

# **Attendance Strategy 2023 – 2028**

Childrens Service  
15/06/2023

**A great place to live and work.**

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# Attendance Strategy

## Purpose

This strategy is intended to provide the framework for continuous development in school attendance and an improvement in attainment for all schools in Central Bedfordshire.

This strategy has been developed to help the local authority, schools and other partners understand what is needed to work in a more effective way, in order to ensure that:

- All partners understand the challenges faced within CBC in terms of attendance.

- Improving attendance can help to improve outcomes and improve life chances.
- Systems are developed to ensure that data used effectively to identify and address attendance concerns.
- All young people have access to a full-time education and can make the most of the opportunities presented to them by attending school regularly.
- As a consequence of the above it is expected that:
- Overall attendance in CBC improves and the levels of persistent and severely absent pupils declines.
- Teams within CBC work more effectively together to identify and share ownership of attendance concerns.
- Schools and other partners are clear on their responsibilities and work in a more consistent manner to help parents understand their duties and responsibilities.

## Context

This strategy is one aspect of Central Bedfordshire's drive to improve educational outcomes.

Educational attainment in Central Bedfordshire continues to lag behind similar authorities and it is recognised that schools where absence levels are significant, are hampered in their drive towards improving educational outcomes.

Nationally the academisation agenda has changed the role for local authorities. An LAs role is to work with schools to

- A. Promote good attendance and reduce absence.
- B. Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education.

- C. Act early to address patterns of absence.
- D. Support parents to ensure children attend regularly at school.
- E. Support pupils to be punctual to lesson

Schools, parents and the local authority all have a part to play in securing regular school attendance and ensuring that children have the best possible start to life and education.

## Why is regular attendance important?

CBC is committed to working with schools and other partners to improve attendance and punctuality across the local authority as it strongly believes that high levels of school attendance impacts positively on the lives of young people.

In addition to the strong correlation between a high level of school attendance and the achievement of positive outcomes for young people, CBC recognises that there are other benefits including:

- School's being the place where many young people form lasting friendships.
- School's being the place where talented individuals develop skills and attributes which stand them in good stead for life.
- children and young people who attend education are at lower risk of being involved in anti-social behaviour and of greater long-term benefit in the economy.
- Regular attendance at school limits social isolation, loneliness and helps many young people develop lifelong support systems.
- learning about the world, learning about ourselves and finding out place in society
- the opportunity to try new things.

To miss education is to miss the many experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have, and the quality of life that we lead.

## The national context

Attendance has been an issue of concern to the Government since 2012. The findings of a 2012 DfE report 'Improving Attendance at School' highlighted the link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement.

As a result of a national focus on attendance the overall national absence rate improved and stabilised at around 4.7%. Since COVID however, attendance has been a concern, with the overall absence rate nationally being around 7.6%.

Since then the national attendance strategy ("Working together to improve school attendance") was published which outlines both core and additional expectations for schools, LA's, Governing Bodies/Trust Board and Parents.

## The local context

Attendance data for CBC has mirrored the national picture since 2017/2018.

Attendance rates have been broadly better than national. More detailed analysis of the local picture however, shows that a pattern of persistent absence has developed within certain groups, which is likely to be impacting negatively on attainment and life changes.

## The overall picture

Since the academic year 2017/18 CBC attendance rates have fallen with absence overall increasing from 4.8% 2017/18 to 7.6% in 2021/22. Whilst this mirrors the national picture, persistent absence (PA) (Those pupils absent for 10% or more of the school year)) is a concern, as in some phases this has consistently been above average.

		Central Bedfordshire			
		2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22
	Overall absence rate	4.8%	4.6%	4.2%	7.6

TOTAL	Authorised absence rate	3.8%	3.6%	3.3%	6.0%
	Unauthorised absence rate	1.0%	1.1%	0.9%	1.6%
	Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	10.6%	9.9%	10.0%	22.0%
	Percentage of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	1.0%	1.0%	1.2%	1.7%

		England			
		2017/18	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22
TOTAL	Overall absence rate	4.8%	4.7%	4.6%	7.6%
	Authorised absence rate	3.5%	3.3%	3.4%	5.5%
	Unauthorised absence rate	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	2.1%

Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed)	11.2%	10.9%	12.1%	22.5%
Percentage of severe absentees (50% or more missed)	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.7%

## Attendance of pupils receiving free school meals

In both the secondary and primary phases CBC trend data shows that whilst non-FSM pupils tend to have better attendance than their peers nationally, the attendance of FSM pupils has been consistently lower than the national figure over the period 2017-2022.

Overall PA rates in CBC for pupils on free school meals in 2022 was 46.2%, compared to 37.2% nationally. In the primary phase within CBC this figure was 42.% PA compared to 30.7% nationally, whilst at secondary PA for FSM pupils was 49.5% compared to 45.3%.

### Attendance of pupils with SEND

As with non FSM pupils, non-SEND pupils and pupils requiring SEND support in CBC had a higher attendance rate than nationally across the period 2017-2022.

Pupils with an EHC at CBC primary schools have a lower level of attendance than their peers, whilst at secondary the attendance rate is comparable to that nationally.

