



Leicestershire County Council Attendance Strategy 2026-2029

“Every Day Counts”

A partnership approach to improving attendance

Introduction

The **Attendance Strategy 2026-29** for Leicestershire sets out our vision for school attendance in the county.

We recognise that all children and young people in Leicestershire deserve access to a high-quality education and we are committed to improving attendance so that every child can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

Alongside this we aspire to ensure that Leicestershire is a great place to grow up and for our children and young people to thrive and go on to lead lives of choice and opportunity. A great education is key to achieving that vision.

Improving school attendance is a shared priority across education, health, and social care in our local area. Regular attendance is not only a legal requirement but a fundamental building block for children's academic success, wellbeing, and future life chances.

It is well established that children and young people who are not attending school are at increased risk of harm and may miss opportunities available to their peers. The negative effects extend beyond childhood, affecting individuals throughout their lives and positively influencing society as a whole. This strategy serves as a call to action, urging collective efforts to address the various causes and consequences of children missing education and to promote and support regular attendance for all pupils.

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) believes that inclusion is a dynamic process which involves challenging and redefining culture, policies, and practice to ensure each child is valued, has a sense of belonging and is enabled to achieve their full potential.



Every day a child misses' school is a missed opportunity to learn, build relationships, and access support. Persistent absence is often a symptom of wider challenges—ranging from unmet additional needs and mental health issues to family hardship.

Our aim is that all schools across the county will become inclusive schools and will work to promote the benefit of regular school attendance – ensuring that all children and young people belong. This strategy should be read in conjunction with the [LCC Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029](#).

Leicestershire Schools will be encouraged to ask themselves to what extent do their pupils feel recognised, welcomed and expected in school and whether this contributes to sustained presence.

Embedding a sense of belonging for our vulnerable pupils is a challenge. However, LCC, working in partnership with schools/settings and other agencies, hopes to build stronger working relationships and create a tangible inclusive attendance ethos across all schools.

It requires school leaders to move beyond talking about attendance percentage figures and instead evidence conditions that generate daily presence at school.

Evidence nationally and locally shows that attendance difficulties are frequently linked to unmet special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), particularly for neurodivergent children and young people, including autistic children and those with sensory processing differences or anxiety-based needs.

While some pupils are identified under SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) or PML (Profound & Multiple Learning difficulties) categories, this strategy recognises that neurodivergent children may present with emotional distress, avoidance or anxiety as a response to unmet communication, interaction or sensory needs. Recognising neurodiversity and ensuring attendance approaches are rooted in understanding, inclusion and meeting individual need rather than compliance alone.

It is vital that Leicestershire schools strike a balance between recognising where children and young people have specific and identified needs that mean that they cannot attend school due to ill-health whilst encouraging resilience so that minor ailments do not disrupt regular and consistent school attendance for young people.

The **Working Together to Improve School Attendance** government guidance emphasises a ‘Support First’ ethos, encouraging the education setting, parents/carers and other agencies to work together to understand why a child is not attending school and put in place effective solutions to improve attendance. This aligns well with the national **Families First Partnership Programme** which heralds important changes in the way we will work as a multi-agency team around children and families from the earliest point with families and their networks playing a central role.

It will support LCC, schools and supporting agencies to become a more collaborative system, and to provide the multi-agency support needed by those children and young people facing the more complex barriers with severe absence.

This strategy details our core principles and strategic aims for the county and the improvements that we plan to make with our partners so that attendance at school is prioritised by all agencies.

It is designed to build on our existing partnership arrangements, to work together from the earliest opportunities to help parents/carers/carers meet this legal duty, secure in the knowledge that their child is understood and well supported.

Our Vision

Leicestershire County Council’s vision is:

“To ensure every child is supported in attending school regularly through a collaborative and child-centred approach that reflects their lived experiences, removes barriers, promotes wellbeing and ensures they belong.”

With this shared vision, we will endeavour to work together effectively to support children and young people to thrive at school and reach their potential.

Our Strategy will aim to:

- Embed a culture of high attendance across all schools and services;
- Embed curiosity around attendance across all services;
- Strengthen early identification and intervention pathways;
- Ensure children and young people can receive an inclusive, flexible education that meets their particular needs and that they belong;
- Empower families and communities to be active partners in attendance;

- Hold all stakeholders accountable through clear roles, responsibilities, and performance indicators

This strategy should be read alongside statutory guidance documents on improving school attendance, safeguarding, children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and elective home education.

