

# MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BULLETIN

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025 – HALF TERM 4

Welcome back, we hope you had a restful half-term. This bulletin is an update of relevant information for the next half-term. Please remember to check Essex Schools Infolink (ESI) for supporting forms and documents you may find useful.

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## Attendance Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs)

We are now just over half-way through the academic year, as such, many of you may have had at least one Attendance TSM with your local Attendance Specialist Team (AST) member. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to deliver attendance Targeting Support Meetings with schools, dependent on need. Within the [DfE Working together to improve school attendance - Statutory Guidance](#), it outlines the main areas of discussion. It is believed further instruction from the DfE on the content of a TSM will be shared by the end of the academic year when we will update our offer and communicate this to you accordingly, if required. Schools also have responsibilities under the guidance relating to TSMs, including the school's Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance, otherwise known as a schools' Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) attends all TSMs and that all school's statutory attendance policies must also name this person.

Currently as part of an Essex TSMs, and as per the guidance, we will usually:

- Ascertain what is going well for your school and what the barriers might be
- Provide you with a data overview, giving comparisons to National and Essex averages for the school's phase (where available)
- Discuss your severely absent pupils on roll (50% or below attendance). When a pupil is severely absent, a multi-agency approach is expected, and a lead practitioner allocated. The lead practitioner is usually the best-placed service involved. This is often the school as they are the most consistent

party involved. During the TSM we will want to ascertain if there is a multi-agency approach in place and how this is working, we may even set further actions to support you, the pupil and their family. These actions could be for the school, other professionals or the AST.

- Where time allows, we will also discuss some/all of your persistently absent pupils (50%-90%), where barriers to attendance indicate a multi-agency response may be required
- Time allowing, we will ask the school if there are any other cases, not already discussed, that they may be struggling with, and encourage the use of early help services across Essex

Following the meeting, all schools are provided with a report via the Nexus/Perspective lite platform. It is expected schools take their own notes during the meeting, as well as any actions, to avoid unnecessary delays in providing support for these pupils and/or their families.

More information on Essex TSMs can be found [here](#).



### Consultations with AST (outside scheduled TSMs)

Should a school wish to consult with their AST outside of an organised TSM, they can request a 30-minute slot via their quadrant's specialist email addresses. It is advised the subject heading should be titled 'Request for 30-minute TSM'. Each quadrant allocates 4 x 30-minute slots every week.

Northeast: [neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)

Mid: [midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)

West: [westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)

South: [southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)

### Feedback

**We are always looking to reflect and adapt our practice to support our schools, so please email any feedback or suggestions to your team using their email address as detailed at the end of this bulletin.**

### Data Nationally and across Essex to 2 February 2025:

Data can be found via the [DfE data dashboard](#). DfE data does not include the first week of the academic year due to the variety of return dates across the country and therefore schools should run comparative data reports from 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024. We would like to thank all schools for their efforts throughout the year to ensure as many young people are attending school daily as possible.

### September 2024 – 2 February 2025

#### Primary

	Attendance % (Absence %)	PA %
<b>Essex</b>	94.7% (5.3%)	14.6
<b>National</b>	94.8% (5.2%)	14.8
<b>Summary</b>	Essex's overall attendance was trending slightly behind the National average by 0.1%.	Our PA% was trending lower (better) by 0.2%, and this good work will soon no doubt reflect in the overall figures.

## Secondary

	Attendance % (Absence %)	PA %
<b>Essex</b>	91.6% (8.4%)	22.9%
<b>National</b>	91.9% (8.1%)	22.6%
<b>Summary</b>	Essex's overall attendance was trending 0.3% behind the national average.	Our PA was also trending behind by 0.3%.