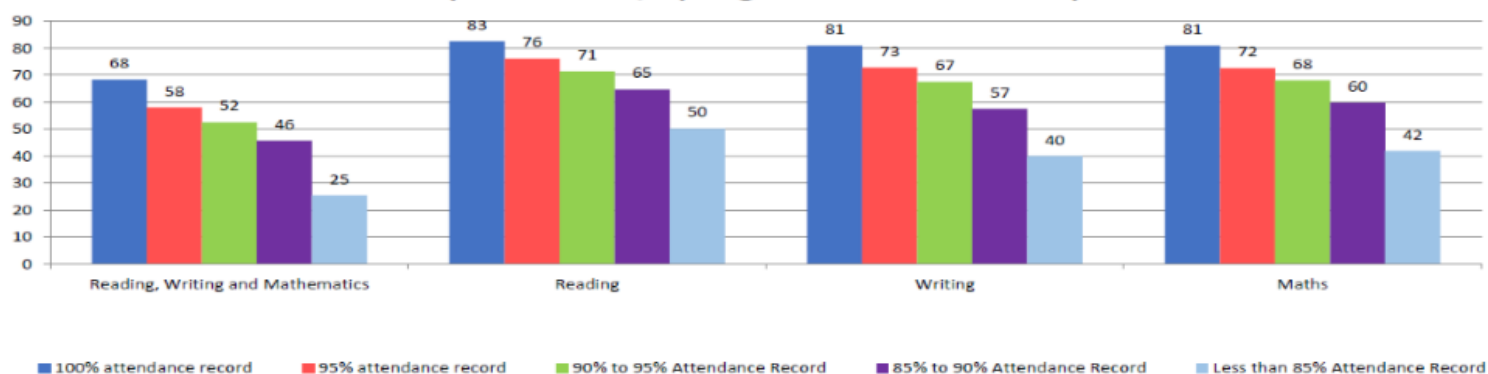
### A deeper dive into the impact of attendance

The impact on attainment within CBC mirrors the research findings. Pupils with persistent absence are most often in attendance at school for 85-90% of the available sessions and have as a group an average at KS2 22% lower and at KS4 15 points lower than those with 100% attendance.

## 2022 Key Stage 2 by Attendance Analysis

2022 Revised Key Stage 2 by Autumn 21/Spring 22 attendance					
Pupils attendance record:	Number in Cohort	% Reaching Expected Standard			
		Reading, Writing and Mathematics	Reading	Writing	Maths
100% Attendance Record		68	83	81	81
95% to 100% Attendance Record		58	76	73	72
90% to 95% Attendance Record		52	71	67	68
85% to 90% Attendance Record		46	65	57	60
Less than 85% Attendance Record		25	50	40	42
<i>Unmatched</i>		13	25	38	13
<b>Central Bedfordshire Total</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>68</b>

### 2022 Key Stage 2 Assessments by Attendance Bands ( Autumn 21 / Spring 22 attendance Terms)



Based on 2022 Revised key Stage 2 dataset and Autumn 2021 / Spring 2022 Termly attendance data.

## Isolating the cause of persistent absence

CBC Absence Data from 2021/22 CBC shows that whilst unauthorised absence gradually increases from Yr.1 – year 11, it is the increase in authorised absence that impacts on declining levels of attendance as pupils progress from Yr. 4 onwards.

Analysis shows that the high levels of authorised absence are driven by:

- Illness
- Agreed holidays
- 'C' coded other Authorised Absence

We also know from our partners that since COVID the following issues have also contributed to persistent absence.

Medical and health concerns

- diagnosed health concerns which result in Medical Needs Tuition or S19 provision by the LA which result in reduced provision which negatively affects absence levels.
- undiagnosed health concerns which do not meet the threshold for LA support, but where the school is unable to pursue a legal remedy as a formal diagnosis takes time
- any issue which fuels anxiety and other absence

#### Travel and transport issues

- timescales required to commission LA school transport.

#### Family and societal factors familial concerns and lack of awareness of the available support,

- social media influences on young people (ie Bullying, gender identity etc)
- 'T' coding where families legitimately travel as part of their cultural background

#### Guidance and systems

a lack of understanding from all partners of

- Their own role and responsibilities in promoting high levels of school attendance and that this is not solely owned by a single service with the LA
- the steps required prior to legal intervention.
- available early intervention
- The requirement on LAs to use legal intervention where all reasonable intervention have been offered but these have been unsuccessful and there is no other option.
- a need for more effective joined up working across all partners to understand individual cases, provide appropriate support and where required take the necessary enforcement.
- close gaps in process to ensure all young people have access to suitable full-time provision (inc: EOTAS, S19, MNET, Place planning)
- efficiently share pupil and family information and reduce paperwork.
- reduce the time taken to enable a child to be removed from a school roll when the family have been referred as missing in education.
- a lack of training to ensure that attendance is everyone's business (inc: Educational based school non attendance)
- further support for families with English as an additional language.

In too many of these cases where legal action is appropriate schools are unable to swiftly progress this and this can lead to the use of part-time timetables and authorised absence marks being inappropriately given.

## What do we know about attendance practice in CBC?

Many schools across CBC exhibit a range of effective practice and work with local authority officers, the police, health and other partners to manage and promote effective school attendance.

All colleagues involved in promoting effective attendance work hard to secure this and this is reflected in overall school attendance in CBC being at or above national each year.

We know following a review across CBC that there are many strengths:

- Some Multi-Academy Trusts and Individual Schools are employing pastoral members of staff to implement the very effective early intervention practices such as first day calling, door knocks/home visits, parent/pupil meetings, mentoring etc.
- Following the end of the Buyback process within CBC all Independent, Maintained and Academy schools receive an allocated Local Authority School Attendance Officer.
- The attendance of secondary age pupils in CBC is above the national average and the percentage of both unauthorised absence and persistent absentees lower than the national average.
- We know from our partners however that there are practices which could support even more effective school attendance, these are:

## Expectations and understanding

We know that schools within CBC expect high standards of attendance from all pupils. However, we know that it can be confusing when:

- there is confusion about the roles, rights and responsibilities of parents, pupils, schools and the local authority
- there is a lack of consistent practice between institutions.
- patterns of good attendance are not promoted in early years.
- absence from school is the result of a complex set of circumstances where health needs impact on securing good attendance and it can be challenging to secure a co-ordinated response across different agencies.