The strategy should also be read in conjunction with [Leicestershire Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2026 – 2029](#) which sets out the following priorities for every child in the county:-

To support children and young people to Build Strong Foundations: -

- Focusing on development, readiness for learning and learning as a driver of wellbeing for all children and young people
- Working in partnership to offer support and opportunities to children in their own communities, to help them reach their full potential, and transition well into adulthood
- Working in partnership to identify those children and young people who would benefit from support and provide a shared response to them

To support children and young people to Be Safe and Belong:-

- Working with families to ensure risk is understood and reduced, and targeted support is provided at the right time, in the right place by the right service and agency
- Developing and using partnerships to prioritise safety for children and young people and ensuring it is understood that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Creating an understanding of "belonging" across partnerships so that children feel they matter and can maximise positive opportunities and links in their families, early learning and education settings and communities
- Empowering families to build positive relationships and support systems to create safety for children to live within their family or family network

To support children and young people to Enjoy and Achieve: -

- Ensuring children and young people have access within their communities to good quality early learning and education that enables them to achieve their full potential

- Developing a shared understanding of the impact of inequalities and trauma across partnerships, and a shared approach to supporting vulnerable children

National Context

National research tells us that there is a strong correlation between poor attendance and under-attainment at school. Missing school for just a few days a month can seriously affect a student's chance of achieving well.

Children and young people with little to no absence are 1.3 times more likely to achieve a Level 4 or above at GCSE and 3.1 times more likely to achieve a level 5 at GCSE. Of pupils with absence rates over 50% only 3% manage to achieve 5 or more GCSE passes.

Regular absence is also associated with a number of risky behaviours. This includes gang membership, crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

A study by **Public First, 2023 - Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis – Dr Sally Burtonshaw and Ed Dorrell – September 2023** - describes school attendance in England as being in crisis and seeks to understand the complex push and pull factors that influence it. The report acknowledges there is “no quick fix - schools or single agencies cannot fix attendance on their own. They need the support of government and the voluntary sector to effect cultural change and make participation irresistible. Most of all they need the support of parents.”

We need to improve joined up working between families, partners and agencies if we are to deliver sustainable improvements.

Overall absence in schools has risen more than 50% since 2019. Persistent absence rates – when pupils miss 10% or more of sessions – have almost doubled. The challenge for schools and the Local Authority is to return to pre-pandemic levels with regard to attendance.

The latest accredited official statistics for an academic year show that in **2023/24 1.48 million pupils** were missing half a day or more a week compared to **771k pupils in 2018/19. 171,269 pupils** were missing more than half of their education in **2023/24** compared to **60,247 pupils in 2018/19.**

We know that some of our most vulnerable children and young people with social workers and children and young people with additional needs are

more likely to be absent from school and we recognise this is having a detrimental impact on their progress and attainment.

In **2023/24 pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)** had an average absence rate of **11.0%** compared to **5.8% for non-FSM eligible pupils**.

Pupils with an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) had an average absence rate of **12.6%** compared to **6.3% for pupils with no recorded Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision**.

Schools and services are expected to consider whether declining attendance is an indicator of unmet SEND, school-related distress or environmental barriers, and ensure appropriate assessment, support and reasonable adjustments are explored alongside families before escalation to enforcement.

Recognising neurodiversity and ensuring attendance approaches are rooted in understanding, inclusion and meeting individual need, rather than compliance alone, will underpin all-inclusive practice across Leicestershire

In the **2023/24 Pupils with a social worker** had an average absence rate of **18.6%** compared to the **average for all pupils at 7.1%**.

Good attendance starts in the early years. Without it, children and young people miss out on friendships, routines, and the building blocks of learning.

As they move through the school system the numbers of children and young people who are persistently absent grow resulting in a significant number of persistently absent young people in the final and arguably, the most critical, years of secondary school.

By the time young people enter their mid-teens low attendance has become entrenched and is difficult to impact.

It is recognised that **early intervention by schools and other agencies** is key to addressing issues with regard to attendance.

This Attendance Strategy has an **early help and prevention** approach at its heart.

Feedback from schools and services in Leicestershire highlighted that effective attendance improvement relies on consistent engagement from all partners. The strategy therefore commits to strengthening multi-agency accountability, ensuring that attendance is recognised as a shared

responsibility across Health, Social Care, SENA, Family Help, CAMHS and education services.

The early help approach enables local services, including schools, to quickly and holistically address challenges faced by children and young people and families. It ensures factors leading to school absence that include—emotional, social, economic, and academic—are considered, so that schools and agencies can work together to identify and reduce barriers to regular attendance.

Leicestershire County Council recognises the importance of taking a consistent, proportionate, child-centred approach to consider how the child's needs can be met and how they can be supported to return to full-time education. Leicester County Council hears that there is a need for improved consistency from partner agencies to ensure that no child's attendance is compromised by a lack of coordinated support from the wider system.

There is also a recognition that behaviour, including behaviour relating to attendance at school, is a form of communication, and thus it is essential that professionals work together to understand what a child may be communicating in their pattern of attendance or absence, and seek to meet their needs.

