex Online Booking System 	
<p>Book onto AST Webinar July 3rd 2024 – available soon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Essex Online Booking System 	
<p>Access DfE webinars via the DfE YouTube channel pertaining to key changes (future webinars will not be delivered live due to election rules)</p>	
<p>Check Y11 coding for HT6 is appropriate and correct (see guidance on Essex School's InfoLink)</p>	
<p>Ensure conversation or communication is in place with the families in the PA cohort during HT6 to revisit any barriers and reiterate the attendance expectations for the new academic year.</p>	
<p>Share or signpost parents to key resources to help them fully understand the expectations for the new academic year e.g. The Education Hub/EPHA Parent's leaflet/The Children Commissioner resources - this could be shared via the school newsletter</p>	
<p>Contact feeder schools to discuss pupils transitioning into school</p>	
<p>Speak with schools where children are transitioning to and advise of any attendance and/or punctuality concerns</p> <p>Agree a date in HT1 to celebrate 'Attendance Week' to raise the profile and importance of attendance with pupils, parents, and staff</p>	
<p>Hold staff briefing session to set the new expectation and school attendance vision for the new academic year. Remind all staff of the role they play in achieving this. Circulate to pupils and parents the school's aspirational targets</p>	
<p>Ensure all staff have been made aware of the changes and how that will impact them and the pupils, signpost or facilitate training for key staff members with responsibilities for attendance – SENCO, DSL, Pastoral Manager, HOY, SLT, Disadvantaged Lead etc.</p>	
<p>Check with the office administration team that all personal contact details have been updated/reviewed following the summer break to allow for changes in telephone numbers and addresses that may have occurred</p>	

WTTISA Guidance – 19th August 2024

I am sure by now you are well aware that new guidance has been published by DfE in relation to school attendance and will become statutory from 19th August 2024.

It is vital you, your School Attendance Champion (SLT lead for attendance) and indeed ALL staff are aware of the new guidance, how this will affect the job they do and the role they play in supporting and promoting attendance. A clear and comprehensive understanding of the new guidance is essential before the start of next academic year. It is advisable key staff come together to review the document and agree a plan for implementation before schools open after the summer break.

There are guidance videos on the DfE Sector Comms YouTube channel that can help schools better understand the changes and new expectations:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA3oIhNjANNjdpQuZaFwJeA>

It is advised schools take time to review the videos on offer and take advantage of the information shared.

AST & ACT Training

To support schools in their understanding of the new WTTISA guidance both the Attendance Specialist Team and the Attendance Compliance Team will be offering online training workshops in July:

ACT – 1st July 2024

AST – 3rd July 2024

It is highly recommended all staff associated with attendance in school attend these virtual training sessions.

Access to these training opportunities can be arranged through Essex Workforce Development. Both training workshops are **free** to attend.

- [Education Essex Online Booking System](#)

Transition

Hopefully your attendance transition work is now well underway, and you are beginning to build a picture of the new pupils you are expecting to receive in September as well as sharing attendance information with schools where your pupils may be going next academic year.

Remember ALL children experience transition at the end of the academic year and so it is vital the important work schools dedicate to those leaving or arriving also needs to be considered for those staying and moving from year group to year group.

Positive transition = positive attendance, and so those first few weeks in the new academic year are crucial if schools want to maximise the opportunity for good attendance. Pupils in your school who you know struggle to attend following a break must have plans in place to welcome them back in September.

*****Remember** Any child who experiences an absence in the first week of school is 4 times more likely to end the academic year PA.***

If you want more information on transition planning, please do not hesitate to contact the AST for support and guidance.

Model Attendance Policy

The AST in collaboration with the ACT and EPHA have produced a new model attendance policy for schools to consider to reflect the new WTTISA guidance and the new national framework for penalty notices.

The policy can be found via the EPHA website and should be amended accordingly to reflect the specifics of your individual school:

- [Attendance Policy ECC EPHA model September 2024](#)

Please note there are changes in the WTTISA guidance specifically relating to registration periods. It is important all schools understand these changes, amend their practices to reflect the new expectations and detail the changes in their attendance policies.

To accompany the new model attendance policy, EPHA have also made available a model attendance leaflet for schools to share with parents:

- [Attendance leaflet for parents September 2024](#)

Again, this will need adapting to reflect individual schools.

Sharing Your Attendance Data

For the last 2 academic years, DfE have invited schools to share their attendance data to be able to produce national, regional, and county average statistics. 90% of all schools in England and Wales have signed up to this scheme and already share data on a regular basis. The sharing of information happens automatically and requires no effort on behalf of the schools once the link has been set up.

From September it will be mandatory for all schools to share their attendance information in this way. In order to be best prepared it is advised all schools have this link already established before the end of this academic year.

By sharing your attendance information, you will also be able to access the DfE database for attendance where schools can create tables, compare attendance statistics, and gain access to national, regional, and county averages.



Again, the DfE Sector Comms YouTube channel has instructional videos for schools to access that guides on this process and how to best take advantage of the information on the DfE attendance platforms.

Remote Learning

Under the new DfE guidance remote learning has been more clearly defined and attendance codes updated.