## Communication, training and support needs

It is important to listen and understand each party to understand the barriers to attendance and agree on how we can work together. We know that a review of the following is therefore required:

- Communication between schools, the local authority and parents to ensure this is as streamlined and supportive as possible.

- Improved communication between the LA, Schools and its partners to help ensure that complex situations are understood and appropriate action taken.
- Accessible training and communication pathways are available to help unblock any identified systemic issues.

Further development of multi-agency early intervention for pupils where attendance is a concern.

## Systemic challenges

Schools, partners and local authorities are committed to developing systems which help ensure young people receive the education and support they need. However improvement can be made by all parties to ensure that:

- Systems enable more rapid engagement/resolution to be secured.
- Appropriate information sharing protocols are in place
- Electronic systems where possible communicate with each other and reduce duplication

## Operational considerations

Whilst the current operational practices are effective, improvements can still be made. It is important that we continue to develop:

- A shared agreement about what constitutes effective practice in respect of:
  - Monitoring attendance data
  - Identifying patterns or poor attendance
- A consistent and shared approach towards Holiday absence
- Action to address attendance concerns, including:
  - Enforcement where all avenues have been exhausted and as a last resort
  - Provision in complex situations where further support is needed to ensure a young person secures their right to full-time education.
- Specific areas of identified need in CBC, including:
  - Unauthorised lateness.
  - Removal from roll
  - Absence amongst some key groups

We know schools and parents usually navigate these challenges effectively, however, our partners tell us there is more we can do in this area.

## How will we improve attendance in CBC?

Commitments	Everyone needs to turn out for attendance <b>ACTION</b>	
<p>We seek to develop a system wide commitment too:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right service at the right time provision</li> <li>• Providing clear guidance</li> <li>• relevant suitable training</li> <li>• accessible support</li> <li>• Addressing attendance issues with consistency</li> <li>• Sharing accountability and securing strong governance</li> </ul>	<p>Everyone:</p> <p>Develop appropriate communication tools which will help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure lines of responsibility are clear and processes transparent</li> <li>• raise awareness of the benefits of regular school attendance</li> <li>• Intervene in the right way at the right time</li> <li>• Take advantage of the resources offered by the LA in terms of the monitoring and identification of absence</li> </ul>	
	<p>Young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilise pupil voice to understand the issues which impact on the attendance of young people</li> <li>• consider the impact of careers education in making school relevant</li> <li>• trial re-integration projects using music and other high impact, low friction mechanisms of bringing pupils back into school settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicate the importance of attendance from the earliest opportunity possible.</li> <li>• work with families to secure good attendance where situations across and between agencies is problematic.</li> <li>• consider how parental advocacy can be built into the attendance process</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further develop early intervention strategies and multi-agency responses to an attendance concerns.</li> </ul>
	<p>Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• target support for key groups of concern</li> <li>• establish clear lines of responsibility, communication, mechanisms for support and the sharing of consistent practice.</li> <li>• establish a clear understanding in respect of part-time timetables and section 19 'Otherwise support</li> <li>• ensure that there is easily accessible and accurate information for practitioners to help them promote attendance and provide suitable support</li> <li>• enable schools to access LA officer support earlier to identify concerns and support intervention</li> <li>• work with schools to address issues where pupils fall through the cracks.</li> </ul>	<p>Other partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work with the LA to develop resources and training to ensure all parties understand how they can positively impact attendance issues.</li> <li>• review systems to reduce duplication enhance information sharing, enable all partners to have up to date information for intervention and address any blockages between parties.</li> <li>• secure joint governance arrangements to ensure that attendance challenges across sectors can be addressed.</li> <li>• ensure that habits are formed in early years by promoting good attendance in all early years settings</li> <li>• work with health and other partners to establish a clear protocol where pupils are absent from school whilst waiting diagnosis, treatment or suitable school places.</li> </ul>

## What role will officers and partners play?

Commitments	Everyone needs to turn out for attendance <b>ACTION</b>	
<p>We seek to develop a system wide commitment too:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right service at the right time provision</li> <li>• Providing clear guidance</li> <li>• relevant suitable training</li> <li>• accessible support</li> <li>• Addressing attendance issues with consistency</li> <li>• Sharing accountability and securing strong governance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Access inclusion, school improvement and music services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support schools via the use of attendance support officers</li> <li>• Appoint a School Improvement Lead to work with schools to secure effective intervention practice.</li> <li>• Develop and review the success of music and other low friction re-integration projects</li> <li>• Appoint complex case officers to work with families to secure good attendance where other strategies have failed</li> <li>• Further develop S19 and PTT officer roles to ensure education is available for all young people in line with statutory guidance</li> <li>• Develop network meetings for schools to share good practice</li> <li>• Develop resources which are easily accessible to inform and improve attendance for parents, schools and external partners</li> <li>• Develop and deliver suitable training to schools, CBC officers, parents and external professionals.</li> <li>• Provide a ½ termly bulletin for schools updating them on attendance initiatives and performance</li> <li>• Develop a attendance handbook which outlines roles and responsibilities, agrees common</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Social care:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in a forum for schools to bring educational concerns to an early intervention panel and align this with front door support</li> <li>• Agree an approach to early intervention referrals from schools or officers in respect of poor attendance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>All partners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure multi-agency approach in respect of attendance</li> <li>• Implementation of any agreed ways of working</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teams within children’s social care to receive appropriate training</li> <li>• To report within a governance structure any issues relating to attendance</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SEND:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with special schools to review the persistent absence and poor attendance of some special school pupils</li> </ul>	<p><b>Schools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a pupil voice offer with LA officers to understand current attendance concerns</li> <li>• Audits to be completed of the careers offer to ensure young people see school as relevant</li> <li>• Develop a strategy to target key groups</li> <li>• Agree to adopt Study Bugs as a platform of in-time information</li> <li>• Nominate a school lead for attendance</li> <li>• Agree to any revised agreed ways of working</li> </ul>

## What will success look like?

Explanation of schools and partner roles here.