When there are specific problems with attendance, the local authority and schools will work closely to support families and children.

We will take a carefully managed graduated approach and seek to understand, encourage and support children and young people to attend school every day.

Local context

The landscape is ever-changing and ever-more challenging with currently over 300 schools, academies, specialist and independent schools in Leicestershire that educate more than 100,000 children and young people (Nursery to Year 13).

Leicestershire is currently and historically performing better than both the national and statistical neighbours but, in line with national figures, we have seen an increase in the number of persistently and severely absent pupils in our primary and secondary schools since 2018/19.

Table showing Leicestershire's annual school attendance performance in 2018/19 and 2023/24, with comparisons to Statistical Neighbour authorities within the Midlands region, and the England Average

Area	Attendance Rate (%)		Unauthorised Absence Rate (%)		Persistent Absence Rate (%)		Severe Absence Rate (%)	
	2018/19	2023/24	2018/19	2023/24	2018/19	2023/24	2018/19	2023/24
Leicestershire	95.5%	93.3%	1.1%	1.9%	9.6%	17.1%	0.8%	2.1%
Nottinghamshire	95.6%	93.0%	1.5%	2.5%	9.4%	18.6%	0.7%	2.3%
Warwickshire	95.3%	92.4%	1.0%	2.1%	10.1%	20.3%	0.9%	3.0%
England Average	95.3%	92.9%	1.4%	2.5%	10.9%	20.0%	0.8%	2.3%

Leicestershire is performing better than the national average in terms of attendance and persistent absence which reflects a determined and shared priority to improve and have high aspirations for our children and young people.

Other key data insights for Leicestershire:

- Leicestershire's cohort of Children in Need or on a Child Protection Plan attending state funded schools within or outside of LCC have absence rates lower than for this same cohort nationally, absence rates for Leicestershire being 15.1% in 2023/24 compared to 15.9% nationally, but significantly higher than the national average, 7.1% being the national absence rate for children and young people not on a plan or a child in need
- Pupils eligible for a FSM, Pupil Premium funding, or having an EHCP also have the highest absence rates (11.5% for children and young people with an EHCP). Most recently over 5% higher than the average pupil in Leicestershire. For deprived pupils, absence rates in Leicestershire have been historically and consistently higher than for their national peers
- Severe absenteeism (defined as missing 50% or more of possible sessions) is showing the greatest performance divergence
- Leicestershire's overall absence data both now and in the past is lower than the national average. This is driven by the attendance of primary and special schools which are better than national average. Secondary school attendance is generally similar to the national average so would be an improvement priority for Leicestershire
- Pupils with PML (Profound & Multiple Learning difficulties), and SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) primary SEN needs are more likely to have poorer attendance than other SEN need categories

- Leicestershire's worst attenders by year group are Year 11 students
- The absence rate gap for pupils living in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived has widened

We need to meet this challenge urgently working together with schools in the county, other services in LCC and external agencies.

In 2018/19, 6.2% of children and young people in Leicestershire primaries were persistently absent compared to 11.2% of children and young people in 2023/24

In 2018/19, 0.34% of children and young people in Leicestershire primaries were severely absent compared to 0.68% of children and young people in 2023/24

In 2018/19, 13.6% of children and young people in Leicestershire secondaries were persistently absent compared to 23.6% of children and young people in 2023/24

In 2018/19, 1.37% of children and young people in Leicestershire primaries were severely absent compared to 3.77% of children and young people in 2023/24

	Leicestershire Absence Rates 2023/24	National Absence Rates 2023/24
Overall absence in primary schools	4.90%	5.50%
Overall absence in secondary schools	8.80%	8.90%
Overall absence primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data)	6.60%	7.00%
Persistent absence in primary schools	11.20%	14.60%
Persistent absence in secondary schools	23.60%	25.60%
Persistent absence in primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data)	16.80%	19.60%
Severely absent in primary schools	0.70%	0.90%
Severely absent in secondary schools	3.80%	3.80%
Severe absence in primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data)	2.10%	2.20%
Primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data) Absence for pupils with SEND:		
SEN Support	10.4%	10.2%
EHCP	11.5%	12.5%

Primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data) Persistent absence for pupils with SEND:		
SEN Support	28.4%	30.1%
EHCP	31.5%	34.6
Primary and secondary schools combined (not including special school data) Severe absence for pupils with SEND:		
SEN Support	5.0%	4.3%
EHCP	6.8%	7.3%

In the 2024/25 academic year using the latest validated data, up to the end of the Spring Term, the overall attendance rate across state-funded schools in Leicestershire stood at 93.7%, with an overall absence rate of 6.3%. Of this, 4.7% is attributed to authorised absences and 1.6% to unauthorised absences. Notably, illness accounts for 58% of all absences highlighting the need for integrated health and education responses.

