

Manchester Attendance Strategy



1 Overall Purpose Of The Strategy

- 1.1** Manchester is a vibrant and economically successful city. In order to benefit from the opportunities the city offers, it is important that children and young people are successful at school, leaving with the skills and qualifications that enable them to secure employment, continue with their education or access appropriate training courses. Ensuring that children go to school every day will help achieve this ambition.
- 1.2** Children's Services work in an integrated way with schools, settings and partners to secure positive outcomes for children and young people in the five Every Child Matters outcome areas: Staying Safe, Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Making a Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Wellbeing.
- 1.3** There is a strong correlation between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children. It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children and young people. Poor school attendance is a recurrent theme in Serious Case Reviews undertaken by Manchester Safeguarding Children Board. It is therefore important to ensure that schools and settings offer a safe environment, positive relationships, high-quality teaching and learning, and opportunities to develop social and emotional skills.
- 1.4** The Attendance Strategy has been developed to help the Local Authority, schools, settings and other services work in a more coherent way, making the best use of resources available, in order to ensure that:
- All children and young people can make the most of the opportunities provided by attending school
- Standards continue to rise and improvements in attainment are sustained
- Overall attendance improves and levels of persistent absence reduce
 - Children are safeguarded because they attend school regularly
 - Parents understand the contribution they can make to their child's wellbeing, achievement and good attendance.
- 1.5** This Strategy document:
- Describes the Manchester context
 - Identifies the role of the Local Authority, schools, settings and partners in improving attendance
 - Describes the key strands of the Strategy.
- 1.6** Related Strategies that have a direct impact on school attendance include:
- The Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy
 - The Parenting Strategy
 - The Extended Schools Strategy
 - The Community Cohesion Strategy
 - The Crime and Disorder Strategy.



2 The Manchester Context

2.1 While Manchester has a vibrant city centre, it has 25 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Subsequently, issues such as poor physical and mental health, complex family issues and generational unemployment are often underlying causes of poor school attendance. While ensuring that regular school attendance of pupils is recognised as a parent's responsibility, in cases where additional needs are identified, schools and services will need to work together to support children and their families.

2.2 Despite the efforts made to improve pupil attendance, this continues to be a significant challenge for many schools in Manchester. Manchester's figures for overall absence are higher than the national average in primary schools and secondary schools and higher than in other local authorities that are statistically very similar to Manchester. The issue is one that affects secondary

and primary schools alike. Our children also have some of the highest rates of persistent absence (attendance below 80 per cent) in the country (Appendix A).

2.3 Improving attendance and reducing absence, especially persistent absence, is a priority for Manchester and critical to the city's ambitions to raise standards, narrow the attainment gap and safeguard all children.

2.4 The key strands of the Strategy are described and developed in Section 3. They can be summarised as Strand 1: parents; Strand 2: attendance and school improvement; Strand 3: the integration of attendance within Children's Services; Strand 4: data and the use of data; and Strand 5: developing the skills of the workforce. Emotional health and wellbeing is a theme that underpins all strands within the Strategy.



3.1 Strand One: Parents

- 3.1.1** For the purpose of this document, the term parent includes carers and all those with parental responsibility.
- 3.1.2** Parents have the responsibility and therefore a vital role to play in ensuring that their child attends school regularly, is on time and is ready to learn. Engaging positively with parents at all stages of their child's education is a key driver for the success of the Attendance Strategy.
- 3.1.3** Positive relationships between the school and parents will help to ensure good attendance. Schools need to be accessible and develop a wide range of effective strategies to ensure that relationships are built with all parents. This can include the use of Family SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning), a family or parent support worker, training for school staff and regular consultation with parents.
- 3.1.4** Through a continued focus on developing positive and responsible parenting outlined in Manchester's Parenting Strategy, parents will be provided with high-quality information through The Family Information Service, libraries, health centres, early years settings and schools. This will include information about the importance of their child attending school. The Local Authority is working in partnership with schools to give clear messages to parents and is developing a range of guidance relating to school attendance.
- 3.1.5** Poor school attendance is a safeguarding matter and where parents are not able to ensure that their child attends school regularly, additional and targeted short-term support will be required; this might take the form of a Parenting Course. This level of support should be offered at the earliest opportunity when concerns first emerge. Where appropriate, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) should be used to assess and identify appropriate multi-agency support for the child and family. This will help to identify the underlying causes of poor school attendance and ensure that appropriate solutions are identified and parents and pupils are supported to effectively participate in this process.
- 3.1.6** The Education Act 1996 places a legal responsibility on parents to ensure their children receive a suitable education and attend school regularly if their child is a registered pupil. Where appropriate, schools and the Local Authority will move to more assertive intervention. Schools will be supported and training will be provided for schools deciding to use parenting contracts and penalty notices, and in preparing cases for prosecution.