## Special

	Attendance % (Absence %)	PA %
<b>Essex</b>	88.8% (11.2%)	32.4%
<b>National</b>	87.2% (12.8%)	35.7%
<b>Summary</b>	Essex's overall attendance / absence continues to trend better than the national average by 1.6%	Essex's PA continues to trend better than the national average by 3.3%

## Closing the gaps; looking in depth at your data and using the View Your Education Data (VYED) service and Banding Reports

Part of the role of the Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) at a school is to strategically analyse at absence/attendance data and the DFE VYED service has been developed to support you with this. The guidance provides further information on the requirements to regularly analyse attendance and absence data (from page 19). Please also make use of the [Monitor your school attendance guide - how to use the absence bandings report](#).

Schools should analyse the codes that attribute most to their absences (illness will likely remain the highest category) to determine what can be done to mitigate these further. Breaking down absences into codes allows schools to highlight the areas of greatest need for support – for example is your C2 code high? Think strategically about how to lower all pinpointed school specific absence rates.



### Reminder – requirements of afternoon registrations as per legislation

Please be reminded that statutory requirements, and legislation (the law) changed, which includes greater clarification on when the afternoon register can be taken. For full information please refer to the statutory Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance, linked earlier. In summary, Chapter 8 of the Guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 states the afternoon register must be taken during the afternoon session and identifies this session to be after a “*substantial break*”. Simply therefore, the PM register must come after a school’s “*lunch break [that] separates one session from the next*”. By not adhering to this, DFE/Ofsted may consider schools to be in breach of the statutory guidance, therefore schools are strongly advised to ensure they are following this guidance.

Further clarification is available via the DFE webinar from the 3-minute and 26 seconds mark - [DFE Q & A - School attendance register: attendance and absence codes](#).

### NEW – Section 19 Sickness Reporting – requirement by law

From September 2024, under the sharing of information section of the Guidance, schools must share with the LA the full name and address of all pupils of **compulsory school age** who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe they will miss **15 days consecutively OR cumulatively** because of sickness. There is now the facility for schools in Essex to report this information, as required by law. To do this, and for more information, please visit Essex Schools Infolink (ESI); Admissions and Access to Education; Education Access; [Sickness Return](#).

## Planning a successful transition – from Y6 to Y7, between year groups and for new Reception intakes



It is never too early to start planning for next year's changes. We all want a successful start to every academic year for every pupil and their family. Whether this be children starting reception; children moving schools; changing year groups or pupils from transitioning from primary to secondary, these 'transitions' are critical to a successful year and positive attendance. Please find below just some points to support you with this.

What can you do?	How can you do it?
<b>Identify concerns</b>	Help the pupil and family to identify any worries/concerns early and provide reassurance and on-going support. This could include information on the school; a ' <i>who's who</i> ' presentation or leaflet; a map of the class/school layout; an inclusive welcome communication with the ' <i>who's who</i> '; video introductions etc
<b>Information sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start to gather information now to better support a successful period of change; ascertain if there are any concerns with friendship groups; are they feeling behind in certain subjects etc.</li> <li>• Share the right information at the right time and with key people, allowing time for questions and responses, as well as the right support to be developed for the individual and their family</li> <li>• Consider creating transition packs for pupils and parents, make this visual not just written information to ensure inclusivity</li> </ul>
<b>Assimilation – time to acclimatise</b>	Allow time for pupils to become familiar with their new surroundings – the more time you allow for this, the better
<b>Create 'user' friendly environments</b>	Suggestions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An arrival pack</li> <li>• Assigning an adult mentor</li> <li>• Assigning a peer mentor</li> <li>• Signposting to support available</li> <li>• '<i>Who's Who</i>' pictograms</li> <li>• Arrival packs with visuals</li> <li>• Packs to include key points such as expectations of pupils, what their day will look like, again a <i>who's who</i></li> <li>• Team building sessions – settling in sessions</li> <li>• Visual maps on display and as leaflets</li> <li>• A flexible, kind, compassionate approach to a daunting situation for all, even an adult starting a new job, their induction is key to success</li> <li>• Have members of staff, welcoming and present in key/common areas throughout the school not just first day but the first weeks</li> </ul>
<b>Create social opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities, before school, during school, and after school for social opportunities</li> <li>• Be creative and inclusive</li> <li>• '<i>Getting to know you</i>' games, include the staff – it can make all the difference to relationship building</li> <li>• '<i>Welcome events</i>'</li> </ul>

