

Press release

## Major national drive to improve school attendance

Attendance hubs to more than double to support 1,000 more schools and £15 million investment to expand the attendance mentor pilot programme.

From:

[Department for Education \(/government/organisations/department-for-education\)](#)  
and [The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP \(/government/people/gillian-keegan\)](#)

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Driving up attendance and tackling persistent absence is at the centre of new stronger measures launched today as pupils return to school.

More than one million children and young people will be supported into regular education as part of a major expansion of the [attendance hubs](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/attendance-hubs) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/attendance-hubs>), which provide a range of tailored support to families and pupils to boost time in school.

There will be 18 new attendance hubs across six regions, bringing the total to 32 and will see nearly 2,000 schools helped to tackle persistent absence.

Hubs are run by schools with excellent attendance that share practical ideas with other primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools in England who need help to boost their attendance.

From direct pupil engagement initiatives like breakfast clubs and extracurricular activities, to improving their processes and analysis of attendance data, lead hub schools provide a range of support to schools that they can tailor to their pupils and families.

The government is also increasing the direct support offered to children and their families with the expansion of the attendance mentor pilot programme.

With an investment of up to £15million, over three years, this programme will provide direct intensive support to more than 10,000 persistent and severely absent pupils and their families.

The programme will see trained attendance mentors working in 10 further areas from September 2024. These areas are in addition to the existing pilot programme with Barnardo's which is already operating in Middlesbrough, Doncaster, Knowsley, Salford, and Stoke on Trent.

The programme provides intensive one-to-one support to pupils who are persistently absent working with them and their families to find out why the child is skipping school. This can lead to extra support, more intensive work with teachers or in some cases bridge-building between school and family.

Being in school has never been more valuable with standards continuing to rise. 89% of schools are now rated good or outstanding, up from 68% in 2010. We are constantly seeing the success of our reforms rising up the rankings in maths, reading and science. Just this month, England was ranked 11th in the world for maths, up from 27th in 2009, and in May, England was named 'best in the west' for primary reading.

Education Secretary Gillian Keegan said:

- “ The benefits of our success in raising education standards can only be when all children are in school.
- “ Tackling attendance is my number one priority. We want all our children to have the best start in life because we know that attending school is vital to a child's

wellbeing, development, and attainment as well as impact future career success.

“ I am hugely grateful to all our brilliant teachers, heads, and everyone whose worked with us to make the progress we’ve already made with 380,000 fewer children persistently absent.”

Children’s Commissioner Rachel De Souza said:

“ As Children’s Commissioner, I have made school attendance one of my top priorities because children tell me how much they value their education and want to be in school. Every day counts: when children miss school, it’s not just about missing lessons, it’s also about losing valuable moments spent with their friends and teachers.

“ I very much welcome the government’s announcements today which include the recommendations made last year in my report on school attendance.

“ I am hopeful that these measures will arm local authorities and schools with real-time information about school absence rates and provide vital support for children who face barriers to attending school.”

Chief Executive of Barnardo’s, Lynn Perry MBE, said:

“ Our Attendance Mentoring pilot scheme shows that one of the best ways to improve attendance is working individually with children, building trust and listening to their concerns. Our mentors encourage children to talk openly about issues such as family finances, bullying, or mental health worries – anything they feel may be preventing them from going to school.

“ In Middlesbrough, 82% of the children we have worked with improved their attendance through one-on-one support from an attendance mentor, with almost two-thirds of the children saying their mental health also improved.”

Rob Tarn CBE, Chief Executive of Northern Education Trust said:

“ We are delighted that the hard work around attendance at North Shore Academy has led to significant impact for our students and their outcomes.

“ The fact that this work was recognised as a best practice model meant we felt compelled to share what we are doing with other schools and academies in similar contexts and help where we could. This was, in essence, the beginning of the attendance hub programme. Seeing this work extended, with more hubs supporting more schools, is a source of great pride for the trust.”

A national communications campaign on the importance of attendance is also launching today targeting parents and carers. Under the strapline ‘Moments Matter, Attendance Counts’ it outlines the importance of attendance for attainment, wellbeing, and development as well as signposting to advice for further support.

Key advice includes a recent letter [from the Chief Medical Officer](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-school-leaders-on-mild-illness-and-)  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-school-leaders-on-mild-illness-and->

[school-attendance](#)) that outlines best practice when it comes to attendance and illness. The intention is to ensure that parents have the guidance they need when it comes to making decisions when deciding to send their child to school or when to keep them home.

The government has also committed to further legislation in the coming months that will mean all schools will be required to share their daily school registers. This, together with reforming pupil registration practice, will modernise how schools record and share data on attendance and support them to understand what is driving absence in their school and provide early support and intervention where pupils are displaying worrying trends of absence.

DfE media enquiries

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