3.2 Strand Two: Attendance and School Improvement

Schools

3.2.1 Schools are the key universal children's service that children and young people experience and that can positively influence their lives and emotional wellbeing. A positive ethos, the quality of the curriculum, the organisation and engaging delivery of teaching and learning all contribute to school being a safe and secure environment and a place children want to be. Building strong relationships with parents and engaging them in their child's education will also help secure good attendance. Regular attendance at school makes a critical contribution to safeguarding children and securing good outcomes. We want our schools to promote a culture of good attendance and to work in partnership with children and young people, their families, Children's Services and other agencies to improve attendance.

3.2.2 Providing children with the opportunities to develop positive social and emotional skills and resilience is crucial in addressing individual needs and achieving the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. Research increasingly demonstrates that positive emotional health and wellbeing are key factors in affecting social development, school attendance and educational attainment. Embedding programmes such as SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning), UK Resilience and Healthy Schools will support school improvement.

3.2.3 Schools have a key role to play in the early identification of patterns of poor attendance and for taking action at an individual pupil, cohort, departmental and whole-school level. Systems and procedures for encouraging regular attendance should be clearly set out in each school's Attendance Policy and make clear links with the Continuum of Need Framework, Learning, Behaviour, Health, Anti-bullying and Emotional Wellbeing Policies. The Attendance Policy should identify how individual cases are managed, how the school works proactively with parents and pupils to ensure that they understand why attendance is important, as well as include an escalation of interventions that will be used.

3.2.4 The Local Authority strongly recommends that all schools adopt a 'Distributed Leadership' model of managing attendance, with all staff having a clear role and responsibility for improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. Staff should be supported to implement this model through professional development opportunities, such as reflective practice, coaching and the shadowing of others. This approach also includes:

- Identifying a senior member of staff as the Attendance Leader
- Identifying specific groups of PA (persistently absent) pupils
- Completing the National Strategies self-evaluation framework each half-term
- Identifying specific actions for each half-term
- Implementing a scale of escalating interventions that are understood by pupils, their families and staff
- Monitoring the impact of actions taken.



The Local Authority

3.2.5 Through the process of self-evaluation the school will identify priorities, which will be validated by the School Improvement Partner (SIP). These will include targets for reducing overall absence and persistent absence where the school has been identified as a priority school. The Integrated Support Plan (InSup) is the tool by which Local Authority support is agreed with schools following school self-evaluation. There is an expectation that in schools where attendance is identified as a priority, Local Authority support will be recorded in the InSup.

3.2.6 The Local Authority has a clear role, through the School Effectiveness Officers, to challenge and support Headteachers and senior leaders to ensure that the measures taken to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence are effective.

3.2.7 The Local Authority ensures that the Attendance Team (Education Services) efficiently and effectively discharges the Local Authority statutory functions relating to attendance. These include:

- Analysing data from schools, providing reports for the Director of Children's Services and others, reporting on the number of penalty notices issued, etc.
- Prosecuting cases for non-attendance in line with legal and statutory requirements
- Executing post-prosecution interventions, parenting orders and monitoring conditional discharges
- Conducting attendance audits annually
- Providing training on legal and statutory requirements
- Implementing Child Employment and Entertainment functions
- Developing and co-ordinating city-wide campaigns and initiatives
- Co-ordinating truancy sweeps and liaising with relevant agencies.

3.2.8 The Attendance Team is responsible for undertaking annual audits of pupil registers to ensure compliance and the integrity of attendance data for the pupil census. Schools will receive a minimum of four weeks' notice prior to the audit and will be provided with a self-evaluation tool to review their practice. On completion of the audit a final report outlining the findings and any recommendations will be sent to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, School Effectiveness Officer and the Education Services Management Team.

3.2.9 The Local Authority will support schools in taking a rigorous line in reducing absence. While the predominant focus is always to build strong positive relationships between parents, pupils and education providers, the Local Authority will prosecute parents/carers where it is deemed appropriate.

