

## London Borough Of Hammersmith & Fulham

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 07/10/2024

**Subject:** School Attendance Strategy

**Report of:** Councillor Alex Sanderson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education

**Report author:** Peter Haylock, Operational Director, Education and SEND  
Joe Gunning, Head of Programmes, Children's Commissioning

**Responsible Director:** Jacqui McShannon, Executive Director People's Services

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### SUMMARY

Hammersmith & Fulham council is committed to working with schools and other partners to improve school attendance across the Local Authority. This Attendance Strategy has been developed in response to DfE Guidance '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' and sets out H&F's strategic approach to ensuring a whole system response to working with children, young people and their families to remove the barriers to good attendance.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet approves the Attendance Strategy attached at Appendix 1.
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**Wards Affected:** All

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<b>Our Values</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the H&amp;F Values</b>
Building shared prosperity	Ensuring a person-centred approach that delivers the right level of support to meet presenting needs of children, young people and their families – and in so doing provide them with the best opportunities to thrive.
Creating a compassionate council	Listening and responding to feedback from professionals, young people, parents, carers, education settings and wider partners to address the barriers to good attendance.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	The development of this document has been guided by feedback from key stakeholders, including practitioners

	working across education, health, and care services.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	This strategy provides a whole system response to improving attendance within the borough, ensuring children receive the right support at the right time.
Taking pride in H&F	This strategy aligns to our vision of ensuring children and young people lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives and achieve their life goals.

## Financial Impact

There are no direct financial implications associated with the publication of the H&F Attendance Strategy. Any specific resourcing requirements to deliver the priorities within this strategy will be addressed via the Councils Medium Term Financial Planning process.

*Financial implications completed by: Caroline Baxter, Finance Manager, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024, reviewed by Tony Burton, Head of Finance Children's Services and Education, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024*

*Verified by: James Newman, AD Finance, 10 June 2024*

## Legal Implications

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. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at school or by education otherwise than at school.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 makes it a parental duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age are in receipt of a suitable education through regular attendance at a school or other alternative arrangement.

The Council has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available to meet the needs of its area in accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 1996. The Council's duties in relation to the enforcement of school attendance are set out in chapter II of the 1996 Act.

*Implications completed by Fionnghuala Devereaux, Senior Solicitor, LBHF Legal Services, 7 May 2024*

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## Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

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## DETAILED ANALYSIS

### Proposals and Analysis of Options

1. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Successfully removing the barriers to good attendance requires the Local Authority, schools, and other partners to work collaboratively with families.
2. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms.
3. School attendance has become an increasing concern across the country since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is principally because attendance at school has dropped significantly with the number of children who are classified as persistently absent (attendance below 90%) increasing significantly. This is a concern both nationally and locally in Hammersmith and Fulham.
4. The Attendance Strategy establishes our strategic approach to ensuring any child, regardless of their characteristics, needs or the type of school they attend, receives access to a full-time, high-quality education that allows them to flourish and paves the way to a successful future. The strategy sets out our whole system response to supporting children and young people in Hammersmith and Fulham through collaborative partnership working to ensure all practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring good attendance for our children and young people.
5. The development of this document has been guided by feedback from key stakeholders, including young people and practitioners working across education, health and care services and is fundamental to implementing our responsibilities set out in the DfE guidance [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance).

### Option 1 – Approve and publish the H&F Attendance Strategy (Recommended)

6. Attendance is a priority both locally and nationally. The Attendance Strategy clearly explains our strategic approach to in ensuring children, young people and their families are supported in addressing barriers to good attendance. Approving and publishing this strategy enables the progression of key priorities in this area. This option is recommended.

## **Option 2 – Do not approve and publish the H&F Attendance Strategy (Not recommended)**

7. This option will not result in the delivery of the priorities set out in the document, adversely impacting the life chances and outcomes of children and young people across H&F. This option is not recommended.

### **Reasons for Decision**

8. The strategy is produced in the context of the DfE guidance, which should be read alongside the statutory guidance documents on parental responsibility measures, children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and safeguarding as set out within the strategy.
9. Approval of the Attendance Strategy contributes to the fulfilment by the Council of the obligations set out within these documents.

### **Equality Implications**

10. There are no direct negative equality implications for groups with protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010, by the approval of this strategy. It is the right of every child irrespective of age, gender, race, disability, or social background to have access to a fulfilling high-quality education.

### **Risk Management Implications**

11. The strategy sets out a vision and principles which will guide the local area in delivering the strategy; ensuring needs are met as early as possible and that children achieve the best possible outcomes through addressing the barriers to good attendance. This is in line with being a compassionate council and in being ruthlessly financially efficient.
12. There are no notable risks to LBH&F as part of this initiative.

*Implications verified by: Jules Binney, Risk and Assurance Manager, 15 May 2024*

### **Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications**

13. There are no anticipated climate and ecological implications as a result of publication of the strategy.

*Implications verified by Hinesh Mehta, Assistant Director Climate Change, 7 May 2024*

## **Consultation**

14. Our parent/carer forum along with Headteachers via our Attendance Alliance have been engaged in the development of this strategy.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Attendance Strategy