

**APPENDIX 1 - Hammersmith &
Fulham**
**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
STRATEGY**
2024- 2029

***Working together in Hammersmith
and Fulham to improve attendance***

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INTRODUCTION

Hammersmith & Fulham council is committed to working with schools and other partners to improve school attendance across the Local Authority. Partners across the local area have committed to our Early Intervention vision of ensuring “Every child, young person and family is happy, healthy and has the opportunity to thrive, supported by an effective community network.”

Underpinning this commitment is the understanding that there is a strong correlation between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children. Safeguarding is a borough wide priority, and it is recognised across all partner agencies that attending school is a protective factor for children and young people. Learning from national serious case reviews and child practice reviews highlight the importance to a child’s life of having access to a school place and the need to place education at the heart of multi-agency planning and provision.

In our work with children and families, we are committed to ensuring that all staff advocate the child’s right to a full-time and efficient education. This means that our work with children, parents and schools should be underpinned by the key principle that any child, regardless of their characteristics, needs or the type of school they attend, deserves access to a full-time, high-quality education that allows them to flourish and paves the way to a successful future.

CONTEXT

School attendance has become an increasing concern since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally attendance at schools has dropped significantly with the number of children who are classified as persistently absent (attendance below 90%) increasing significantly. This is a concern locally in Hammersmith and Fulham.

The DfE have published extensive advice in the document [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90422/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance.pdf) which sets out the role of the local authority in supporting families and schools with attendance barriers. This strategy has been developed in response to this guidance to establish a whole system response to working with children, young people and their families in Hammersmith and Fulham to secure good attendance.

AIMS

This Attendance Strategy has been developed to ensure a whole system response to working with children and young people in Hammersmith and Fulham whereby all practitioners understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the importance of partnership working to secure good attendance for our children and young people through:

- All practitioners across the system understand their respective responsibilities for school attendance, they know who to contact for support and are confident to address concerns about school attendance.

- All practitioners working with children and young people in the borough take collective responsibility for improving school attendance and there is consistent response to planning and working to remove barriers to attendance.
- Systems are developed to identify patterns and trends in attendance within the borough enabling better oversight and monitoring.
- All stakeholders including parents and carers are clear about what support is on offer to improve attendance as well as their responsibilities.
- Responses to concerns about pupil absence at an individual level are coordinated across educational settings, health and local authority teams.

As a consequence:

- Overall attendance in the borough improves and levels of persistent absence reduces.
- All services working with children and young people work in a coordinated way and take collective responsibility to address barriers to attendance.
- Barriers to working with families, children and young people are reduced to ensure timely access to early help support where attendance is a concern.
- Communication between education settings and services are timely and there is a shared understanding in the borough on the approaches to tackling attendance.
- Parents and carers understand the contribution they can make to their child's wellbeing, achievement and good attendance and know where to go to access help and support.
- Clear systems, monitoring and oversight allow early identification of poor attendance at all levels ensuring children and young people access the right support, at the right time.

STATUTORY GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

Current legislation sets out:

- Local authorities *must* ensure a school place is available for every child of statutory school age resident in their area.
- Parents/carers *must* ensure their child utilises the education provision available or makes alternative arrangements.
- School and local authority colleagues *must* act swiftly if a parent is not fulfilling this duty, initially through support in removing barriers to attendance.

- In cases where families refuse to engage with support available and continue to fail to ensure their child is in receipt of a suitable, full-time education, the local authority must consider legal sanctions available e.g. Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, prosecutions for non-attendance or School Attendance Orders.