Therefore, the most common reason for absence is illness. Whilst attendance codes for absence from school due to illness do not currently differentiate between physical and mental health, it is evident from local data, that the majority of these cases are for reasons relating to mental health, and that these figures are higher than ever. As well as the difficulties this creates for children and young people accessing education, the knock-on effect is a rising demand for mental health services.

Approaches to supporting attendance where anxiety is present should be informed by current research, trauma-informed practice and an understanding of sensory and environmental barriers. Interventions should avoid reliance on attendance targets or exposure-based approaches alone, without addressing underlying need

Persistent absence remains a concern in Leicestershire, with 14.9% of pupils classified as persistently absent, defined as missing 10% or more of possible sessions.

In Leicestershire 2.11% of pupils are classified as severely absent, defined as missing 50% or more of possible sessions and of serious concern. This compares to 1.99% for the same period last year and is 167% higher than in 2018/19.

These figures underscore the urgency of coordinated, proactive efforts to identify and support at-risk pupils and families - ensuring that every severely absent child in the county has a co-ordinated circle of support around them all working towards of mutual aim of improving that child's attendance.

Whilst we are aware that this is a nationwide issue, we have to recognise that changes must be put in place to turn this tide within our own county.

There are particular challenges around reducing persistent and severe absence for certain pupil groups, particularly those of secondary school age, children and young people with additional needs and children and young people with a social worker.

The push and pull factors contributing to pupil attendance and absence are wide and complex and understanding local and individual context is critical.

[ImpactEd, July 2024](#) identifies a range of emerging themes around the challenges pupils and schools face. These include:

- Pupils not having a sense of belonging and/or feeling safe at school;
- Levels of anxiety and pupil wellbeing associated with attending school;
- The importance of successful transitions in supporting good attendance, particularly for pupils with additional needs and those transitioning from Years 6-7 and Years 7-8;
- Consequences and sanctions for unauthorised attendance being understood but having limited impact or meaning for some groups of pupils

Furthermore, it appears that these are being exacerbated yet more by the current cost of living crisis and what is deemed to be a '*seismic shift in parental attitudes to school attendance that is going to take a monumental, multi-service effort to change*' ([Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis](#))

Our strategy will be driven by data so that the right support reaches those that need it the most including schools/providers. As well as data it will also be informed by the collective input of LA service providers, schools, parents/carers and external agencies.

Key Roles

Everyone will have a role to play within our strategy to ensure that the above aims are met. The Key Roles are as follows:

1. Role of the Council

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal responsibility in respect of their child's education.

The key principle which underpins the local authority's procedures for managing attendance is the belief that regular and punctual attendance is the key to academic and social development. This will in turn safeguard vulnerable young people and will improve their life chances. The Local Authority recognise regular school attendance is a key protective factor.

Attendance and inclusion therefore are key priorities for our work with children, young people, families, partners, and schools to embed the concept of early intervention and prevention and keeping children and young people safe.

The Attendance team under the Inclusion Service will take the lead role on behalf of schools in utilising the legal powers available.

If a parent fails to ensure that their child attends school regularly, the Council has the power to take legal action against them in the Magistrates Court.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution. Parents/carers may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444(1) by paying a penalty. The national threshold introduced by the National Framework and embodied within the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' sets out the guidelines for issuing penalty notices. Those guidelines are also set out in Leicestershire County Council's Code of conduct for issuing penalty notices in the county. A flowchart of actions to be taken by a school when the national threshold has been met provides guidance.

The Inclusion service will continue to support children and young people with complex needs by continuing to identify children and young people who are not receiving an education.

Working with our partners within Leicestershire County Council we will:

- ◆ Ensure our statutory duties for school attendance are fulfilled;
- ◆ Share good practice;
- ◆ Arrange multi-agency meetings and create action plans with relevant services and agencies;
- ◆ Provide support workers to work with families to improve attendance where required;

- ◆ Ensure school attendance is a priority for families for children and young people with social workers via our Virtual School;
- ◆ Provide support and guidance to families with EHCP and SEND needs

2. Role of schools

Schools have a statutory duty under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. This can only be fulfilled through effective registration systems and active, whole school monitoring of pupil absence, in order to support and promote regular school attendance.

This strategy recognises that attendance challenges vary widely between schools. For some, term-time holidays represent the majority of absence; for others, barriers relate to SEND, EBSA/EBSNA, medical needs or complex family circumstances.

All schools must have a whole school attendance policy, including a staged response which sets out how attendance is managed and what monitoring systems are in place. Parents/carers should be made aware of these systems.

