

## Attendance strategies that have helped schools significantly reduce absence rates of pupil premium children

### **1) Good / outstanding teaching and learning that makes pupils want to come to school.**

Very positive relationships in the classroom with high quality support for those that need extra help, so all can achieve success. Varied and exciting enrichment programmes. Zero tolerance for bullying and good procedures for dealing with it. Good communications with parents and carers.

### **2) Very high expectations! Encourage all to aim for a perfect 100% attendance rate every week.**

**Early intervention when attendance drops.** It is no use waiting till attendance drops below 90% (persistent absence threshold); make phone calls and send letters if the absence rate is above the national average for all pupils. There are still big gaps nationally between the attendance of disadvantaged and not disadvantaged, so early action needs to be taken re your PP children. Also set yourself ambitious targets eg for the absence rate of PP children to be the same as non PP children and better than the 2017 national average.

### **2016 national average absence rates**

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
<b>All pupils</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>FSM</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>
<b>All pupils --- persistent absentees (10% or more)</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>
<b>FSM --- persistent absentees</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>21.6%</b>

You are at risk of having Ofsted judge “Personal development, behaviour and welfare” as inadequate if **“attendance is consistently low for all pupils or groups of pupils and shows little sign of sustained improvement.”**

**3) Start early with your youngest children eg 3 year olds or EYFS. A Northumberland First School has introduced Early Bird opening 8.30 to 8.40 am to encourage better punctuality and a more purposeful start to the school day.** The school monitors the arrival times of PP pupils and encourages parents and carers to attend “share and stay” sessions once a week, so they are more aware of the learning that takes place. PP pupils change reading books and access additional learning support. Early Bird attendance awards (teddy bears and colourful certificates) are popular with the children and valued by parents.

### **4) Source motivational attendance awards and invite a local company to sponsor them.**

Ensure parents and pupils know about them and publish them on your website. Weekly attendance awards for classes. Attendance published in weekly newsletter and is a regular feature in assemblies. Attendance figures displayed in classrooms and assembly hall—similar format to football league tables seems to work well with the older children. Celebrate good attendance at every opportunity. Example of a termly award scheme:-

Improved Attendance Award for poor attenders who manage a 5% or 10% improvement on the previous terms attendance rate.

Bronze Award for outstanding attendance for 1 term. Attendance prize.

Silver Award for outstanding attendance for 2 terms. Attendance prize.

Gold Award for outstanding attendance for 3 terms. Attendance prize and raffle ticket for grand annual prize draw for a superb prize.

Local employers who sponsor the awards invited to present attendance awards and talk about the

importance of good attendance at school and work. Brief employers well to ensure key messages are what you need and pupil friendly language used. Guest employers will also help you to raise aspirations.

**5) Attendance review conversations and/or support meetings for PA pupils and those at risk of becoming PA.** Once again early intervention essential and the emphasis needs to be on the lack of progress in reading, writing and maths. Parents meet with HT, Governor, EWO and their son/daughter. Barriers to good attendance discussed and strategies to remove them agreed. Contract drawn up that includes personalised support. Medical appointments to be evidenced.

**6) Provide parents/pupils with an information leaflet linking good attendance with good exam results SAT's, GCSE and A level.** Focus on the dangers of lost learning time and include colourful graphs. Stop authorising holidays and do not allow sixth formers to self-certificate or leave the premises during study time. One secondary encouraged subject leaders to phone parents to emphasise the number of lost hours of learning in their subject and how this was impacting on exam chances.

**7) Make pupils and parents aware that financial support is always available when discussing trips and extra- curricular opportunities, so pupils do not stay at home on trip and/or enrichment days.**

Include a paragraph at the end of letters sent home that states:-

“no child from this school will miss out on any key educational trips and opportunities because of money. If you are unable to pay for this trip please contact (*named person*) and our school will make sure that your child is able to attend.”

Also, provide packed lunches for pupils on Free School Meals on trips.

**8) One secondary successfully raised the attendance of GCSE students with poor attendance by introducing Governor Attendance Panels from January onwards.** The governors who served on the panels were employers who could emphasise the effect of poor employment on job prospects and college places or parent governors use to dealing with difficult teenagers.

**9) A large secondary with a high number of pupil premium students has appointed a part time “Medical Needs Officer” to improve the attendance of disadvantaged children with care plans.**

**10) Do research via pupil voice and/or a parents group on the barriers to good attendance. Also consider how you can reduce fixed term exclusions of pupil premium students to aid learning.**

**11) One secondary improved behaviour in classrooms and reduced exclusions of pupil premium students by :-**

- **Creating a welfare team (intervention HLTA's , part time Medical Needs Officer and a behaviour lead) to help them remove barriers to attendance**
- **Introducing a text messaging service for parents re behaviour issues/management.**
- **Improving Career Information, Advice and guidance.** Senior leaders closely monitored the quality of the CIAG to ensure it raised aspiration and motivation levels.

The impact of these strategies was that behaviour in lessons improved to at least good and was sometimes outstanding. Fixed term exclusions increased at first, but have now started to reduce significantly.