Expectation	Current	Target
Performance levels for CBC	<p>Overall attendance:92.38%</p> <p>Primary attendance: 93.07</p> <p>Secondary attendance: 91.93%</p> <p>Overall PA: 22.01</p> <p>Primary PA: 19.57%</p> <p>Secondary: PA 23.60%</p> <p>FSM PA: 46.23%</p>	<p>Overall attendance:94.50%</p> <p>Primary attendance: 95.00%</p> <p>Secondary attendance: 93.50%</p> <p>Overall PA: 15.00%</p> <p>Primary PA: 13.00%</p> <p>Secondary PA: 16:00%</p> <p>FSM PA: 25:00%</p> <p>Academic Year 2027/28</p>
Recognise the importance of good attendance across the council's areas of responsibility.	<p>Recently appointed a Senior School Attendance Officer.</p> <p>Attendance Strategy being created.</p> <p>New SIA Post being created.</p> <p>2 Complex Case Officers being recruited</p> <p>All Schools and Academies are allocated School Attendance Officers</p> <p>Purchase of StudyBugs</p> <p>CME/EHE/Attendance Training Offered to Headteachers and Governors.</p>	<p>Senior School Officer closely supervising School Attendance Officers In place and regularly reviewed. September 2023</p> <p>Officer in post (Spring 2024)</p> <p>Officers successfully resolving significant numbers of their caseload with pupils accessing education provision</p> <p>Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.</p> <p>Continuation of Governor Training and expansion to sessions for Headteachers and other relevant school staff.</p>
Make attendance a key feature of all frontline council services, but especially access to education services, early	<p>Multi Agency (with parental input) in creation of the Attendance Strategy.</p>	<p>In place and regularly reviewed. September 2023</p>

<p>help, statutory social care, and the virtual school.</p>	<p>School Attendance Officers and related staff all have access to Childrens Social Care IMS System to ensure we are aware that if any cases we are working on have a current Social Worker/Family Partner.</p> <p>Regular attendance related updates in Central Essentials.</p> <p>Regular updates to EMT and CSMT.</p> <p>Planned Multi-Professional Training regarding attendance.</p> <p>Access and Inclusion Service staff involved in Strat/CP/CIN/TAC Meetings.</p>	<p>In place for all officers in the Access and Inclusion Service</p> <p>These become more frequent with more benchmarking information shared</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Bespoke training to be offered to Social Workers, Early Help/Family Partners, 0-12 and 0-19 Teams, GPs. September 2023</p> <p>Continuing</p>
<p>Use attendance data from all schools in the area to identify the pupil cohorts, schools, and neighbourhoods/ towns on which to focus efforts. This should include benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities (both geographic and statistical) and regional and national averages to identify trends.</p>	<p>Close working with CBC Education Information Management Team who extract detailed absence information on individual school, phase, type data in substantial detail. We are data rich although previously capacity has not allowed access to this data to influence practice enough.</p> <p>National and Stat Neighbour data looking right down to EHCP, SEND Support and absence code level.</p> <p>Purchase of StudyBugs</p>	<p>More focus given to data analysis and the circulation of this to relevant professionals and schools.</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.</p>
<p>Use attendance data analysis to set a vision for improving attendance with tangible short and</p>	<p>Purchase of Study Bugs</p> <p>Increased capacity within Access and Inclusion and School Improvement Team</p>	<p>Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.</p>

longer term aims for particular cohorts of pupils	to facilitate this being developed further.  Headteacher and Governor Training	Capacity being used effectively and absence and PA data reducing  Continuation of Governor Training and expansion to sessions for Headteachers and other relevant school staff.  Develop a Communications Strategy promoting the importance of regular school attendance. January 2024
<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Target</b>
Ensure the vision and strategy are understood by all staff in attendance and associated teams as well as local partners (both statutory and voluntary including police and integrated care boards).	Close working with Central Bedfordshire Childrens Safeguarding Board where they are regularly update on CME/EHE\Attendance related information.  Headteacher and Governor Training.  Planned Multi-Professional Training regarding attendance.	As well as annual reports for EHE and CME, a report on School Attendance be submitted. January 2024.  Continuation of Governor Training and expansion to sessions for Headteachers and other relevant school staff.  Bespoke training to be offered to Social Workers, Early Help/Family Partners, 0-12 and 0-19 Teams, GPs. January 2024
Ensure that you are resourced appropriately to develop and maintain this approach.	Increased capacity within Access and Inclusion and School Improvement Team to facilitate this.	Capacity being used effectively and absence and PA data reducing
Regularly review and evaluate the strategy, involving senior officers and lead members. Evaluation should include input from service users, schools, and partners where appropriate.	Currently being undertaken via the Attendance Strategy and the Complex Case procedures.	Attendance Briefings to be put together. October 2023.  Appoint a School Improvement Lead to work with schools to secure effective evaluation and strategic development with schools.

