Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority - Attendance Strategy 2023 - 2025

The vision for children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) is clear and consistent:

'We want all children and young people to enjoy childhood and to be well prepared for adult life'. Our priority outcomes are:

- *Children and young people are safe.*
- *Children and young people are healthy.*
- *Children and young people have equal life chances - education and training.*
- *Opportunities are key to offering this.*

We aim to help children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes, making best use of our resources, personal skills, expertise, local knowledge and partnerships. We aim to help children, young people and families themselves to improve their own lives by putting them at the centre of everything that we do".

This Attendance Strategy will help to make education outcomes for all BANES children and young people the best they can be. For this to happen children and young people need to attend school regularly, where they can access an education that is appropriate to their needs. This document sets out what we all need to do to achieve this vision. Education setting attendance is everyone's responsibility, and we must work together to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people.

The importance of school attendance

It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children and young people. By not attending school regularly children and young people are leaving themselves vulnerable to risks which can reduce their life chances and future opportunities. There is evidence to suggest that regular school attendance is a key mechanism to support children and young people's educational, economic and social outcomes. Research by the DFE shows that:

- Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.
- Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Good attendance promotes good and improved outcomes for children and young people. In BANES we aim to ensure that all staff advocate the child's right to a full-time and efficient education. This is promoted through high quality training and effective partnership working between all frontline services. Details of training from the attendance team can be accessed currently via our newsletters available here

Context

The Department for Education released new guidance Working together to improve school attendance to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support. This guidance will be statutory from August 2024. The key points: -

1. Clarity of expectation schools, trusts and local authorities will all have clearly defined statutory roles for the first time, set out in a clear table of responsibilities

2. Earlier intervention: Schools will have legal responsibilities to proactively improve attendance for the first time (beyond existing requirements to record accurately) underpinned by timelier sharing of attendance data.

3. Support first: All children and young people and parents no matter where they live in the country will have clear expectations from their school, be informed about their child's attendance and have access to early intervention.

4. Targeted whole family support: Attendance teams in Local Authority's (LAs) will work in tandem with early help to provide a whole-family response with a single assessment, plan, and lead practitioner.

5. Independent schools: data will be collected for the first time and will receive the same support from LAs.

This strategy focusses on supporting attendance by:

- Preventing patterns of absence from developing by promoting good attendance
- Intervening early by using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent and working with families to remove the barriers to attendance.
- Targeting support for persistent and severe absentees with all local partners working together to re-engage children and young people.

