

# New measures to increase school attendance

New proposals to tackle the postcode lottery of avoidable absence in schools have been announced by the government today.

A new consultation proposes that all schools have robust policies detailing how they will support pupils to attend as regularly as possible and sets out how legal intervention including penalty notices should be used in promoting good attendance by local authorities.

The number of pupils persistently absent increased to 501,642 in secondary schools in autumn 2020, compared with 454,167 in 2019, not including non-attendance in covid circumstances.

The latest data shows a radically different approach to sanctions across the country, with some local authorities issuing no fines in 2020/21, while others issued over 1,500. The new standards will make sure interventions such as fines are always used when all other options have been explored.

Although the pandemic is still present and causing some unavoidable absence amongst teachers and staff, it has highlighted the importance of regular face-to-face education to allow all pupils to fulfil their potential.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

I want every single child to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, which only time in school with this country's world-class teachers can bring. That's why I will continue to give schools the tools they need to keep pupils in class, whether that's support with ventilation, testing or vaccinations, which all remain so vital.

And as we transition from pandemic to endemic, it makes me even more determined to fight for children to be in school every day they possibly can be.

Absence due to Covid is unavoidable, but there are other reasons children miss out on school too. Our new proposals will end the postcode lottery of how attendance is managed in different schools and parts of the country, and make sure every child and family gets the best possible support to attend school as regularly as possible.

Schools Minister Robin Walker said:

The time pupils spend in classrooms, with their friends and with

our world class teachers, is fundamental to their development, education and the opportunities they have to succeed. We know that Covid has led to some unavoidable absences from school but that makes it even more important to reduce avoidable absence.

So whether it's through the support we are providing to schools to keep children learning face-to-face through the pandemic, or the proposals we have published today to help drive down avoidable absence in the medium and longer term, I will continue to do everything in my power to help make sure every young person can benefit from being in school, day in day out.

Today's consultation comes as the latest school attendance statistics show 99.9% of schools are open, with 87.4% of pupils attending.

The Government continues to prioritise face-to-face education for pupils and confirmed yesterday that all schools that submitted eligible applications for an air purifier will receive them, alongside additional funding from NHS England to support with delivery of the vaccination programme.

As part of the plans to tackle avoidable absence, local authorities and academy trusts will be expected to have plans for how they will provide targeted support for pupils who need it and work with schools to help spread best practice across the school system in driving good attendance.

Schools are also being asked from today to sign up to a new daily attendance data collection trial. Data will be gathered directly from school registers, reducing administrative work and potentially helping schools, academy trusts, local authorities and central government spot and address system-wide issues more quickly if the trial is successful.

The Children's Commissioner is also working with a number of local authorities to review interrogate their data and step up efforts to support children that are persistently absent from school.

Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza said:

School is the best place for children to be. It's crucial to their academic attainment and is a place they can make friends and play sports. I have always believed in the importance of school and in the largest ever survey of children 'The Big Ask' children themselves how much they enjoy school and all it brings.

I am determined that we must get children back into the classroom. We must find those children who aren't back in school, find out why they aren't attending, and actively help them to find their way back in.

That's why this work is so important, it is crucial to help children recover from the upheaval of the Pandemic and for them to be able to thrive into the future.

The Department's automated daily data collection trial will run over the coming months to assess:

- The quality of the data being collected and how well it allows the government to understand and manage sector-wide attendance trends;
- The potential for it to replace other forms of attendance data collection to reduce burdens on schools; and
- How the data can be made available to schools, trusts and local authorities to help them identify and manage local trends and issues. At all times the Department will manage the data collected in compliance with data protection laws, and the Department's own data protection policies.

The Department remains committed to a registration system for children not in school and will publish the relevant consultation response shortly.

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## [IPO launches call for views on designs system](#)

The designs system enables rights holders to protect designs and enforce their rights. We are seeking views and evidence from users of the system so that we can ensure the UK's designs framework works for the businesses, consumers and professionals that use it. This will help us better understand how we can make the most of new opportunities and flexibilities now that we have left the EU, and how new and emerging technologies may impact the design system.

The call for views seeks a wide range of evidence on three main areas – new opportunities, future frameworks and better regulation.

In particular, it will gather views and evidence on the following:

- the complexity of the current system, and whether it should be simplified
- novelty searching
- what impacts post-EU exit changes to disclosure requirements for unregistered designs have had on business, and views on ways to address them.
- if the system is flexible enough to protect designs based on new technologies, created for digital environments or using artificial intelligence

- the introduction of a deferment provision in UK law and what that should look like
- designers' experience of enforcing their rights and changes they would like to see

The evidence and views we receive will help inform future policy in these areas and help us to consider if any changes are needed to the UK designs system.

The IPO's Chief Executive Tim Moss said:

An effective IP system is at the core of the government's ambition for the UK to be the most innovative and creative country in the world. The designs framework is a crucial element, and we want to ensure it remains a powerful enabler in an increasingly digital environment.

To help ensure the designs system remains fit for the future, we are eager to hear a broad range of views to help us understand how it can best meet the needs of those using it, and help unleash innovation's potential.