3.2.10 Support for schools for learning, behaviour and attendance is available through Traded Services. Schools can commission bespoke support using the school's budget. Examples include:

- Consultancy and assessments
- Developing preventative early intervention strategies
- Support and advice on establishing and maintaining effective systems and interventions to improve school attendance and reduce persistent absence
- Support to develop processes involved in issuing penalty notices
- Guidance on standard procedures to ensure case management processes are robust, for example, how to record actions taken in individual cases to build up a pre-court file. Schools can either prepare cases for court themselves or commission support from Traded Services.

3.3 Strand Three: Integration of Attendance Work Within Children's Services and Partner Agencies

3.3.1 Through the implementation of this Attendance Strategy, Children's Services will take a lead in aligning the work of services, schools and other partners to improve attendance. Everyone who works with children, young people and their families has a role to play. These roles should complement each other and work together to support raised attendance.

3.3.2 Our determination to improve school attendance will impact on the way that resources are aligned and the Children and Young People's Plan resourcing strategy will be informed by attendance priorities.

3.3.3 The Education Service, through the School Effectiveness Officer and the Core Attendance Team, will support and challenge schools in relation to improving attendance. Establishing and maintaining good attendance is a school effectiveness issue and is a critical element of the standards and school improvement agenda.

3.3.4 The work of the Children's Services District Teams supports the drive to improve attendance. Staff are aware of the importance of children and young people attending school and understand the issues that contribute to poor attendance and persistent absence.

3.3.5 All staff within Children's Services should work within the Continuum of Need Framework and use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to co-ordinate services around the child where multi-agency support is required.

3.3.6 The District Teams (health, children and families and education) have a clear understanding about the attendance priorities within their locality/district, and district plans will address attendance. Integrating services can have a positive impact on the quality of support for families with a range of additional needs that impact negatively on their child's education and attendance.

3.3.7 Social workers and other professionals who have responsibility for providing oversight of 'Children in Need', 'Children in Need of Protection' and 'Looked after Children (LAC)' ensure that securing regular school attendance is addressed at case planning

reviews, care planning meetings and at LAC statutory reviews. Staff in children's homes and foster parents are expected to support and promote school attendance.



3.3.8 Services and key partners that have the potential to impact on attendance outcomes include the following:

Sure Start Centres (Early Years)

Engagement with young children and their families through a local Sure Start Centre is a key opportunity to work with parents to ensure that they understand the importance of their role in ensuring good attendance at school. Staff working in these provisions are well placed to support parents and to emphasise the crucial role parents play in their child's learning and development. When children start school, children's centre staff can support the transition, working with the school staff to ensure a positive start, which includes good attendance.

NHS Manchester

Health Services and Children's Services work closely together in the context of developing integrated approaches within districts. All health professionals have an important role to play in supporting good attendance and challenging reasons for poor or non-attendance. Consideration should always be given to making routine medical appointments for children out of school hours. The Public Health Service supports schools in achieving the National Healthy School Standard and curriculum development, eg. Sex and Relationship Education.

Extended Schools

Parent Support Advisers based within the Extended Schools Team will support parents, including where there are concerns about poor attendance.

The Youth Service

The Integrated Youth Support and Targeted Youth Support programmes support the development of enriching experiences, which will enable young people to develop better outcomes, including positive behaviours in relation to attendance.

Connexions

The Connexions Service supports young people to successfully engage in education, employment and training.

The voluntary and community sector

The voluntary and community sector works with many children and young people, including those who are not fully engaged with the education process. This resource is often not fully recognised and their membership on the District Panels provides an opportunity to co-ordinate resources and interventions on a more targeted basis to meet identified district and locality needs.

Youth Offending Service

Persistent non-attendance heightens the possibility of young people being involved in criminal activity. Closer liaison between YOS, Education Services and schools can ensure that each young person known to YOS is afforded the best opportunity to attend school or a suitable alternative provision.

Greater Manchester Police

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) is committed to making Manchester safer: respecting, reassuring and responding to local communities. The police work with partners to identify those young people failing to attend school and who are in danger of becoming involved in crime. The Safer Schools Partnership places officers in schools and has helped to build the relationships with young people and address some attendance issues.

