

MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BULLETIN

APRIL 2025 – HALF TERM 5

Welcome back, we hope you had a restful Easter Break. This bulletin is a brief update, please remember to check ESI (Essex Schools Info) for supporting forms and documents you may find useful.

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Latest DfE data update:

Headline figures for the latest week

Release Date	PRIMARY				SECONDARY				SPECIAL			
	ATTENDANCE		PA		ATTENDANCE		PA		ATTENDANCE		PA	
	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT	ESX	NAT
09/09-04/04	94.7%	94.8%	13.9%	14.1%	91.4%	91.7%	22.9%	22.9%	88.8%	87.1%	32.8%	35.8%
	0.1%		+0.2%		0.3%		=		+1.7%		+3%	

The Data Summary:

Since the start of this calendar year, Essex primary schools have been working diligently to improve their performance in comparison to National figures. Although the general trend has been that data has remained slightly below the national averages by 0.1% to 0.2%, the dedication and hard work of all primary schools across the county has resulted in lower levels of PA on average when compared to National.

Similarly, Essex secondary schools have shown a consistent trend of remaining 0.3% below the national average since October Half term, however the recent DfE data shows that Essex secondary schools, like their primary counterparts, have made impressive recoveries in their PA levels, now matching the national levels in this area.

Special schools in Essex continue to outperform the national averages both in overall levels of attendance and lower levels of PA on average.

Written by the Attendance Specialist Team (AST) for schools

The AST will continue to work with schools across all phases to maximise attendance in their settings.

For a more detailed breakdown, including details regarding 'reasons for absence' please see here: [Pupil attendance and absence in schools in England](#)

DfE Attendance Conference (March 2025)

In March the DfE hosted an attendance conference 'Breaking down the barriers to opportunity' for schools and attendance professionals with keynote speakers reflecting on the attendance journey post-pandemic and to review the current landscape of attendance and best practice planning for improved attendance.

As part of the day, specialists in data collection and analysis, identified schools and MATS who were able to demonstrate best practice and evidence positive outcomes. DfE attendance specialists also shared interesting and insightful take aways.

Some of the more interesting and surprising facts shared were:

- Pupils attending 95+% of the time made up 2/3rds of all pupils in school pre-pandemic. Post-pandemic this cohort make up less than 50% of the school population.
- "Attendance is contagious" – pupils sitting in classrooms where chairs are regularly empty due to absence are more likely to be absent themselves in the future – assumed acceptable behaviour.
- 1 additional week of attendance for most SA pupils would result in a 70% better chance of improving their academic outcomes.
- In a recent study, PA pupils earned on average £10k less than non-PA pupils and SA pupils £20k less than non-SA pupils.
- Only 30% of students who finish Y9 as PA are likely to restore their attendance to 95+% by then end of Y11.
- 3/5ths of all students who are absent in the first week of school will finish the year as PA.
- The biggest drop in attendance in recent years is between Y7 and Y8 with the biggest fall occurring after the October Half term
- FSM pupil attendance falls most significantly during KS3 than at any other time during their academic career.

For further reading in relation to key findings between attendance and economic outcomes please see here: [The impact of school absence on lifetime earnings - GOV.UK](#)

Key take-aways:

If the 95+% cohort has been diminished in recent years, then there is a real opportunity to focus on this group in all schools. Reminding pupils, staff and parents of the importance of every day being a school day and every absence having a detrimental effect may encourage those occasional days of absence to be reduced. Reminding parents that being unwell does not always have to result in an absence may help to build resilience in our young people and reset parental mindset around illness and absence.

Schools already provide excellent transition work for our pupils moving from primary to secondary school and this important work must continue but given the information shared above we must not forget all children transition every school year and may need additional support to ensure this happens positively. One key area of focus is the transition from year 7 to year 8. It is recommended that schools identify students with below-average attendance to provide them with the necessary support to prepare for this transition.

Some opportunities to consider may be:

- Have a plan for every year group
- Identify those pupils who are expected to struggle with transition periods

- Ensuring effective wrap-around support for those pupils identified
- Ensure all pupils have the opportunity to see and experience what next year may look like for them
- Engage parents in the support first approach and ensure positive messaging and clear communication is maintained at all times
- Invite pupil and parental voice by providing a platform where any concerns or questions can be asked before transition takes place and where school can respond as appropriate
- All plans should include support at each step of the transition process i.e. before, during and after to ensure pupils feel supported

If you would like any advice, support or guidance in relation to transition planning for your pupils, please do not hesitate to contact the AST.

