

Attendance drive steps up as new term starts for millions of pupils

Schools are being advised to work in partnership with councils and consider targeted family support or home visits where there are barriers to attending school.

This is part of a package of new and innovative measures to ensure that more children are in school every day, including targeted support for individuals who need it and improved data tools that will better identify and solve consistent issues.

The Department for Education is also launching a three-year 1-2-1 attendance mentoring pilot from this term, aimed at tackling the factors behind non-attendance such as bullying or mental health issues. It is being launched in Middlesbrough this year, before expanding to other areas of the country next year. The pilot will provide tailored support to over 1,600 persistently and severely absent pupils over the three-year period.

Schools, academy trusts, local authorities and the government will also have access to a powerful new attendance data visualisation tool is also being launched to help to spot and respond to issues. This data is supporting the launch of the new, interactive national attendance dashboard alongside the publication of the first full fortnightly attendance data of the term. This is expected later in September and will provide ongoing transparency and vastly improved potential for insight and analysis of daily, weekly and termly trends.

The majority of schools are now seamlessly sharing daily register data with the department, where it is aggregated and presented back in dashboards to schools, academy trusts and local authorities. This enables teachers to analyse attendance with greater ease, allowing issues with individual pupils, or groups such as children on free school meals, for example, to be spotted more quickly.

With millions of pupils set to return to schools and colleges over the coming days, there will be a renewed focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as [evidence](#) shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

As outlined in the [Schools White Paper](#), the government is introducing a wide range of tools and programmes to tackle low attendance, including [new best practice guidance](#) on improving attendance for schools, trusts and local authorities.

The guidance makes clear that schools should provide individualised support to families that need it, for example through referrals to other organisations and services, including councils, and issue fines and other sanctions where absence is unauthorised.

There are now over 10,000 academy schools open in England as a result of over 100 new academies converting yesterday, Thursday 1 September. This represents well over half of all students and more than four in five secondary schools.

29 local authorities have expressed an interest in setting up local authority-established multi-academy trusts as part of the trial planned for this year, driving momentum towards all schools becoming academies and receiving the support of a strong academy trust to raise standards across curriculum, attendance, and teacher development. The scheme will be carefully tested via a limited number of successful applications this year.

Education Secretary James Cleverly said:

I want to wish all pupils starting the new school year the very best of luck. From making new friends to learning from inspirational teachers, this is a really exciting time for them.

All the evidence shows that being in school is vital for helping pupils achieve their potential. That is why it is so important for them to attend every day they possibly can.

It's also great that we can mark the new school year with a major milestone – over 10,000 academies are now open in England. The academies programme has been transforming children's education for over a decade now and I look forward to building even more momentum so all schools can join strong academy trusts in the coming years.

Since 2010, there has been nearly a 20 percentage point rise in the number of good or outstanding schools, reaching 87 per cent of all schools in December 2021. Academy trusts played a crucial part in this, taking on poorly-performing schools and turning them around.

More than seven out of 10 sponsored academies which were found to be underperforming as an LA maintained school in their previous inspection now have a good or outstanding rating.

But there is more to do. New regulations that came into force yesterday allow the government to intervene for the first time in schools that have more than one consecutive rating of requires improvement or inadequate.

This will support the transition of these schools into strong trusts, which consistently drive school improvement.

Sylvie Newman, executive headteacher at Donisthorpe Primary School said:

Donisthorpe Primary School is a good school with many strengths and we have been exploring joining a multi academy trust for a number of years, but choosing the right one has been very important.

The primary motivator is keeping our unique identity but to also

providing Donisthorpe with group strength and an opportunity for us to feel part of something 'bigger' and to draw knowledge and share expertise.

We will be able to provide opportunities for staff to progress their careers within the trust thereby strengthening retention.

Alongside this, schools will shortly be provided their budgets for free period products for this year, which they are strongly encouraged to use to access the wider range of products expected to be available through the scheme, to help ensure that no child feels the need to miss school as a result of their period and help end period poverty.

Finally, from this month teachers will be able to claim the government's [levelling up premium](#). This is for teachers of high demand STEM subjects in the country's most disadvantaged schools and worth up to £3,000 tax-free this academic year, as well as the next two years afterwards.