3.4 Strand Four: Data and the Use of Data

3.4.1 The Local Authority will work with all schools to ensure that data returns are both timely and accurate.

3.4.2 Data is available to schools and the Local Authority at school, cohort and individual child level. Through improved analysis and better understanding of data by individual schools and by the Local Authority, patterns and trends will be identified and interventions planned. The data will be shared with all partners.

3.4.3 The main focus within this strategy is to ensure that schools understand and own their data, analyse it accurately, identify trends and compare it with the national picture, have a clear picture of the reasons for absence, understand their attendance profile, and have in place actions for improvement. The Local Authority will also analyse school data and work with schools and partners to address issues raised by the analysis.

3.4.4 To improve the accuracy and quality of the data set, the 'ONE' system is being implemented across the whole of Education Services as a major tool for capturing the support provided by the Local Authority for schools (using the Education Plan Monitoring module) and for individual children (through the Children's Services Support module).



3.5 Strand Five: Developing the Skills of the Workforce

- 3.5.1** We need to ensure that staff in schools, settings and District Teams have the knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the needs of our young people. They also need to have opportunities to problem-solve, reflect on practice, coach and shadow others.
- 3.5.2** Training on communication with parents will be developed and made available for school staff, particularly in relation to behaviour and attendance issues. Other training to be developed and made available for staff will include learning from Serious Case Reviews linked to poor school attendance.
- 3.5.3** In schools, staff with lead responsibility for attendance may wish to obtain the qualification provided by the National Programme of Specialist Leaders – Behaviour and Attendance (NPSL-BA). The Local Authority is committed to supporting the continued roll-out of this training programme. Local Authority staff working with children and young people will be trained to meet the National Occupational Standards requirements.
- 3.5.4** Through Behaviour and Attendance networks, the Local Authority, working in partnership with schools, will provide information for School Attendance Leaders that will enable them to continue to develop their skills and understanding, as well as share effective practice between schools within and outside the Local Authority. Schools will be provided with further training to support them with the effective use and analysis of their data. A range of training courses for Learning, Behaviour and Attendance is also available for schools through Traded Services.
- 3.5.5** Training for Governors will be provided by the School Effectiveness Officer and individual governing bodies will be able to request bespoke training in relation to attendance.
- 3.5.6** Training for staff in District Teams (health and children and families), staff in children’s homes and carers of Looked After Children will be provided on an ongoing basis.
- 3.5.7** A systematic training programme for staff in other services will be available to ensure our partners have sufficient knowledge about attendance to offer advice and/or support as appropriate.



4 Monitoring the Attendance Strategy and Action Plan

4.1 Not every part of the city and every school require the same level of support to improve school attendance. Action will be carefully targeted to have the maximum effect through the deployment of staff and other resources. An Action Plan has been developed and will be updated on a regular basis. This will address the strands identified in the National Overall Absence/Persistent Absence Evaluation framework.

4.2 The Attendance Board will monitor the Strategy and Action Plan. The Deputy Director of Children's Services will chair the Board. Membership includes representation from Chief Executive's Department, Children's Services, NHS Manchester, schools, Greater Manchester Police and the voluntary sector. Report on progress is made to the Children's Board.

Appendix A Attendance Data 2005-2009

Attendance data from academic years 2005/06, 2006/07 and data for 2007/08 that relates to the autumn and spring terms are shown in the table below.

	Overall absence 2005/06 %	Overall absence 2006/07 %	Overall 2007/08 %	Persistent absence 2006/07 %	Persistent absence 2007/08 %
Manchester Primary	6.93	6.11	6.74	3.5	4.8
National Primary	5.76	5.18	–	1.8	2.4
Manchester Secondary	11.37	10.52	10.62	12.5	12.8
National Secondary	8.1	7.86	–	6.7	6.3
Combined Primary and Secondary	8.86	7.97	8.35	7.3	8.2

For 2008/09 the DCSF has defined as 'priority secondary schools' those secondary schools with 7% or more persistent absence and as a result the number of persistent absence 'priority secondary schools' has increased from 15 to 18 schools. The national average for persistent absence was 6.3% in 2007/08. By 2010/11 the national target is that no local authority will have more than 5% of its secondary pupils defined as 'persistent absentees'. To ensure the Local Authority works towards achieving this target, the trajectory target for 2008/09 is 7.92% and 7% for 2009/10.

For 2008/09 DCSF have identified 112 'priority primary schools' in Manchester – these are schools where persistent absence for 2006/07 was higher than the national average of 2.4%.