DfE Sector Comms Attendance Webinars:

The latest DfE Monitor your school attendance update is now available: [DfE Monitor your school attendance webinar - March update](#) The update gives oversight of current attendance trends, comparisons of the previous academic year and key factors impacting current attendance rates. The session includes some good practise examples and case study discussion. Please see here for other key DfE webinars relating to the Working together to improve school attendance guidance: [DfE Sector Comms - YouTube](#).

The next DfE webinar is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 4th June additional details can be found here: [Monitor your school attendance webinar for schools, trusts and LAs - June Tickets, Wed, Jun 4, 2025 at 12:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)

Section 19 Sickness Reporting:

As of September 2024, the DfE made it statutory for schools to 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](#).

Coding Reminder-Study Leave:

As we approach the exam period, pupils may be given agreed leave to study for public examinations, please see below for further information relating to appropriate use of the S code:

The S code should be used where leave has been agreed in advance with a parent (with whom the pupil normally resides) for a pupil to study for a public examination (please note that entrance examinations e.g. 11+ exams, Independent School entrance examinations and mock examinations are not eligible for the use of the S code).

Study leave must not be applied in a blanket approach once the content of the syllabus has been taught for a particular subject. The DfE states that the S code should be used sparingly and where study leave has been granted, provision must still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Where a pupil is absent during a public examination, the appropriate absence code must be used.

All year 11 pupils are expected to remain in full time education until the last Friday in June of that academic year:

- Where a school has a sixth form and the pupil is due to transition to year 12, the school may use the X code after the pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age (last Friday in June).
- Where schools do not have a sixth form or the pupil is not due to transition into year 12, schools may remove from roll after the last Friday in June has passed.

N.B. Half term 6 data for Year 11s is not included within a school's statistical attendance/absence published data ([Attendance - Coding | Essex Schools Infolink](#))/[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) (Pg 82)

PM Registration and the statutory regulations:

Please ensure that the PM registration period takes place as per the [statutory guidance](#): 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". 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](#).

Supporting your child to attend and enjoy school:

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'. To date, 270 referrals have been completed by school colleagues to the service. Schools are encouraged to continue to refer parents who may benefit from this early intervention tool as part of a support-first approach to improving attendance. Referrals can be completed via the following link: [Supporting your Child to Attend and Enjoy School \(Page 1 of 2\)](#)

AST Service offer:

Should a school wish to consult with their AST outside of the standard TSM offer, or a school with attendance above the National for phase require a TSM, a 30-minute slot can be requested via the 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. Additional information regarding TSMs can be found here: [Targeting Support Meetings \(TSMs\): Overview | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

ACT ISA referral Update:

Please note The Attendance Compliance Team will not accept any new referrals for penalty notices / prosecution, for irregular school attendance patterns, after **Friday 4 July 2025**. This will ensure that all referrals are reviewed and decisions around whether referrals have been accepted / declined or whether further information is required, are communicated with referrers before schools close for the summer. Please note: for term time holiday absence, a business-as-usual approach will continue to operate until the end of the academic year.

Please see here for further information regarding the ACT consultation booking: [Attendance Compliance Team | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

Dedicated Parent Contact Line: 03330322968

The AST now has a dedicated line for parents to make contact for advice and guidance. The phoneline 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, please see contact details below.

Written by the Attendance Specialist Team (AST) for schools

Team Contacts:

Northeast Team (incl. Clacton, Colchester, Harwich)
neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968, option 1

Mid Team (incl. Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon)
midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968 option 2

South Team (incl. Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford)
southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968, option 3

West Team (incl. Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford)
westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk / 0333 032 2968, option 4

Early Help Drop-In Sessions

Sessions designed to give partners who work with children, young people & families the chance to discuss anonymised cases, gain peer support, be signposted to advice, and help to answer general questions

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



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
- Peabody 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 11:30-14:30pm

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (North): CAFPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk



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

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (South): CAFPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk



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

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (West): CAFPartnershipLeads@essex.gov.uk



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

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email (Mid): CAFPartnershipLeads@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.