DfE have confirmed the following:

The attendance register is a legal record of which pupils are physically present in school when the register is taken for the session in question. The Department's [guidance](#) to schools on remote education (first published in 2022) makes clear that a situation where a pupil is participating in remote education must therefore be recorded with the appropriate absence code as the pupil is not physically in school at the time.

Following extensive public consultation, the definition of approved educational activity (Codes B, P and W) has been strengthened in the new Regulations. From the 19th August, therefore, for a school to use Code B the pupil must be attending a place, other than a school at which they are registered, for an educational activity. That activity must be supervised by a person considered by the school to have the appropriate skills, training, experience and knowledge to ensure that the activity takes place safely and fulfils the educational purpose for which the pupil's attendance has been approved.

Supervision for the purpose of this code means the pupil is physically supervised by someone who meets the definition set out in the Regulations. Remote education does not meet this definition and so a pupil who is not in school and receiving such education is instead to be recorded with the appropriate authorised absence code in line with the Regulations, as stated in the aforementioned guidance.

Face to face attendance whenever it is possible should always be the priority, but the Department is clear schools may continue to use remote education in line with the remote education guidance and we recognise the value it can add to pupils who would not otherwise be able to access education. Schools and local authorities are expected to provide support to pupils who are facing barriers to attendance and should do so in the pupil's best interests rather than how it is recorded in the attendance register. Where remote education is provided, school can, and should, monitor participation in it and credit pupils for their efforts.

In short, only pupils who are **attending** a session, other than at school, AND that session is **physically supervised** can be coded B.

Any sessions that are attended at home and/or remotely supervised must be coded with an authorised absence mark.

Attendance Code Changes **FROM 19TH AUGUST 2024**



Use of a set of absence and attendance codes will be mandated, to improve consistency and accuracy in recording. The list of codes will be simplified into attending and absent but how they are counted statistically remains the same. Three codes will cease to be used – codes J (replaced by J1), Y (broken down into individual causes) and H (leave of absence for a family holiday). Twelve new codes have been created – mostly be breaking down existing codes.

Code C will be broken down into:

- C** – Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances
- C1** – Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance
- C2** – Leave of absence for compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

There is one change to statistical meanings:

Code J1 (attending an interview) will replace J and become an authorised absence

Code Y will be broken down into:

- Y1** – Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
- Y2** – Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
- Y3** – Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
- Y4** – Unable to attend due to whole school being closed
- Y5** – Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
- Y6** – Absent in accordance with public health guidance or law
- Y7** – Unable to attend because of other unavoidable cause
- Q** – Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

There is an additional code for attending a place other than the school:

Code K – Attending education provision arranged by the LA



Department for Education

Attendance Specialist Team Contacts:

Each school in Essex has a named point of contact in the Attendance Specialist Team who can support with queries and advice and with whom Attendance Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs) will be held. Each quadrant in Essex has a Senior Attendance Specialist and an Attendance Specialist, details of which can be found below:

Mid Quadrant (incl. Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Simone Webb
Attendance Specialist – Elizabeth Newman
midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 2

North East Quadrant (incl. Clacton, Colchester, Harwich)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Susan Thomas
Attendance Specialist – Emily Marks
neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 1

South Quadrant (incl. Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford)

Senior Attendance Specialist – James Moir
Attendance Specialist – Jennifer White
southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 3

West Quadrant (incl. Harlow, Saffron Walden, Waltham Abbey, Ongar)

Senior Attendance Specialist – Daisy Alexander
Attendance Specialist – Joanne Pavlou
westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 - option 4

Early Help Drop-In

Don't forget to take advantage of a your quadrants weekly early help drop in session. For more information please visit [ECC Early Help Drop-in Poster 2022.pdf](#)



Essex County Council

EARLY HELP DROP-IN SESSIONS



4 quadrant specific weekly drop-in sessions

These sessions are designed to give partners across Essex who work with children, young people & families the chance to: discuss anonymised cases, gain peer support, be signposted to advice & help to answer general questions



These sessions will be facilitated by one of the 4 Partnership Delivery Leads, who will be regularly supported by our panel of subject experts including:

Children & Families Hub / Family Solutions / ECFWS / EWMHS
Team Around the Family Support Officer (TAFSO) / Health
Liaison Officer/ Senior Attendance Specialists and others

North Essex drop-in session - Tues 15:00-16:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Lee Bailey](mailto:Lee.Bailey@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (North) Lee.Bailey@essex.gov.uk for more details

Mid Essex drop-in session - Wed 12:00-13:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Paul Mitchell](mailto:Paul.Mitchell@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (Mid) Paul.Mitchell@essex.gov.uk for more details

South Essex drop-in session - Wed 12:30-13:30pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Harriet Pickering](mailto:Harriet.Pickering@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (South) Harriet.Pickering@essex.gov.uk for more details

West Essex drop-in session - Thurs 12:00-13:00pm Click [Here](#) to Join
Email [Fiona Bailey](mailto:Fiona.Bailey@essex.gov.uk) Partnership Delivery Lead (West) Fiona.Bailey@essex.gov.uk for more details

PLEASE NOTE - These sessions **DO NOT** replace work undertaken by the Children & Families Hub as outlined in [Effective Support for Children & Families in Essex](#)



Leads for Partnership Delivery

North, Mid,
South, West