Our local picture

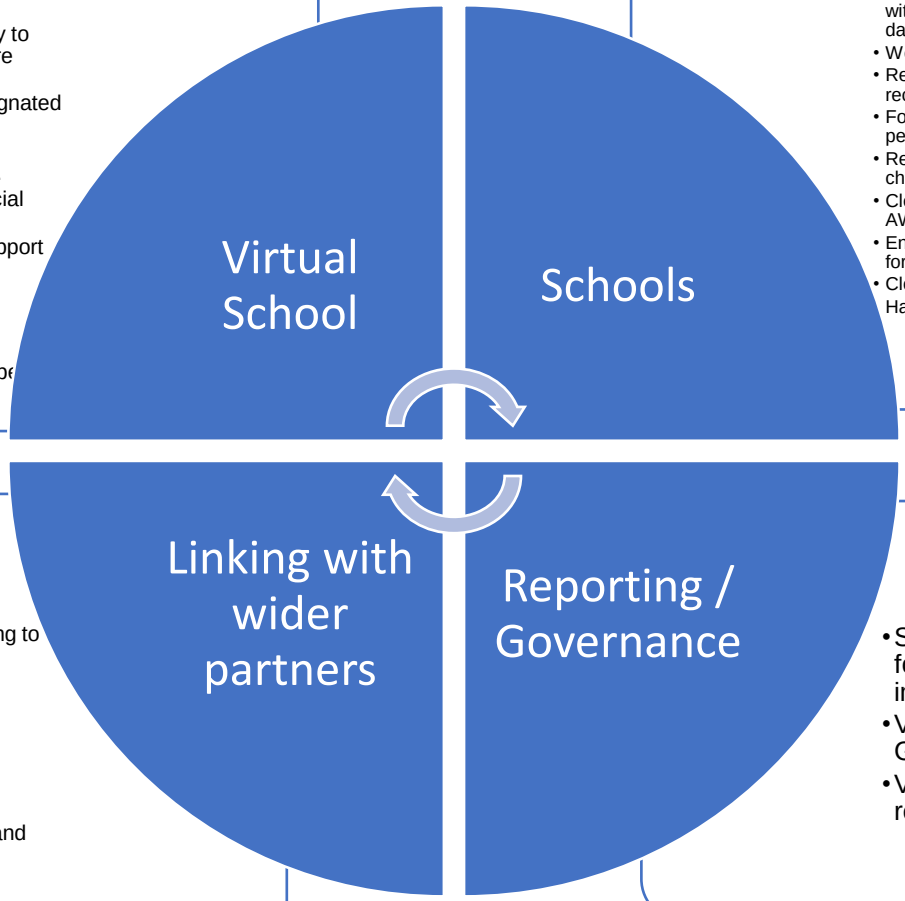
In January 2022 there were 32,230 pupils in Bath and North East Somerset. There are 64 primary schools, 14 secondary schools and 3 special schools. 94% of all schools are academies with only 7 remaining as local authority maintained. We have twice the national average of independent school placements. There are over 100 nurseries and over 90 childminders. All early year's settings are private, voluntary or charity run.

What do we do well?

On the next page we have outlined how across the local authority we are ensuring that attendance is everyone's responsibility.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and we must work together to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people

- All CLA monitored via Welfare Call
- Weekly focus on attendance for CLA in team meetings.
- Where attendance is a concern, a clear strategy to support in the PEP and linked to the child in care plan.
- Regular training both live and recorded for designated teachers
- All children open to CIN and CP, reporting on attendance in every review of CIN and CP plan.
- Termly (6 times a year) sharing of data with social care teams.
- Targetted support from advisory teachers to support where attendance remains an issue.
- Sharing of good practice through CP forums
- Regular training with social care teams
- EP support through adviceline for all schools.
- Dashboard to record attendance for all pupils ope social care



- Allocated AWSO for every school
- Termly meetings with schools to target support for those with persistent or severe absence. Sharing of attendance data
- Weekly drop in sessions for schools
- Regular training available for schools both 'live' and recorded
- Fortnightly behaviour and attendance panels to provide peer support
- Regular newsletter to highlight good practice and key changes in legislation.
- Clear easy referral systems for schools to liasie with AWSS service
- Ensure there is a balance between support and challenge for parents
- Close monitoring of school registers

Handbook provided for every school

- Regular COOEP meeting - multi agency meeting to raise young people not attending school
- Links with PREV - attendance at meetings.
- Health - commisisoned service with link school nurse
- Attendance at TAF / TAC meetings
- Weekly support for MASH
- Public Health
- Early Years - attendance is a priority in audits and through training.
- Dedicated support for addressing attendance through Connecting Families (early help).

- Sharing of data for attendance with a focus on vulnerable groups at service improvement board
- Virtual School termly reporting to Governing body
- Virtual school reporting through annual report to corporate parents.

What does our data tell us?

The DFE data highlights this good practice as detailed below from the 2022/2023 data:

2022/23 Autumn and spring term			
South West	Bath and North East Somerset	Overall absence rate	6.8%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	18.6%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	1.8%
		Unauthorised absence rate	1.4%
	South West	Overall absence rate	7.6%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	21.9%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	2.2%
		Unauthorised absence rate	1.9%
England		Overall absence rate	7.3%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 10% or more sessions missed	21.2%
		Percentage of persistent absentees - 50% or more sessions missed	1.9%
		Unauthorised absence rate	2.2%

Key positives to note:

- Overall absence rate is lower than the South West Region and national data
- % of persistent absence at both the 10% and 50% is below both national and regional data
- Unauthorised absence rate is below national and regional data.

