

# 7 Minute Briefing: Low School Attendance for Children Open to Social Care



October 2024

## 7. Additional Resources

- [Working together to improve school attendance \(2004\)](#) This is the statutory guidance for schools and local authorities.
- [Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker in their Plans - At a Glance](#)
- [Promoting the Education of Children with a Social Worker in their plans](#) This is produced by Surrey Virtual School and is a resource for Social Care Professionals to refer to when a barrier to education is identified. It highlights questions to ask Education Professionals as well as practical items that could be included in Children's Plans.
- [EBSNA Resource Bank for Schools – Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance](#)
- [Contacts for Inclusion service by area:](#)

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## 6. Recommendations cont'd

- All children and families, where there are concerns for low school attendance should be asked what has enabled children to attend school some days but not others (finding golden nuggets and what helps them overcome barriers) and how they can be supported for this to happen more often.
- All professionals should be asked what they can do to support the child and family to improve school attendance.
- At all children's meetings, the practitioners, professionals and family should be reviewing the interventions and actions with regards to low school attendance and if there is no improvement (without valid reason), alternative intervention should be explored.

## 5. Recommendations:

- All meetings should include specific questions about each child's school attendance and whether it requires improvement.
- Practitioners should always follow up and ask questions to the family and professionals about the reasons for low school attendance.
- All Social Care Practitioners must attend [Attendance is everybody's business-training on attendance for all frontline staff](#) (bookable on Olive) – this is mandatory training.
- All practitioners should consult Surrey Attendance Service when advice and guidance is needed around children's school attendance.

## 1. Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) states that persistent failure to send children to school is neglect, recognising this in 2012 and recommending that Education & Social Care work together to address the underlying difficulties and barriers of children attending school regularly.

Persistent Absence is defined as less than 90% attendance and Severe Absence, less than 50% attendance.

[Working together to improve school attendance \(Updated 2024\)](#) is clear that improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates and are often specific to individual pupils and families.

(Working together to improve school attendance Page 8, Chapter 1, Paragraph 8)

## 2. Background Information &

### Dip Sample

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.
- Autumn 2023/24 Persistent Absence of pupils:
  - Nationally: 19.4%
  - Surrey 16.6%
- In Surrey during the 2023-2024 Academic year, there were 23,430 children who were Persistently Absent (less than 90% attendance) and 2,604 children who were Severely Absent (less than 50% attendance)
- Of those children who were Persistently Absent, 1,111 (5%) were receiving services from Social Care.
- The 2,604 who were Severely Absent, 287 (11%) were receiving services from Social Care.
- 30 children's Social Care Records were examined to consider the Social Care response to educational absence

## 3. Key Findings

- For some children, education concern was the primary focus for Social Care Involvement.
- For some children, there was little or no awareness about their low school attendance, despite Education Professionals being involved in Social Care Meetings
- 90% of the Social Care Records examined had identified attendance concerns.
- Only 47% of the Social Care Records had evidenced attempts at exploring the reason for low school attendance; when this was explored, the reasons were generally attributed to the child's additional needs.

## 4. Key Findings continued:

- The 53% where low attendance was not explored – no conversations could be located about school attendance with the child, family or professionals.
- For only 47% of the children, Social Care had attempted to provide specific intervention to address low school attendance. Some children's plans were vague and only stated 'the child should attend school every day' but did not explore how this could be achieved and who would help with this.
- 37% of the Social Care Records had evidenced a positive outcome for children in relation to education due to Social Care Intervention. Some positive outcomes resulted in the child physically attending school more frequently, but others explored alternative provisions (such as online learning) and reduced timetables for a child with deteriorating health.