<p>Provide statutory/voluntary sector partners and schools (including trusts, governing bodies, and school leaders) with an opportunity to shape improvement aims and priorities.</p>	<p>Currently being undertaken via the Attendance Strategy and the Complex Case procedures.</p>	
<p>Circulate guidance on how schools, the school attendance support team and other partners should work together to provide support for individual pupils and families. This should specify when the local authority will become involved in individual cases and how they and the school will share responsibilities.</p>	<p>Headteacher and Governor Training.</p> <p>Detailed Website information.</p> <p>CE updates</p> <p>Draft School Attendance Policies created for Secondary and Primary Schools that they can adopt.</p> <p>Checklists provided to schools regarding expectations on work they need to undertake prior to making EHE, CME, FPN referrals.</p>	<p>Continuation of Governor Training and expansion to sessions for Headteachers and other relevant school staff.</p> <p>Enhance provision of guidance and information on website.</p> <p>Regular use of CE and reviewing of draft school attendance policies. Continued reviews of expectation on schools and appropriate challenge made where these have not been complied with.</p>
<p>Provide schools with a named contact in the school attendance support team who can provide advice, and with whom targeting support meetings will be held.</p>	<p>All maintained, Academy and Independent Schools have a named School Attendance Officer.</p> <p>School Improvement Officer post to support in this area being recruited.</p>	<p>Allocation continued</p> <p>Officer in post. (Spring 2024)</p>
<p>Provide opportunities for all schools to regularly come together to share effective attendance practice.</p>	<p>Prior to COVID this was a regular procedure but needs reinitiating</p>	<p>Regular remote and face to face training reinitiated. October 2023</p>
<p>Work with all schools to tackle common issues. This may include agreeing common practices to issues such as term time</p>	<p>School Attendance Officers undertake this as part of their liaison within the pyramids and MATs they are responsible for.</p>	<p>More schools and MATS taking a consistent response to key areas of concern.</p>

holidays or follow up for persistent lateness.		Development with schools of agreed common practices and approaches
Organise termly targeting support meetings with each school to identify, and agree joint actions for pupils who are persistently or severely absent and those at risk of becoming so.	School Attendance Officers are currently incorporating this within their normal liaison meetings although with the increased capacity with the Access and Inclusion Service and School Improvement Team a new process is going to be devised to address this.  Provision of StudyBugs	Effective and consistent Targeted Support Meetings in place.  Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.
Use these meetings to work collaboratively with the school's attendance leads, including providing advice on recording in the register, accessing services, or the area-wide attendance approach.	Currently these areas are covered in the School Attendance Officer meetings although need development.  Provision of StudyBugs	Regular remote and face to face training reinitiated. Spring 2024.  Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.
Help schools to identify areas of focus in their school policies or approaches. This may include help with analysing data, comparing themselves to other schools in the area, or considering how they may learn from schools in similar circumstances.	Currently these areas are covered in the School Attendance Officer meetings although need development Provision of StudyBugs. Provision of Draft School Attendance Policies	Regular remote and face to face training reinitiate. September 2023 Majority of CBC Schools signed up to this package and CBC Officers using this effectively.  These are regularly reviewed and updated in line with changes in legislation and guidance
Work with schools and other services to provide intensive whole family support where barriers to attendance are complex.	Access and Inclusion Staff regularly take part Strat/CP/CIN/TAC meetings.  Referral and Case Management process	Continuing  Both processes regularly reviewed and adapted where required
Work with schools to agree a joint approach to improving attendance for all severely absent pupils (pupils who are absent for	Needs Development but School Attendance Officer are partially fulfilling this.	Impact from Complex Caseworkers to reduce these. Schools to have plans in place for each SA pupil. October 2023

more than 50% of their sessions).	10 U/A and 15 day Auth Notification Alert.  Sec 19 Process	All schools complying with these.  Fully in place
Provide multi-disciplinary support that builds on the existing early help offer.	Referral and case Management Process	Both processes regularly reviewed and adapted where required
The school attendance support team should advise the family's lead practitioner on attendance elements of the plan. They can act as lead practitioner if appropriate. They should also be part of the team around the family if necessary, and step in to lead any formal support or legal intervention when required (including if support is formalised in a parenting contract, education supervision order or parenting order).	As part of normal case management process.	Continued
To facilitate effective multi-disciplinary support for families, the School Attendance Support Team is also expected to:	Attendance Strategy being created.	In place and regularly reviewed
Advise schools on how to raise concerns and make referrals to early help (and other services) so that families receive support quickly	As part of normal Schools Attendance Officer role	Discussion at each register check and Targeted Support meeting.  Links added to Access and inclusion Website
Build strong relationships with services and partners that can remove specific barriers to attendance. This will include health, youth justice, the voluntary and community sector, early help, children's social	Attendance Strategy being created.	In place and regularly reviewed

<p>care, local safeguarding partnerships, special educational needs, educational psychologists, and housing support. The team should meet regularly with leads from these services, set out their ensure in attendance support, and how they fit into the local authority's attendance strategy. They should also help coordinate joint strategies and messages on attendance to improve consistency of approach.</p>		
<p>Build effective data sharing opportunities with partners as part of data sharing/governance arrangements to ensure a joined-up approach.</p>	<p>Studybugs will be available to Social worker and Early Help Worker so that they can monitor the attendance of their cases.</p> <p>Access and Inclusion Service has access to Social Care IMS, Education IMS, Council Tax database, NHS Data Sharing , Housing Benefit, a specific Government Agency</p>	<p>Training and implementation in place. September 2023.</p> <p>Full access maintained as well as continued identification of other areas where information can be accessed.</p>
<p>Work closely with local mental health services, school level senior mental health leads (including school based mental health support teams), the local school nursing service and the local authority's special educational needs and disability team(s) to ensure joined up support for families facing health or disability related barriers to attendance.</p>	<p>This takes place as part of normal Officer Case work</p>	<p>Continue as normal practice</p>

Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used.	Information on Website and in verbal and written communications with parents and a schools	Enhanced and clear information placed on website regarding this.
Use formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.	Normal casework procedures. ESOs considered and ESO Officer employed although this has now developed into a Complex Case Officer role.	The use of an ESO considered prior to casework prosecution.
Secure effective joint working between the School Attendance Support Team and statutory children's social care services where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe.	Having access to the Childrens Services IMS system.  Taking part in Strat/CP/CIN/TAC meetings and also ensuring Social workers and Family Partners are involved in School Attendance Officer casework.	Introduction of half termly reviews between A+I Manager and Social Work Managers. October 2023
Issue fixed penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where support has been provided but not worked or engaged with.	Current policies and procedures Website information	Adopt proposed National Code of Conduct when this comes into law,
Take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.	Case Management Process	Legal checklist to be rewritten to ensure that there is full evidence of this prior to agreeing prosecution. October 2023
Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker, including those looked-after by the local authority.	Currently social workers take part in Strat/CP/CIN/TAC meetings and also ensuring Social workers and Family Partners are involved in School Attendance Officer casework. Virtual School at this time do not attend.	Virtual School will have data management process in place re children with Social Workers. Welfare Call still in place.
Set aspirational targets for attendance of pupils with a social worker, and put in place personal	PEP for pupils who are looked after. Attendance targets are set for children with poor attendance.	Virtual School will have data management process in place re children with Social Workers.

education plans for pupils looked-after.	Liaison between VS and social care to improve attendance where it is a concern.	Welfare Call still in place as a mechanism for collecting the attendance of all looked after children.
<b>Expectation</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Target</b>
Provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have needed a social worker.	The VS train all designated teachers in the PEP process and this includes promoting attendance.	Regular remote and face to face training put in place.  VS to train all social workers of those children who aren't looked after in order that they are able to advocate for them as the VS does with children in care.
Secure regular attendance of looked-after children as their corporate parent and advise services supporting pupils previously looked after about the importance of attendance	Virtual School	Virtual School to maintain current high standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work across children's' social care services to ensure all social workers recognise the importance of attendance,</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>and that attendance is built into every child in need or child protection plan where this is a concern.</p>	Needs development.  School Attendance Officers do this when they take part in Strat/CP/CIN/TAC Meetings	Bespoke training to be offered to Social Workers, Early Help/Family Partners, 0-12 and 0-19 Teams, GPs. September 2023

## What are the arrangements for governance and monitoring?

Ultimately schools have responsibility for the attendance of their pupils. Governors therefore should ensure they have a clear plan for monitoring and reviewing of attendance and alerting the where statutory responsibilities require.

The LA governance of attendance is secured via the children's services overview and scrutiny committee.

### Schools

- School Staff and Governors to monitor individual pupil, group and whole school performance.
- Regular scrutiny of absence data to identify emerging trends.
- Action planning for all Severely Absent and Persistent Absentees.
- Whole School Attendance Policy in place.
- CME/EHE/Sec 19 alerts/PT Timetables referrals submitted

### LA Officers

- School Attendance Officers allocated to each school.
- Training made available for schools, governors and other professionals.
- Termly Conversation held regarding absence.
- Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.
- Sec 19 Duties.
- Overall governance for attendance will be exercised by the Goodand Better board and Overview and Scrutiny.

### Social Care/Early Help

- Workers to regularly review the school attendance of young people on their caseload
- Reinforce the requirement and benefits of regular school attendance

Joint education\social care attendance meeting to review all cases of concern

### LAC

- To monitor the individual attendance of all looked after children
- To review group performance of children in need

## Which partners are committed to addressing attendance issues?

Everyone needs to turn out for attendance, and for this reason the list of partners and LA teams who have committed to improving attendance includes:

Officer Teams  
School Improvement  
Access and Inclusion Team  
Virtual School  
SEND  
Education Psychology  
School Transport  
School Admissions  
Safeguarding in Education  
Youth Service  
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller  
Team  
Community Safety

Education partners  
CBC Academies and  
Maintained Schools

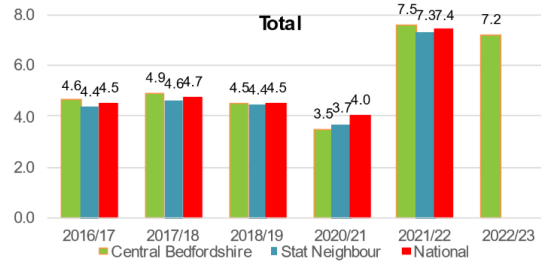
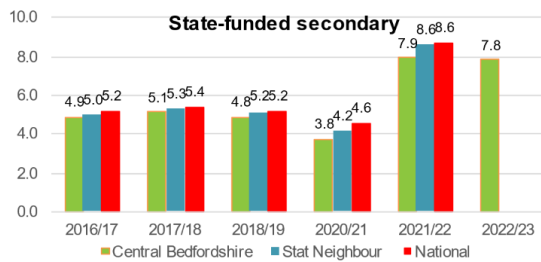
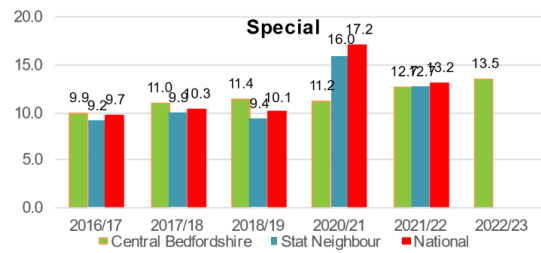
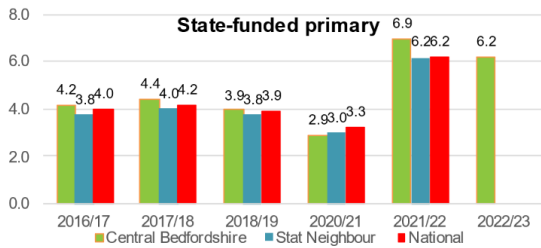
Non education partners  
Bedfordshire Police  
Childrens Social Care  
CAMHS  
Chums  
SNAP Parents/Forum  
Bedfordshire Police and Crime  
Commissioner  
NHS  
Cambridgeshire Community  
Services NHS Trust