Attendance patterns relating to children open to social care can be accessed here Our outcomes are summarised below:

		2022/23		
		England	South West	
			South West	Bath and North East Somerset
CINO at 31 March	Persistent absentees percentage	48.8%	53.0%	41.3%
	Severe absentees percentage	10.4%	13.8%	9.6%
	Unauthorised absence percentage	8.2%	9.2%	5.2%
CLA 12 months at 31 March	Persistent absentees percentage	20.0%	23.4%	20.0%
	Severe absentees percentage	4.9%	6.1%	c
	Unauthorised absence percentage	3.0%	2.9%	2.1%
CPPO at 31 March	Persistent absentees percentage	57.5%	61.8%	59.0%
	Severe absentees percentage	14.8%	18.9%	19.2%
	Unauthorised absence percentage	12.6%	13.1%	12.7%

Key positives to note:

- CLA is below both national and regional for all areas apart from persistent attendance which is on the national average but below regional.
- CIN is strong for all areas, sitting below both national and regional data.

Challenge:

- CPP severe absence is higher than national and regional.

What do we need to do to develop?

From our data and from discussions with wider stakeholders we have agreed on the following 4 key areas for improvement:

- Strengthen our strategic vision for attendance underpinned by high quality data systems.
- Ensure all children have access to a suitable full-time education.
- Reduce the number of children who are persistently absent.
- Absence for children open to social care is below or in line with national averages, specifically those open to CP plans.

We shall achieve this in the next 2 years by the following actions, these actions are summarised in the attached detailed action plan.

1. Strengthen our strategic vision for attendance underpinned by high quality data systems.

    - Rewrite our strategic vision for the next 2 years, using the outcomes of our self-evaluation and support from the DFE advisor.
    - Further develop our data reporting systems to allow us to manipulate our data to lead our strategic vision.
    - Develop systems to enable us to produce individual reports for schools allowing them to target key areas of support.
    - Ensure that attendance targets are embedded within the local authority Children and Young People's plan.

2. Ensure that all children have access to a suitable full-time education.

    The local authority expects that there is robust oversight of pupils who are not accessing full-time education provision in their current setting. This includes schools accessing Alternative Provision and those on part-time timetables. There should be clear plans for pupils to return to full-time education and all professionals working with a child should have a clear focus on this outcome.

    - The attendance and welfare support service will collate data around pupils accessing alternative provision in their termly meetings with schools.
    - Provide a clear training offer and guidance for education settings around the use of alternative provision through the AP and SEND advice service.
    - Support social workers to ensure that education plans are clear in CPP and CIN plans, that clearly focus on accessing full-time education.
    - The AWSS to continue to robustly monitor attendance coding through termly visits with allocated school officers.

3. Reduce the number of children that are persistently absent.

    - AWSS to have a targeted training offer via the hub and website to accompany termly visits to support schools to address attendance concerns when they arise.
    - Have clear oversight of the trends and challenge patterns relating to persistent absence with a focus on key trends in disproportionality.
    - Have a clear graduated response document that highlights the offers of support that is available for parents, carers and all professionals.

4. Absence for children open to social care is below or in line with national averages, specifically those open to CP plans.

- The Virtual School dashboard will track attendance for all children open to social care.
- Regular termly sharing of data for attendance concerns with social care managers.
- Develop alerts for social workers so they are aware when children on their caseload have poor attendance.
- Support social workers, IRO's and CP chairs to develop clear targets in plans to address attendance concerns.
- Develop a system to share good practice around attendance across the CP forums and behaviour and attendance panels.