Design Council's Chief Design Officer, Cat Drew, said:

Intellectual Property rights are fundamental to the business of design. We want a design IP system that keeps pace with and reflects new technologies and global markets. It's really important that people from across the design industry give their views on the current IP framework and how it can be improved for designers. As part of our Design Economy work, we are looking at ways to enable designers to provide more value for people and planet, and we will be looking carefully at the suggestions emerging within this important review by the IPO.

The call for views will run for 8 weeks, closing on 25 March 2022. After it closes, the government will assess the responses it receives and publish a summary of responses. These responses will inform the government's decision on any next steps and action that may be required.

You can respond to the [call for views](#) here.

### **Note to editors:**

In addition to the call for views, we published a [survey](#) aimed at people with an interest in designs and how they are protected, but who do not consider themselves experts on IP. The closing date for the survey is 7 February.

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## Bradford children's services to be placed into Trust

Bradford's children's social care services are set to be lifted into a Trust that will drive rapid improvements, following recommendations made to the Education Secretary by the Children's Services Commissioner in Bradford.

The not-for-profit trust will be owned by Bradford Council but operate at arms-length under the control of a new independent Chair and Board of Directors.

The decision follows positive and collaborative discussions with leaders at Bradford Council, who have voluntarily agreed to the move in recognition of the challenges it has faced since its children's services were [rated inadequate by Ofsted in 2018](#).

The collaborative, council-owned trust model has been used in several other local areas, including most recently in [Sunderland](#), one of the most deprived councils in England, where services went from inadequate to outstanding in 3 years.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Keeping vulnerable children safe from harm is non-negotiable. Where a council is not meeting its duty to do this, we will take action to protect children and put their needs first.

It's clear from the recommendations made by the Commissioner in Bradford that the council needs support to improve and so I'm pleased that Bradford council have agreed to establish a new trust that will bring positive change for the council and independent oversight that drives improvements.

This is an important moment for children and families in Bradford, and for social workers and other professionals who want to create meaningful and effective relationships with them. These professionals take highly complex decisions each day to protect children, and I am grateful for the effort that goes into each one.

While the new trust is established, an independent non-executive commissioner will also be appointed to lead the council through this transition period, to create immediate change for children and young people in Bradford. The trust will work closely with council leaders but will remain operationally independent.

The Education Secretary's decision follows a series of recommendations set

out by Bradford's Commissioner, Steve Walker of Leeds City Council, who was appointed last September to conduct a thorough 3-month review of Bradford's children's social care services.

His review set out to identify immediate and ongoing improvements, recommend any additional support to deliver those improvements, and assess the council's capacity and capability to improve itself or whether an alternative arrangement should be put in place. It notes that leaders in Bradford recognise the challenges for children and young people in Bradford and 'acted promptly' to ensure children's services have the resources required for improvement and that recent progress had been made – however, it concluded that the council lacked the capacity and capability to improve services at pace on its own and recommended an alternative delivery model to support improvement in services and outcomes for vulnerable children in Bradford's care.

Since May 2010, where the government has provided support, 51 local authorities have been lifted out – and stayed out – of intervention, including eight trusts set up to run children's services that had been underperforming.

Separately, the independent [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel](#) will now also consolidate the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Star Hobson into its [national review of the murder of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes](#) to identify local and national improvements needed by safeguarding agencies. This decision is supported by the Bradford safeguarding partnership and the Panel's Review is still due to be published in May 2022.

The Children's Commissioner for Bradford council conducted his review of the council's children's services between September 2021 and January 2022. The full, final [report](#) was published on 9 February.

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## [UK-built Solar Orbiter catches a second comet by the tail](#)

The event was predicted in advance by astronomers at University College London, and the spacecraft has been able to collect a wealth of science data for analysis.

Built by Airbus in Stevenage, Solar Orbiter is designed to conduct unique studies of the Sun but is also making a name for itself exploring comets. For several days in December 2021, the spacecraft found itself flying through the tail of Comet C/2021 A1 Leonard.

The ESA/NASA mission, which launched in February 2020 and has already taken the closest images ever of the Sun, captured information about the particles

and magnetic field present in the tail of the comet. This will allow astronomers to study the way the comet interacts with the solar wind, the stream of energetic particles that emanate from the Sun and sweeps through the solar system.

Comet tail crossings are relatively rare events. Both of Solar Orbiter's encounters were predicted in advance thanks to the computer code developed by Geraint Jones from the University College London Mullard Space Science Laboratory.

The work also helps build experience for ESA's Comet Interceptor mission, for which Geraint is the Science Team Lead. The mission will visit an as-yet undiscovered comet, making a flyby of the target with three spacecraft to create a 3D profile of a 'dynamically new' object that contains unprocessed material surviving from the dawn of the Solar System.

In the meantime, the instrument teams on Solar Orbiter are busy analysing the Comet Leonard data not only for what it can tell them about the comet but about the solar wind as well.

Caroline Harper, Head of Space Science at the UK Space Agency, said:

This is a brilliant example of scientists working together and pooling expertise across different missions, to get the most from them by seizing opportunities of this kind.