# Appendices

## Appendix 1:



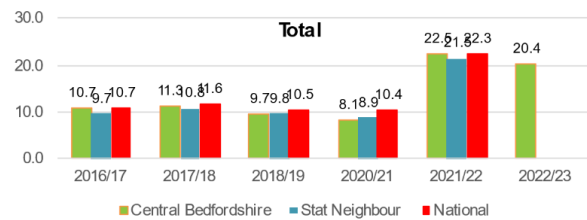
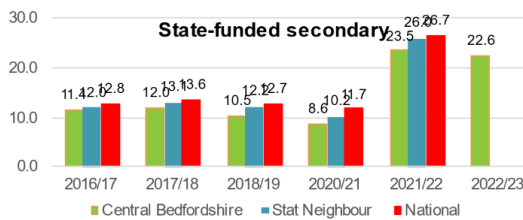
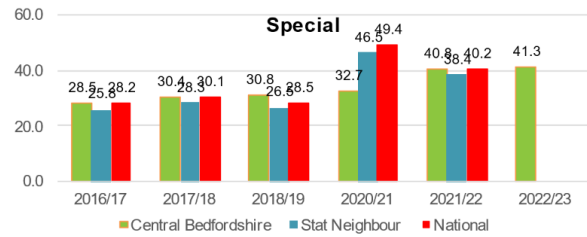
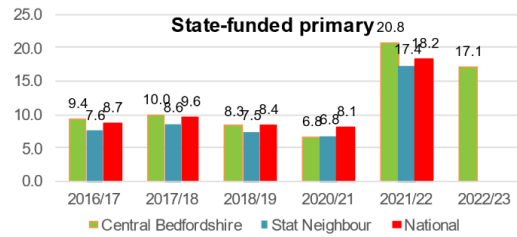
# Total Absence Levels Autumn/Spring Terms



## Appendix 2



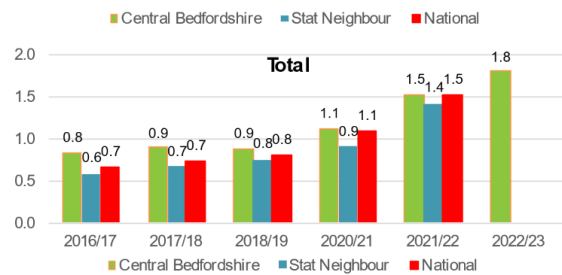
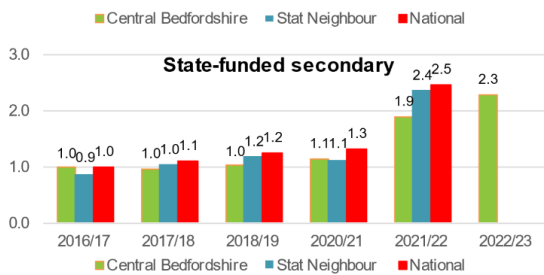
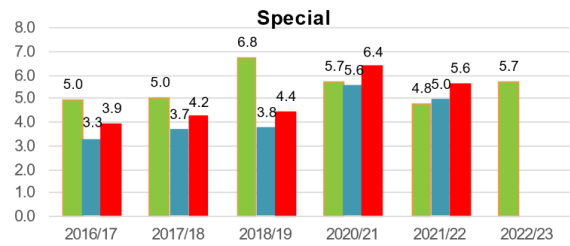
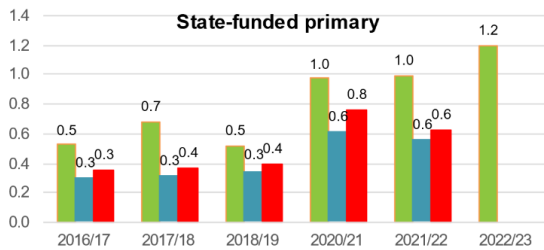
# Persistent Absence (10% + Absence) Autumn Spring Terms



## Appendix 3



# Severely Absent Pupils (50% + Absence) Autumn/ Spring Terms



## Appendix 4:

Guidance documents/Links

- DfE Working together to improve School Attendance  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- CBC Fair Access Protocol  
[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/97/school\\_administration/538/access\\_and\\_inclusion\\_for\\_schools/13](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/97/school_administration/538/access_and_inclusion_for_schools/13)
- CBC Penalty Notice (School Attendance) Code of Conduct  
<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EYGbG6oPA7NEtxN4JYfCtnkBFLP3wFSEortjpw9WLHAcEg>
- CBC Penalty Notice (Exclusions) Code of Conduct  
<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EbOMUJeJ7ttFtCEM8nFznaoBQ2yL6s708hQRmrVQb7rrRA>
- CBC Traveller Education Engagement Process and Procedures  
<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/ET8vvWtsEWNGuSf5iqOSNOABjcwX1ypGWxNgwxNI1yPEng>
- CBC Family Holidays in Term Time  
<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EezxR7tReRdHi8pgeoMBkdkBOMtHFjnO2m05h842PWOkHg>
- Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006  
[https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/ERq1Ae2bnKBEOVRk0epLEAB1Fol\\_ahhF5AuDYiedBWbQA](https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/ERq1Ae2bnKBEOVRk0epLEAB1Fol_ahhF5AuDYiedBWbQA)
- CBC Primary Model Attendance Policy  
[https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Communications/EURSTQmFdXxHhEl-UotwtalBCw-VQYPOa-d72\\_sRDTGYUg](https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Communications/EURSTQmFdXxHhEl-UotwtalBCw-VQYPOa-d72_sRDTGYUg)
- CBC Secondary Model Attendance Policy  
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- CBC Flexi Schooling Advice  
[https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Communications/ES5si9w1UtxOlvUh1F4CWTkB1o\\_4fIBROuYhea5oLyD51g](https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Communications/ES5si9w1UtxOlvUh1F4CWTkB1o_4fIBROuYhea5oLyD51g)
- CBC Removing Pupils from School Roll – Guidance for Schools  
<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EeY83O-t5LZPm2SOyReiV24Bu2A-iWwpkauRlqkGFVj0yA>