Schools are encouraged to seek specialist advice and adopt individualised, flexible reintegration planning, working collaboratively with families and services. Where there is evidence that attendance difficulties may relate to unmet need or distress, schools and services should prioritise assessment, SEND support and environmental adjustment, supported by multi-agency discussion, before escalation to statutory attendance action.

Under the new [2025 Ofsted Education Inspection Framework](#) for attendance there is an emphasis upon momentum of presence – pupils will be asked “who notices when they are not in school” and “if you are late or struggling to attend, who checks in not just calls home?”

Schools should have a whole-school ethos which reinforces good attendance. Setting annual targets for attendance and monitor progress towards them. School leaders should place a high priority on improving attendance and punctuality, at whole-school level and for different groups, including for those who are occasionally, persistently and severely absent.

This strategy acknowledges the workload and implementation pressures faced by schools and will ensure that all expectations are proportionate and

sustainable so that attendance work remains relational, meaningful, and manageable rather than becoming a compliance driven exercise.

Schools should now recognise attendance is not just about compliance, it is about connection. Attendance needs to be anchored in a “visible culture of belonging”.

Persistent absence will be considered in relation to the school’s graduated response, partnership with families and “culture of noticing”.

While regular school attendance is predominantly the responsibility of parents and carers, schools play a central role in ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly. This includes taking a positive and proactive role in the promotion of regular school attendance, through strategies identified within their school attendance policy, that will engage families and ensure that there is a coherent and consistent approach to attendance across the school.

The Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion should take overall responsibility for this and drive the attendance agenda, actively supported by every member of staff and endorsed and monitored by their governing body.

3. Role of parents/carers and pupils

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their children and young people of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude and to any additional needs the child may have.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly.

Parents/carers are expected to report their child’s absence from school on the first day of absence and to communicate the reasons for absence promptly.

Where there are concerns about a pupil’s attendance parents/carers are expected to work with school staff and other services to address these concerns.

Parents/carers are expected to support school attendance by avoiding family holidays during term time. Headteachers can only authorise Leave of Absence from school in exceptional circumstances; a cheap holiday is not

considered an exceptional circumstance by the DfE. Headteachers can ask the LA to issue a penalty notice for holidays taken during term time.

Leicestershire County Council will promote the importance of good attendance and avoiding term time holidays.

Parents/carers are expected to engage with school support and interventions when their child is struggling to attend school.

If a parent requests a transfer to a new school, it is the parents/carers' responsibility to ensure that their child continues to attend their current school until a place is available at another school.

4. Role of other agencies and stakeholders

The Inclusion Service and Attendance team work closely with a range of agencies to address school attendance issues. In addition, protocols with other Council services and the health services help to identify any children or young people who do not have a school place and refer them on to their local authority.

When a child does not attend school, is persistently absent, or is kept out of education without reasonable cause, this can result in significant harm to their development, attainment and wellbeing. For this reason, all partners must understand when poor attendance may be indicative of Educational Neglect, and must act swiftly through Early Help or safeguarding channels to protect the child's welfare

All other services within Leicestershire County Council have a vital role to play in prioritising school attendance and ensuring a child is accessing an education that suits their needs.

Those services and agencies are as follows:

Virtual School
Early Years
Education Effectiveness
Social Care
Family Help
Specialist Teaching Services
Education Psychology
Oakfield Primary and Oakfield Secondary School
Youth Justice
School Admissions
SENA

Housing
Health/CAMHS/MHST
Police
Transport

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with all of these services to raise attendance for all groups, with a particular focus on partnership working for children and young people in vulnerable groups who are severely absent.

Our Strategy in Action

Our Attendance Strategy covers the next three years from 2026 to 2029 and will direct our work in improving school attendance over that time.

One of our guiding principles in developing this strategy has been to build on our existing partnership working with schools, partners and stakeholders to make sure our local approach is not only in line with current government guidance and legislation, but that it recognises the needs of our community, post-pandemic, and seeks to empower and support them, inspiring confidence to attend school rather than exercising statutory powers to enforce it.

To address the challenges raised by schools, Leicestershire County Council will prioritise cross-service conversations, so attendance is not treated in isolation from SEND, safeguarding, behaviour or wellbeing

Schools reported that direct, relational work with families has the greatest impact on improving attendance. Leicestershire County Council aim to expand in-person, practical support to children and families where absence is emerging or entrenched.

In recognition of workload pressures on schools, the strategy will ensure expectations are proportionate, sustainable and designed to reduce administrative burden rather than increase it.

Tools, templates and workflows will be standardised so that attendance work remains relational, meaningful and manageable rather than compliance-driven

The strategy recognises that improving attendance requires a whole-system response, rooted in early intervention, inclusive practice, and strong partnerships with families.