Now we can look forward to many more fascinating insights from Solar Orbiter's main mission – to study the Sun and how it affects space weather. And we can expect great things from Comet Interceptor when it launches in 2029.

Solar Orbiter flew through the tail of Comet Leonard in December 2021. Credit: G Jones and S. Grant (UCL).

The crossing had been predicted by Samuel Grant, a post graduate student at University College London's Mullard Space Science Laboratory. He adapted an existing computer program that compared spacecraft orbits with comet orbits to include the effects of the solar wind and its ability to shape a comet's tail.

Samuel Grant, from University College London's Mullard Space Science Laboratory, said:

I ran it with Comet Leonard and Solar Orbiter with a few guesses for the speed of the solar wind. And that's when I saw that even for quite a wide range of solar wind speeds it seemed like there would be a crossing.

At the time of the crossing, Solar Orbiter was relatively close to the Earth having passed by on 27 November 2021 for a gravity assist manoeuvre that marked the beginning of the mission's science phase, and placed the spacecraft on course for its March 2022 close approach to the Sun. The comet's nucleus was 44.5 million kilometres away, near to the planet Venus, but its giant tail stretched across space to Earth's orbit and beyond.

So far, the best detection of the comet's tail from Solar Orbiter has come from the UK-led Solar Wind Analyser (SWA) instrument suite. Its Heavy Ion Sensor (HIS) clearly measured atoms, ions and even molecules that are attributable to the comet rather than the solar wind.

Ions are atoms or molecules that have been stripped of one or more electron and now carry a net positive electrical charge. SWA-HIS detected ions of oxygen, carbon and nitrogen, as well as molecules of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and possibly water.

As a comet moves through space, it tends to drape the Sun's magnetic field around it. This magnetic field is being carried by the solar wind, and the draping creates discontinuities where the polarity of the magnetic field changes sharply from north to south and vice versa.

Data from the magnetometer instrument (MAG), also led by the UK, suggests the presence of such draped magnetic field structures but there is more analysis to be done to be sure.

Lorenzo Matteini, a co-investigator on MAG from Imperial College, London, said:

We are in the process of investigating some smaller scale magnetic perturbations seen in our data and combining them with measurements from Solar Orbiter's particle sensors to understand their possible cometary origin.

In March, Solar Orbiter makes its closest pass to the Sun yet at a distance of 0.32 au (approximately one-third of the Earth-Sun distance, or about 50 million kilometres). It is one of almost 20 close passes to the Sun that will occur during the next decade. These will result in unprecedented images and data, not only from close up, but also from the Sun's never-before seen polar regions.

The UK is at the heart of the Solar Orbiter mission with UK industry winning £200 million worth of contracts and the UK Space Agency investing £20 million in the development and build of the instruments.

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# [TRA to review anti-dumping measure on heavy steel plate](#)

Press release

The TRA has today initiated a transition review of an anti-dumping measure on heavy steel plate from China.



The [Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) will review a [trade remedies measure countering imports of heavy steel plate from the People's Republic of China](#) and decide whether duties are still needed to offset dumping of these imports in the UK. This measure is one of a number which the UK transitioned from the EU system – the TRA is reviewing them to make sure they are still suitable for the UK's needs.

The measure covers certain products of non-alloy or alloy steel which are often used in the manufacture of construction, mining and logging equipment, in oil and gas pipelines, for ship-building and construction of bridges and buildings.

The period of investigation for the transition review is 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021 with the entire injury period being 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2021. [View further information on our current transition reviews, including the notice of initiation for this review.](#)

Businesses that may be affected by the review (such as importers or exporters of the products or UK producers of similar products) can contribute to the review by registering on the [TRA's online case platform](#). They can also stay up to date with developments in the case, which will be posted on the TRA's public file.

Background information:

- Anti-dumping duties allow a country or union to take action against goods which are being sold at less than their normal value – this is defined as the price for 'like goods' sold in the exporter's home market.

- These measures are one of the three types of trade remedies – along with countervailing measures against countervailable subsidies and safeguard measures which address sudden, unforeseen floods of imports – that are allowed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.
- The TRA is the UK body that investigates whether trade remedies measures are needed to counter unfair international trade practices and unforeseen surges of imports.
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU. Forty-four EU trade remedies measures of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA needs to review each one to check if it is suitable for UK needs.
- The goods being reviewed are products of non-alloy or alloy steel (excluding stainless steel, silicon-electrical steel, tool steel and high-speed steel), hot-rolled, not clad, plated or coated, not in coils, of a thickness exceeding 10mm and of a width of 600mm or more or of a thickness of 4.75mm or more but not exceeding 10mm and of a width of 2.05m or more.
- Period of Investigation – when we are reviewing dumping or subsidy cases, we use a period of investigation of around a year. We aim for the end point to be as close as possible to the date of initiation. The exact period of investigation for each case is decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Period of injury – the injury period will usually cover the period of investigation and normally the 36 months immediately before this (i.e. 48 months in total). This is a longer period than the period of investigation so that trends (e.g. in sales data) can be identified more clearly.

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