



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Minister for Schools

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Attendance data update

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to thank you for the significant contribution you have made in working with your schools, trusts and local partners to support pupils back to school. Last year in England there were nearly 440,000 fewer pupils who were persistently absent or not attending than the year before. And for many children, attendance is getting back to where it was before the pandemic. New data we are publishing on 10 May shows that in 2022/23 there were 375,000 more pupils in school nearly every day (95%+), with key gains across all school types and cohorts. We know that both pupils and teachers benefit when attendance is high, so these improvements are a fantastic testament to the hard work of parents, teachers, headteachers and local partners. But there is still more to do. Given the progress made, I would like to set out how we intend to support the sector to go further.

When I wrote to you in February, I set out how reducing school absence is a priority for the Government and the actions the Department have taken so far to improve attendance, including revised statutory guidance, laying new regulations, and publishing details of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices. The [reforms](#) we introduced are designed to support schools, trusts and local authorities to continue their hard work tackling the absence problem. The next step in our programme is that the Department for Education is today making two new data tools available to schools that we believe have the potential to help drive more targeted action.

The first is for [schools sharing daily attendance data](#) who can now access new absence bandings report within their Monitor your school attendance tool. This feature will allow schools to identify quickly the distribution of pupils across five percentage point absence bands and is filterable by key characteristics including free school meals and SEND.

Then, for further comparison, and for Local Authority use we are introducing a public interactive tool providing additional national and local authority level breakdowns to the 2022/23 attendance census data, which was published on 21st March. Through an interactive table we are providing more information about the distribution of absence across year groups and pupil characteristic.

We are providing this functionality because many of the most effective schools tackling absence already look at data banded by severity and year group, and we want to encourage its wider adoption. They advise that this approach strengthens leaders' ability to break down the issue of absenteeism into manageable segments, and pinpoint areas where improvements have been made or where targeted interventions may be needed. The new tools will also allow schools to compare their absence profile with more granular, historic national data table and benchmark against local and national trends.

Our attendance hubs have highlighted three priority areas where schools may wish particularly to focus in using the new tools, building on the excellent work already happening:

- The first is supporting pupils who have absence in 5-15% range, a group that has significantly increased post-pandemic. This is a priority because attendance barriers for these children are more likely to be in school and a focus here can help target preventative action.
- The second is the double transition from primary to secondary school and from Year 7 to Year 8, critical points where attendance tends to drop off. The drop into Year 7 is particularly marked in the national data for children eligible for free school meals; the Year 8 change for all pupils.
- The third is effective collaboration with local authorities and other agencies to provide multiagency support for those children facing more complex barriers as part of addressing severe absence.

As a critical member of the local authority School Attendance Support team, you play a crucial role in working with schools, trusts, and local partners in your area to support children and families and ensure pupils are in school, where they should be.

I very much hope that the introduction of these new tools, designed to support schools, will be useful in getting a more forensic view of the absence profile in schools and support leaders to channel efforts in a way that maximises attendance.

I would finally like to thank you for the enormous contribution you continue to make to support children and young people to fulfil their full potential, and your continued support to improve school attendance.

Sincerely,



Damian Hinds
Minister for Schools