Our Core Principles are as follows:

Child-centred – every decision will be made in the best interests of the child

Prevention-first – focussing on early intervention and reducing barriers

Partnership driven – collaborative working with schools, families and services

Equity focused – targeting resources to those who need it most

Working in Partnership and being responsive

Long lasting solutions to improving school attendance can only be achieved in partnership and not in isolation.

We will use and build onto our strong existing partnerships recognising that attendance is **everybody's business**. Under each aim we will highlight the actions currently being taken by all services and agencies in the county and plans for the future to improve attendance.

Our key strategic aims

1. To promote and provide early intervention and preventative action

- There will be an overall focus on the early identification of school attendance issues and preventative action with curiosity
- We will recognise and support the most vulnerable and severely absent and promote early help pathways for those children and young people
- We will ensure any meetings involving a child will consider their school attendance and work with other agencies to improve that attendance where required
- All Schools will be offered support, training and advice from the Inclusion Service, Virtual School, Oakfield Primary and Secondary school and the Attendance Team enabling them to approach and alert those services as soon as they have concerns about a child's attendance for advice and support
- We will work with our partners in the Police, Health, Social Care and Family Help to ensure they bear in mind the importance of school

attendance as a protective factor for vulnerable children and young people and take action to notify other relevant services within LCC where they encounter a child where school attendance is of concern - recognising Educational Neglect as a factor when assessing whether safeguarding thresholds have been met

- We will aim to provide “support first” and measures to enforce school attendance will be a last resort. The ‘Working Together to Improve School Attendance’ government guidance will underpin all of our work
- We will continue to develop protocols and procedures to improve pupil tracking and monitoring of pupils without a school place
- We will ensure that Early Years settings are aware of our approach, and we will involve them in any district-wide appropriate campaigns/advice, to ensure that good attendance habits start early.
- We will work closely with Family Hubs and early years providers to promote positive habits from the start and provide early support for families where concerns emerge in Reception or earlier and in line with our “School Readiness” guidance.
- Data will be used effectively by all services to flag concerns before they escalate, and low attendance becomes “entrenched”
- We will encourage Health Professionals to explore school attendance with families where the child should be in school, identifying the barriers to attendance and signposting them to relevant support services where appropriate – emphasising the importance of school attendance to parents/carers where advice is sought

2. To have an established multi agency approach around attendance

- There will be a strong emphasis on multi-agency collaboration. Good communication between professionals and families will characterise all aspects of attendance improvement work and there will be a strong emphasis on multi-agency collaboration by the use of regular Team Around the Family (TAF) and Team Around the School (TAS) meetings
- We will hold each other to account when partners do not fulfil their responsibilities, be open to feedback and improvement in the best interests of children and young people, and where necessary take swift, determined and effective actions under statute to ensure that our children and young people are safeguarded and receive their right to an education

- We will explore with our colleagues in Health, Police and Transport how they can notify LCC when they become aware of a child not attending school without a reasonable explanation
- We will recognise the connection between attendance and wider safeguarding risks, including community violence. We will work with the Violence Reduction Network, police and youth services to identify vulnerable groups and plan joint interventions
- Encourage our colleagues in Health to contribute to multi-agency work where a parent believes that their child has health needs that are preventing them from attending school and contribute to re-integration plans where necessary
- Early and joint planning amongst professionals will be encouraged ensuring all parties improve their understanding of the barriers to attendance and collaborate with regard to strategies to overcome them
- We will ensure that an aspirational attendance target is set for all children and young people with a social worker and targets will be reviewed at regular intervals
- School attendance for a child or young person will be a key part of any plan, review or assessment relating to a child including EHCP review or assessment, Child in Need and Child Protection plans with aspirational targets being set for that child and progress being reviewed at regular intervals
- A child's school attendance will be a key feature in any Early Help assessment, Quick Thinking Plan or Family Group Decision meeting relating to a child of compulsory school age, with aspirational targets being set for that child and progress being reviewed at regular intervals
- SEND services will collaborate with schools and partners to ensure that children and young people with EHCPs and co-existing vulnerabilities, including severe absence, will receive support from the right services
- Virtual school will continue good practice and work with partners to ensure that the attendance gap for children and young people in care continues to close

3. To promote inclusive and flexible education encouraging a sense of belonging for all pupils

- We will promote therapeutic and inclusive practices in schools, especially for children and young people with additional needs

