

Addressing Attendance in Essex

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Attendance Road Map for schools and other professionals

September 2024

Suggested road map to identifying concerns early, and putting the right support in place

It is essential schools develop their own processes and practices that embodies a support first approach and meets the expectations placed on them as outlined in the DFE's statutory [Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance](#).

To support schools with this, the Attendance Teams in Essex have developed a toolkit of suggested/template documents, with support first as the priority. These documents/templates sit with the expectations on all partners to: Expect, Monitor, Listen and Understand, Facilitate Support, Formalise Support and where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working, or being engaged with, Enforce through statutory legal intervention.

The Essex Support First Toolkit – Essex Template Documents can be found on Essex School's Infolink (ESI), under the Attendance Specialist Team Section and 'Essex Support First Toolkit – Essex Template Documents'.

Please note, there is no timeline at which to proceed to the next step, or if indeed a step should be bypassed. This is for each school to determine according to their knowledge of each individual pupil and family and whether support is appropriate or not. However, it is important to note that the key to successfully improving attendance is early identification, intervention, and support, as well as ensuring on-going and regular reviews of plans with the family. It is therefore essential that schools and families work in partnership to review support that isn't working as soon as either party have concerns about its effectiveness.

Essex Support First Toolkit – Essex Template Documents

Please note, more guidance on the use of the document templates can be found within, or alongside the document listed on ESI.

Attendance Policy

- Expectation of all parties

Absence Call-Backs

- Supports schools and families to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships
- Prevention and early identification and intervention is key
- Sets expectations, encourages early intervention and supports schools to identify concerns before they escalate

Pupil Check-ins

- Supports schools and families to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships
- Prevention and early identification and intervention is key
- Sets expectations, encourages early intervention and supports schools to identify concerns before they escalate
- Supports school to monitor, listen to and understand, so that they can facilitate support early, where applicable

Initial Concern Conversation/s

- Supports schools and families to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships
- Prevention and early intervention and intervention is key
- Enables opportunities to listen to, understand and facilitate support

Early Help and Support

- Supports schools and families to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships
- Prevention, facilitating targeted support

Attendance – meeting to address declining attendance (targeted intervention and support – voluntary)

- Listen to and Understand, facilitate targeted support and intervention
- Encourage voluntary engagement

Essex Support First Toolkit – Essex Template Documents – Moving to a more formal approach

Attendance Contract/s

- Targeted, voluntary support and intervention
- An Attendance Contract is still meant to be a supportive, preventative measure, and an opportunity for parent/s to engage voluntarily
- Designed to avoid the need for formal legal intervention
- Schools should still listen to, understand and provide support as appropriate, offering new support, and/or re-offering of previous support
- Please note, if a referral is made to the Attendance Compliance Team (ACT) for legal intervention, schools will be expected to share copies of their Attendance Contract/s **or** provide a **clear rationale as to why a Contract has not been developed**

Notice to Improve - targeted support and intervention

- Issued when the national threshold for legal intervention has been met (10 sessions unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-school-week period) and support is appropriate, but previous offers of support have not been engaged with, or have been ineffective
- It is a final opportunity for a parent/s to engage in support to improve attendance
- In Essex, a Notice to Improve provides a 6-week timeframe for improvements to be achieved prior to seeking legal intervention. Schools should continue to work with, offer new, and re-offer previous support where appropriate

Referrals for legal intervention

- Support first approaches were ineffective, and school can evidence attempts to secure engagement and improve attendance, or support-first approaches were not deemed appropriate (see guidance)
- For more information on expectations in terms of legal intervention please refer to the DFE's statutory [Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance](#) (from page 47)

Essex Attendance

Support First Roadmap

Attendance Policy

A school's opportunity to clearly outline DFE and school expectations, processes and procedures



Pupil Check-Ins

A supportive well-being check-in with the pupil. Designed as an opportunity to see if there is anything else going on (early identification) so where appropriate support can be put in place early



Early Help and Support

Schools should seek to put the right support in place early



Moving to a more formal approach

Attendance Contracts should be considered at this stage. For more information refer to the documents listed under the toolkit on ESI



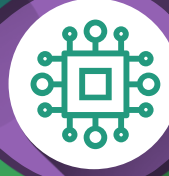
Deciding if legal intervention is appropriate

Consideration to which route to take, bringing together all documentation of support and interventions offered, creating a timeline / chronology or and using the referral form to do so



Absence Call-backs

A supportive well-being check with the parent about the pupil and family, designed as an opportunity to see if there is anything else going on (early identification) so where appropriate support can be put in place early



Initial Concern Conversation

Early identification and intervention opportunity



Declining Attendance Meeting

Early identification and put the right support in for the individual family/pupil – listen to and understand – work together



Notice to Improve

National threshold must be met to issue. 6-week time period to improve before considering formal legal intervention



Legal Intervention

Consider discussing with the Attendance Compliance Team and making a referral for legal intervention in the form of a penalty notice or prosecution



This is designed as a summary to be used once a school/professional has familiarised themselves with the documents on ESI

Department for Education

Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Department for Education

Working Together to Improve School Attendance Statutory Guidance