**Have you had a successful transition last year? Would you be willing to share your good practice? If so, get in touch with your quadrant team (details below).**

### **Links to support a successful transition**

- Young Minds have a page dedicated to transition support: [Supporting school transitions | Resources | YoungMinds](#)
- The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families have produced a resource for parents to support their child with the transition to secondary school: [Moving up! The transition to secondary school | Anna Freud](#)
- Some useful information can also be found [here](#), including some great strategies to support a successful transition for pupils managing Emotional Based School Avoidance
- Ensure you familiarise yourself with the SEMH section of ESI found [here](#).

### **We Miss You Maximising Attendance – Family Addition**

Please be advised there is a new Family Addition of the [Let's Talk... We Miss You: Best practice and guidance for maximising school attendance \(PDF, 2.09MB\)](#). This has been developed to help families but also to support schools when undertaking the exercise with a family. Information can be found here: [Let's Talk... We Miss You - Family Edition \(PDF, 1MB\)](#)

### **Attendance Compliance Team consultations:**

The Attendance Compliance Team (ACT) offer 10-minute bookable consultation slots for schools to discuss any cases that may be leading towards legal consideration or to gain updates for ongoing cases. This extra layer of support enables school attendance teams to receive professional guidance and ensure all areas of school support have been considered/offered in line with current guidance before a referral is submitted for consideration. For further information please click [here](#).

### **Parental support course:**

The LA, through the ACT, has secured the support of the Adult Community Learning (ACL) team to deliver a specifically tailored course for parents 'Support your Child to Attend and Enjoy School' As schools will be the only referral route for this early help support, this amazing opportunity will allow schools, during their discussions with parents, to consider whether a referral would be beneficial on a case-by-case basis. It is another way in which schools can offer the support first approach to encouraging improved attendance. This service can be accessed via the following link: [Supporting your child to attend and enjoy school](#).

### **Team Contacts:**

Due to the AST's commitment to delivering TSMs there is no longer the facility for schools to call their area team. Contact is via the relevant quadrant email address, providing as much detail as possible regarding your query to enable a response within 5 working days. Please see below for Team details:

### **Attendance Specialist Teams quadrant email addresses:**

Northeast: [neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)  
Mid: [midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)  
West: [westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)  
South: [southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk)

**Dedicated Parent Contact Line: 03330322968**

The AST now has a dedicated line for parents to make contact for advice and guidance. The phonenumber enables parents to leave their name and contact number for a call back from one of our Specialists. The phone line is strictly for parents only and is accessed by the team twice weekly. Schools/professionals leaving messages on this line will receive an email as a response to their call and will be advised to send their query via their Team email, see above for details.

## Early Help Drop-In Sessions

Please visit [the children and young people and families page for more information and links](#)

 Essex County Council

# Early help drop-in sessions



Weekly drop-in sessions - you can attend any session

This session is designed to give partners in 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 are supported by our panel of subject experts from across the children's system including:

- Team Around the Family Support Officer (TAFSO)
- Inclusion Partners
- Essex Family Support Service
- Engagement Facilitators
- SENDIASS
- Attendance Specialists
- Essex Youth Service
- Redbody Outreach
- Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service
- DWP
- and others

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



**North Essex drop-in session**  
Tuesday 15:30-16:30pm

[→ Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (North) [C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk](mailto:C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk)



**South Essex drop-in session**  
Wednesday 12:30-13:30pm

[→ Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (South) [C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk](mailto:C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk)



**West Essex drop-in session**  
Thursday 12:00-13:00pm

[→ Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (West) [C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk](mailto:C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk)



**Mid Essex drop-in session**  
Wednesday 12:00-13:05pm

[→ Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (Mid) [C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk](mailto:C&FPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk)

Please note that the Mid Essex has an online booking system, where you are able to pre-book a slot to present a case. Colleagues are still welcome to join the session without booking, but you won't be guaranteed a time to discuss your case.