- We will encourage flexibility in school approaches to accommodate individual needs
- We will support schools to consider alternative provision where necessary
- We will ensure that professionals actively listen to the views of children, young people, and their families to plan the support provided
- The child will be at the centre of supportive decisions and actions and their voice prioritised – ensuring they have a trusted adult to confide in
- For specialist schools, progress will be understood relative to a child's starting point, acknowledging that reintegration may require gradual, therapeutic steps.
- We will pledge to process school's applications promptly to minimise delays in securing a school place reducing time out of education
- We will prioritise admissions for children and young people in care, previously looked-after children, and those at risk of persistent absence or exclusion, following up promptly on cases where a child has not taken up an allocated place within the Inclusion Service and School Admissions, ensuring no child is left without education
- We will work with schools to ensure fair access for pupils who are hard to place, reducing delays that can lead to non-attendance
- All professionals will take a trauma informed approach to understanding and improving school attendance
- SEND services will continue to listen and respond to children and young people and families with additional needs via their current channels and the SEND parent carer forum, and will ensure that items on attendance are incorporated into their communication and consultations
- All schools will be encouraged to put in place attendance routines designed to generate early belonging cues: aiming to notice pupils at risk of disengagement quickly and beginning relational contact before absence accumulates
- We will address mental health and family dynamics that impact school attendance and encourage our colleagues in Health to consider the wellbeing benefits and sense of belonging provided by school attendance when making recommendations about suitable education for a child
- We will support re-integration after exclusions and address school-based anxiety alongside our partners in Health
- We will work with schools and other agencies to strengthen family and community partnerships

- We will work with schools and our partners in health to provide pathways for mental health and emotional wellbeing support
- We will advocate for the educational rights of children in care, ensuring that attendance is treated as a priority in all care planning and review meetings

4. To provide training and empowerment for services, schools and parents/carers

- We will ensure that training opportunities are provided for schools and professionals on topics like positive pathways, trauma informed practice and relational practice. Encouraging the use of the Graduated Attendance Toolkit, Inclusive Practice Toolkit and other training material for schools and staff in relation to school attendance
- We will seek to empower parents and carers to advocate for their children and young people and navigate support systems but also to support them to build their own child's resilience when it comes to attendance
- Our approach will be proportionate and context-sensitive, ensuring appropriate pathways are in place for holiday-related absence, emotionally based school avoidance, severe anxiety, SEND needs, and pupils in specialist settings
- We will provide clear guidance on evidencing effective attendance practice for Ofsted, Trusts and governing bodies, including examples of case sampling and recognised sector materials such as national attendance publications. Attendance improvement will be fully aligned with the 2025 Ofsted Inspection Framework, enabling schools to demonstrate the lived experience of children, not just attendance data
- Education Effectiveness will support schools to identify emerging patterns early and integrate attendance considerations into school improvement conversations
- Training will be expanded across the workforce—including schools, health services, social care and SENA—covering EBSA/EBSNA, trauma-informed practice, anxiety-related absence and reintegration planning.
- We will ensure training is available for parents to support routines, resilience and understanding of attendance expectations.

- We will strengthen the use of established LA networks—including Pupil Premium networks, and Education Effectiveness networks—to foster shared practice and collective problem-solving around attendance
- We will provide opportunities to share attendance data with schools and other services to inform decision-making and strategies with regard to children and young people in the county and decide where best to place resources
- We will provide targeted support for schools with attendance rates below national average and seek to identify strategies and support they can access to improve their overall attendance
- We will seek to encourage a graduated approach to attendance within school and across services

5. To ensure clarity and consistency of approach across all partners in supporting school attendance

- We will ensure that we produce and collectively adhere to consistent processes and clear communication pathways and systematically monitor and improve the quality of our offer
- LCC and its school/academies will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to develop information sharing systems
- LCC will continue to develop protocols and procedures to improve pupil tracking and monitoring of pupils without a school place. e.g. schools/academies will be expected to inform and liaise with the Inclusion Service before removing a pupil's name from the school roll
- We acknowledge the impact that delays in EHCP processes, specialist placements and medical needs provision have on school attendance, and commit to improving timeliness so children are not left out of education for extended periods
- All parents/carers will have the same experience of the National Framework to enforce school attendance regardless of which school their child attends
- We will reduce variation in penalty notice practice to support fairness, clarity and transparency
- The Attendance threshold for legal intervention will be applied consistently across the county

- We will ensure that schools are not left navigating persistent non-engagement alone and that a transparent route to escalated intervention is available and consistently applied
- We will apply updated attendance codes and train staff to reduce miscoding, off-rolling and improve safeguarding accuracy
- We will encourage our partners in Health to review and define communication, access and approaches for school nursing, GPs and other health services so that there is a consistent approach across the county

6. To use and share attendance data to strengthen our strategic vision

- We will encourage the use of attendance data by all services to inform decision-making and progress of a child's school attendance
- We will encourage schools to use data provided by the DfE in the form of school summary reports, attendance banding reports and ABIES (Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectations) to set realistic school level targets
- We will use attendance data across the services to flag up concerns with regard to a child's attendance and take action where necessary to improve that child's attendance
- We will look at opportunities to share data between LCC, Education and Policing so that we can jointly understand any patterns, including hotspots, and plan joint responses to improve school attendance.
- Our partners in Admissions will share data and work jointly with Children Missing Education (CME) officers and Attendance Teams to identify and resolve gaps in provision
- We will produce termly attendance data reports for elected members, safeguarding leads and senior officers across the children and young people and family services

How will we know the strategy is working?