The roles and responsibilities of schools, parents and local authorities are clearly defined with statutory guidance and advice as follows:

- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)
- [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities](#)
- [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children](#)
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Alternative provision](#)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](#)
- [School Exclusion](#)

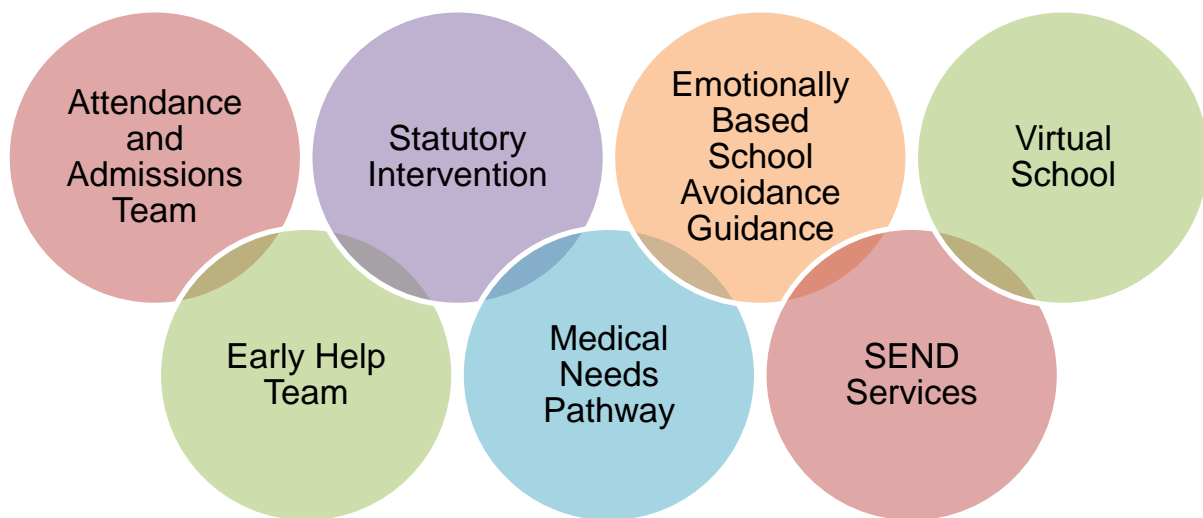
LOCAL GUIDANCE AND POLICIES

This strategy should be used in conjunction with the following local guidance and policies:

- ACE (Attendance (statutory), child employment and children in entertainment, elective home education, children missing education and permanent exclusions) [ACE reference manual](#)
- [H&F Early Intervention Strategy](#)
- [H&F Local Area SEND Strategy](#)
- [Supporting pupils in Hammersmith and Fulham with Medical Needs](#)
- [Alternative Provision Strategy](#)
- [The Virtual School – guidance for schools and colleges](#)

H&F'S WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO MANAGING ATTENDANCE

The Council has a range of services which are designed to remove barriers, improve access to education and secure good attendance. Further detail about these services can be found in Appendix 1 of this strategy. These services reflect component parts of our whole system and how the local authority works with school partners to improve attendance.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Workforce development** – Collectively, everyone who works with children, young people and their families has a role to play in supporting good attendance. These roles should complement each other and work together to support raising attendance. In order to achieve this, we will seek to develop the skills of the workforce ensuring they have the knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the needs of our young people and respond effectively to concerns about school attendance.

How we will do it:

- Develop an attendance self-assessment for schools to evaluate and rag-rate the whole school approach to managing school attendance.
- Enhance the existing offer of training, support and guidance to schools based on consultation, learning from audit and needs analysis. This will include training for governors and trustees.
- Create a training offer including for existing staff in other services (e.g. INSPIRE, SEND teams, Social Care) to ensure all partners understand their role in supporting good school attendance and understand where to access further advice and support.
- Via the H&F centralised Learning and Development training offer, ensure opportunities to understand the features and importance of good school attendance is embedded within the induction process for staff working with children and families in H&F.
- Provide opportunities for practitioners to problem solve, reflect on practice, coach others with regards to attendance.

- Via the H&F Attendance Alliance, identify, collate and share good practice highlighting the impact of those interventions for children and their families as well as on school standards.
2. **Effective intervention and consistent practice** – Across Education, Health, Social Care, schools and other key partners, we will review the current defined pathways in place to tackle attendance within the borough ensuring that at each level there is a clear and consistent set of expectations and agreed approach.