- CBC Reduced Education Provision Guidance

<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EepI3rbV8PB GhqSfKjZIkKoBhdqABzZmNtnwtyVetK6amg>

- CBC Learning from home advice

<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/Communications/ET3yY1HAGz JNtuS6tbITHOoBffcwHGLmB34fFV817-GfVg>

- CBC Children Missing Education Procedures

<https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/Eb1TWLbNZd hMkS13QbY0ywkBfpbNsUrwe9rHCELDwW61iQ>

- CBC Elective Home Education Procedures and Policy

[https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EQty9FGyGK 9Cm8WsHTfiR\\_gBctXmrJh1sfxMABFVt5I8fg](https://centralbedfordshirecouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Communications/EQty9FGyGK 9Cm8WsHTfiR_gBctXmrJh1sfxMABFVt5I8fg)

## Appendix 5:

### CASE LAW

1. Spears v Warrington 1954

Exclusion by the school is not necessarily a defence. Main issue in this case was that school uniform rules were not being complied with

2. Hinchley v Rankin 1961

Lateness- If a child is registered after the close of register, it may be treated as non-attendance as it affects regular attendance.

3. Happe v Lay 1978

Exclusion on the grounds of discipline does not constitute 'leave'.

4. Jenkins v Howells 1949

Chronic illness of parent or other family responsibilities or duties are not an 'unavoidable cause'

5. Marshall v Graham, Bell v Graham 1907

Ascension Day is a 'day exclusively set apart for religious observance' by the church of England, and a member of the church who withdrew his child from school for the purpose of sending him to church on that day was exempt from prosecution.

6. R (on the application of P) v LIVERPOOL CITY MAGISTRATES (2006)

For an offence under the Education Act 1996 s.444(1A) to be proved a court had to be satisfied to the criminal standard that, on the evidence before it, there was no reasonable justification for a parent's failure to ensure that a pupil attended school regularly.

**The burden of proof did not lie on the accused parent but on the prosecuting party.**

7. EAST SUSSEX CC v. SUSSEX CENTRAL AREA JUSTICES 2019

This is an appeal brought by a local authority against a decision of a magistrate's court that parents had a defence to the claim that they had failed to ensure the regular attendance at the school of their son – that defence being reasons of ill-health. The local authority was appealing the magistrate's

decision on the basis that parents did not have written medical evidence of ill-health for ALL the absences.

The administrative court dismissed the LAs appeal on the basis that written medical evidence was not necessary and the oral evidence of parents and other documentary evidence was sufficient to demonstrate ill-health on the balance of probabilities.

8. *Barnfather v London Borough of Islington Education Authority, Secretary of State for Education and Skills*: QBD 7 Mar 2003

The appellant was convicted of the crime of being a parent whose child had failed to attend school regularly. She challenged saying that the offence required no guilty act on her part, but was one of strict liability, and contrary to her human rights. Although the offence is one of strict liability, there is no reversal of the burden of proof. Article 6(2) has no bearing on the reduction or elimination of 'mens rea' requirements, and is therefore compatible with offences of strict or even absolute liability. The section engaged article 6.2 but was compliant. Authorities should however be careful before exercising their discretion to prosecute. Elias J said: 'I recognise that the penalties are small, being only a fine, and that is a factor which can properly be considered when determining whether an offence of strict liability is justified. However, in my opinion there is nonetheless a real stigma attached to being found guilty of a criminal offence of this nature. It suggests either an indifference to one's children, or incompetence at parenting, which in the case of the blameless parent will be unwarranted.'

9. *London Borough of Sutton v S*: Admn 26 October 2004 Oct 2004

The Borough appealed against acquittal by the magistrates of the defendant parent accused of failure to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school. The child had attended only irregularly. The parents had contacted the school and authorities and sought help and co-operated with the Borough, but their daughter had been unco-operative and eventually abusive. The appeal failed. The very strict nature of the offence under section 444(1) is and has for some considerable time been considered of great importance to support the duty placed by section 7 of the Education Act 1996 upon parents. However, the case of *Barnfather* had emphasised the need for the use of discretion by authorities. It may have been proper to bring proceedings before the magistrates, but it should have been obvious that the appeal had no prospects of success and could only cause further distress for the family involved. In essence this was a question of fact, and the court had rejected the evidence of the Education Welfare Officer. The court considered whether, the parents having been found not guilty of the greater offence, the magistrates should have convicted them under the lesser offence, saying: 'It is important to stress that the public interest often requires that a person charged with a more serious offence should, if that is not made out, nonetheless be convicted of the lesser offence, if that is made out. The interests of justice are not served by

acquittals in such circumstances. However, the test is the interests of justice.'  
The matter should not be remitted.

**Central  
Bedfordshire**

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