It is important that measures of success are monitored to know that we are delivering on our key aims.

The expected benefits of implementing this strategy will be to:

- Raise awareness across the system and review practice with regard to school attendance;
- Increased use of data and other evidence to demonstrate a reduction in the number of children and young people struggling to engage in or stay in education due to mental health issues

The following key performance indicators will also demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the strategy:

- Improved levels of overall absence in primary, secondary and special school phases
- Reduced % of persistent absentees (attendance 90% and below)
- Reduced % of severe absentees (attendance 50% and below)
- Reduced % of pupils missing school with unauthorised absences
- Reduction in penalty notices issued and prosecutions
- Reduced absence for holidays during term time
- Positive parental satisfaction and school feedback
- Earlier referrals and reduced escalation to statutory interventions
- More children and young people accessing suitable education, strengthening the Children Missing Education processes in readiness for the Children Not in School register proposals
- Improved levels of overall absence for the following specific groups of children and young people in each national curriculum year group:
 - o Children and young people with a social worker
 - o Looked after Children and young people
 - o Children and young people with additional needs and EHCPs
 - o Traveller Children and young people
 - o Young carers, children and young people who are unable to attend due to health-related reasons.
 - o Children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school

Governance, monitoring and review

Effective governance is essential to ensure the successful implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of the Attendance Strategy. Oversight will be provided through a structured governance framework that promotes accountability, transparency, and collaboration across all stakeholders.

1. Strategic Oversight

- The strategy will be overseen by a Multi-Agency Attendance Board
- This board will meet quarterly to review progress, evaluate impact, and steer strategic direction
- Membership will include representatives from education, health, social care, youth justice, and parent carer forums
- A dedicated **Attendance Working Group (AWG)** will be established to drive operational delivery of the strategy
- Core responsibilities include:
 - o Coordinating implementation of strategic actions
 - o Reviewing attendance data and identifying trends
 - o Sharing best practices and case studies
 - o Escalating systemic issues or barriers to the strategic board
 - o Ensuring lived experience and family voice are embedded in all planning

2. Membership of the AWG will include:

- School Attendance leads
- Family Help, Social Care and Early Years
- SENA
- SENDIASS and Parent Carer Forum members.
- Virtual School
- Inclusion Service and Attendance Team
- Oakfield Primary and Secondary School
- Anti-Bullying Team
- Admissions
- Health/CAMHs/MHST
- Police
- Youth Justice
- Education Effectiveness
- Specialist Teaching Services and Education Psychology

3. Monitoring and Review

- Termly data dashboards will be produced and reviewed by the AWG
- Annual feedback will be gathered from families and young people

- An annual impact report will be published, including recommendations for strategy updates

Useful Links

[Leicestershire County Council's Education Belonging Strategy 2026-2029](#)

[Leicestershire Children and Family Services Departmental Plan 2026 – 2029](#)

[Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis – Dr Sally Burtonshaw and Ed Dorrell – September 2023](#)

[Families First Partnership Programme](#)

[Out of School, Out of Sight – Ensuring children out of school get a good education](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Child Missing in Education Policy.](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Fair Access Protocol](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Elective Home Education Policy.](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Children with Medical Needs Policy](#)
[ImpactEd July 2024](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's School Readiness Guidance.](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Trauma Informed Practice and Relational Practice Guidance.](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Alternative Provision Strategy](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Early Help Strategy](#)

[Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Voice and Influence Strategy](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Youth Justice Plan](#)

[Leicestershire County Council's Best Start in life Local Plan 2026-2029](#)

Statutory Guidance

[Education Act 1996](#)

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance \(DfE 2024\)](#)

[SEND reform: putting children and young people first \(DfE February 2026\)](#)

[Children missing education \(DfE September 2016\)](#)

[Keeping children safe in education \(DfE 2025\)](#)

2025 Ofsted Education Inspection Framework

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (DfE August 2024)

Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE December 2023)

Arranging Alternative Provision (DfE February 2025)

Providing Remote Education: guidance for schools

Special educational needs and disability code of practice 2015

Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance – February 2023

Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: effective practice examples

Date	Version	Owner	Review Date
21/5/26	V7	Lynne Fantham	21/5/26