How we will do it:

We will review and revise current practice models and guidance so that:

- Approaches to tackling attendance are consistent across all stakeholders.
 - The link between school attendance and safeguarding is clearly understood by all stakeholders.
 - Trauma informed approaches are embedded in practice.
 - Through clear signposting schools, children and their families have access to appropriate support including making full use of Voluntary Community Sector partners.
 - There is an agreed multi-agency response for the most vulnerable learners where interventions have not supported them to access a full-time education through a lead professional approach.
 - Incorporate regular dip-sampling of attendance cases to highlight good practice, quality assure processes and understand areas for improvement.
3. **Data and systems** - Through access to data, the LA will have a clear understanding of the current local picture and how this compares to national trends, in particular for vulnerable cohorts such as SEND, children looked after, pupils with a social worker and pupils attending commissioned Alternative Provision. As a result, the system will be responsive to emerging need and LA Teams will respond to the data strategically, in a timely manner.

How we will do it:

- Support schools to 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 via support from the School Attendance Officers.
- Develop a clear system for monitoring all relevant data which outlines respective teams' roles and responsibility and frequency of the activity.
- Share data and emerging patterns and trends routinely via the Attendance Alliance and collectively through networks and in training.

MEASURING SUCCESS

As part of this three-year strategy, we have identified performance areas against each priority for which SMART targets will be set and reviewed every six months.

We will be using a range of information including baseline data and stakeholder feedback to identify what is working well and where we need to act to achieve further change.

Oversight of actions and targets will be via the Attendance Alliance Group which will report into the Children's Education, Health and Social Care Partnership Board.

The Children's Education, Health, and Social Care Partnership Board spans the range of local area partners involved in working with children and young people. It is chaired by the Strategic Director for Children's Services and the Borough Director for H&F in the NHS Northwest London Integrated Care Board. The Partnership Board holds the local area to account on the progress of actions and priorities in this strategy.

APPENDIX 1 – SERVICES WORKING TO ENSURE GOOD ATTENDANCE

ACE Team

The ACE service is available to provide advice on whole school strategies in relation to improving attendance and on the legislation and guidance that informs LA work with children with poor attendance. This will include but not limited to:

- Advice on registration codes
- Authorisation
- Undertaking 'reasonable enquiries' when necessary to support a head teachers' decision to remove a child from roll.
- Interpreting relevant DFE guidance.

ACE will support school led prosecutions, and/or penalty notices dependant on evidence from school and FS/Early Help, if interventions have not improved attendance sufficiently.

The School Attendance Support Officer (SASO) works with all schools across H&F to ensure compliance with DFE attendance guidance. The SASO focus is to support schools to maximise their impact on attendance before external referral. In schools receiving support, the aim is to ensure individual attendance action plans are in place for identified pupils.

The H&F ACE Team oversee a robust policy framework to ensure the LA fulfil its statutory duties in relation to children missing education. As a result, H&F have an up to date and accurate Children Missing Education register and processes for tracking pupil movement within the borough.

Early Help Team

H&F Early Help Team (FS) is the key service working with schools and families, to support children to access education and reduce barriers to good attendance. The Early Help service is fully integrated within the Children and Young People's Services.

Early Help is a consent-based service and works with families with children aged 0-19 to identify individual needs and support. The aim of the service is to have a positive impact on families' futures, providing them with effective support that enables them to bring about desired and sustainable change and negating the need for statutory and specialist children's services. This is achieved through the adoption of a whole family approach with one key lead practitioner. A range of targeted interventions are offered, to ensure families get the right help at the right time.

Statutory Intervention

If there is a need within the family for statutory involvement under the Children's Act 1989, the family will be progressed to the Contact and Assessment Service (CAS) whereby a child and family assessment will be completed by a qualified social worker. This assessment is completed within 45 working days. Depending on the circumstances of the situation several outcomes can come from this:

- Initiating child protection processes under s47 of the Children Act 1989,
- Initiating legal processes due to significant concerns of immediate harm.
- Children becoming looked after.
- Identification of additional intervention needed under S17 Child in Need.
- Step-down to Early Help.
- No further action and closure.

In all service areas, the concern about attendance is taken seriously. Practitioners are aware of the need for children to be in education and the ramifications of not attending. Professionals ensure that plans for families include ensuring attendance is a priority and will work with them to identify the barriers to school attendance and provide support where needed.

There are multidisciplinary support services that practitioners have access to, to support attendance from mentoring, mental health support, systemic family therapists and community based young people's support.

Depending on the context of the individual cases, several strategies to support attendance can be considered including:

- Work with the network and family to identify the barriers to attendance.
- Identify a workable plan (for the child) to return to education in conjunction with the school and family.
- Complete school attendance plans and support families to attend school attendance meetings.
- Complete a variety of meetings from team around the families (TAF), Child in Need (CIN) meetings, Core Group Meetings (CGM), network/professional meetings, Child Protection Conferences or Legal Planning Meetings (LPM) with relevant professionals to consider how best to support a family based on the concerns arising and put together support/intervention plans accordingly.

Medical Needs Pathway

Where a child or young person is unable to attend school with the support of the universal or targeted services and their medical needs result in them being away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure suitable, fulltime education provision is arranged. This applies whether or not the child is on the roll of a school and whatever the type of school they attend. It applies to children who are pupils in Academies, Free Schools, special schools, and independent schools as well as those in maintained schools.

For most children who are unable to attend school due to medical needs, the school will be able to provide suitable alternative provision utilising funding that has been provided to them. However, in some instances, where the child's individual needs require a tailored approach, schools can liaise with a named officer in the INSPIRE team to access further advice and support.

Emotional Based School Avoidance

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a widely used term to describe children and young people who are experiencing persistent and severe challenges with attending school due to various emotional based factors. This often results in frequent and prolonged absences from school (West Sussex Guidance, 2018). All Schools have access to training and guidance on EBSA prevention and early intervention from the Educational Psychology Service and are encouraged to reflect on a whole school approach emphasising relational approaches and building resilience.

SEND

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

The Council's Ordinarily Available Guidance is intended to support schools and settings to reflect and develop their inclusive provision to benefit all the children and young people in the school or setting including those with SEND. By outlining a set of expectations, we are encouraging consistency between schools and settings across the authority. Whilst this document is primarily aimed at professionals, we also intend that this document will support parents, carers, children and young people themselves to better understand the support that will be provided for children and young people with SEND without an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). "Ordinarily Available Provision" refers to the support that all Hammersmith & Fulham schools, early years, and post 16 settings should be able to provide for children and young people including those with SEND from within their own resources.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) are available to schools and partner organisations via the H&F Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists have expertise in:

- Education and learning across multiple contexts, including nurseries, schools and colleges.
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Child development from 0-25
- Well-being/mental health of children and young people, including behaviour and social and emotional needs.
- Up to date research and the evidence base concerning what works to promote positive changes.

The Inclusion and Specialist Intervention Outreach Service (INSPIRE) provides specialist interventions to inspire children and young people with SEND to transform their lives and achieve the best outcomes. Specialist interventions, assessment, teaching and advice are provided specifically for children and young people with hearing impairment, visual impairment, autistic spectrum disorder and dyslexia as well as advice for young children with significant developmental delay.

A wide range of bespoke training and workforce development is available for professional colleagues and parents and is tailored to meet an individual's or organisation's specific requirements. We are committed to building capacity within our schools to meet the educational needs of all Hammersmith & Fulham learners to enable them to be independent in adulthood.

Virtual School

The H&F Virtual School work jointly with schools and LA partners to monitor the attendance for Children Looked After and children with a social worker. This is a priority area for the Virtual School. Advisers within the team follow up individual cases and attend the PEP Meetings to ensure there are plans in place to increase attendance. This is monitored over time.