

Attendance Champion Toolkit

VERSION 1.0 – NATIONAL ATTENDANCE PORTAL

"Creating a culture where every child feels they belong, every day matters, and attendance becomes the natural outcome."

This toolkit is your practical, week-by-week companion throughout the school year. It is designed for Attendance Champions, pastoral leads, and school leaders who want to move beyond chasing numbers and build something more powerful: a school where children genuinely want to be present. Every section is structured for immediate, real-world use — whether you are at your desk on a Monday morning or preparing for a difficult parent conversation on a Wednesday afternoon.



How to Use This Toolkit

This is not a document to read once and file away. It is a living handbook — something you reach for every week, every term. The content is organised to mirror the rhythm of your working week, so you can find what you need quickly and act on it immediately.

01

Daily Routines

Step-by-step guidance for each morning, midday, and end-of-day check. Keep attendance moving in real time.

02

Weekly Cycles

A structured pattern for Monday briefings through to Friday celebration — rhythm that the whole team can rely on.

03

Strategic Tools

Risk registers, dashboards, intervention ladders, and quality assurance frameworks for monthly and termly review.

04

Conversation Guides

Scripts, prompts, and frameworks for pupil conversations, parent meetings, and staff coaching moments.

05

Templates & Checklists

Ready-to-use documents for every stage of the attendance journey — from first contact to case conference.

This toolkit is designed for primary, secondary, special, alternative provision, and multi-academy trust settings. Adapt it to your context — the principles are universal, the application is yours.

The Role of the Attendance Champion

The Attendance Champion is one of the most important roles in a school. Not because of the data they manage, but because of the children they advocate for. This is a role built on relationships, curiosity, and an unshakeable belief that every child belongs in school — and that when they are not there, something needs to change.

Your role is to lead the school's strategic approach to attendance. That means challenging poor systems, coaching staff, supporting families, analysing trends, and removing barriers. It means knowing every vulnerable child by name and ensuring they have a trusted adult who notices when something is wrong. It means celebrating success as loudly as you address concern.

Most importantly, attendance is the **outcome**. Belonging is the **driver**. When children feel safe, known, valued, and expected — they come to school. Your job is to create the conditions for that to happen.

What the Attendance Champion Does

The Champion IS...

- The school's biggest advocate for children
- A relationship builder and coach to staff
- A strategic analyst of patterns and trends
- A barrier remover for families
- A celebration champion for every improvement

The Champion is NOT...

- An attendance police officer
- A punishment or consequence officer
- Simply a letter sender or data administrator
- The only person responsible for attendance
- A last resort — they intervene early, not late

☐ Attendance is everyone's responsibility. The Champion leads — but every member of staff owns it.

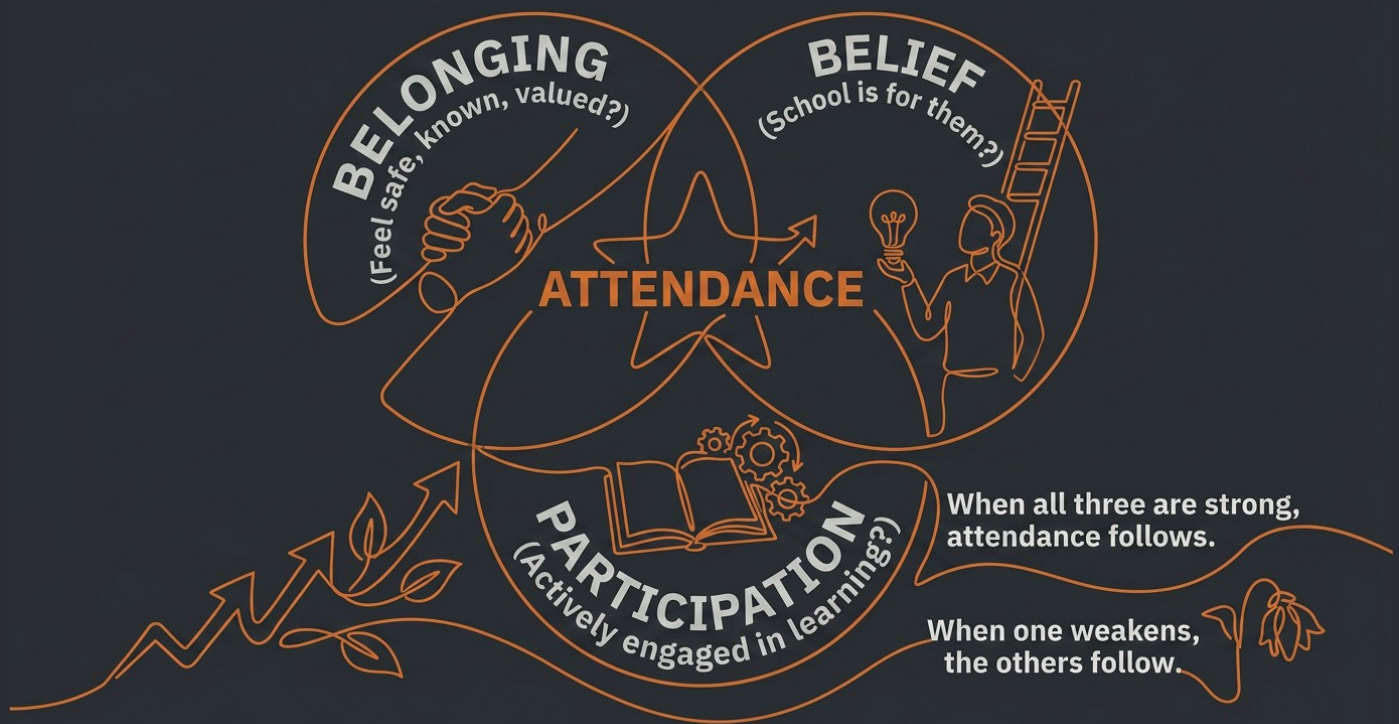
The Attendance Philosophy

Attendance isn't created by threats, fines, or chasing numbers. It improves when pupils experience belonging, relationships, purpose, routine, and success.

This is the foundation everything else is built upon. Before you open a spreadsheet or send a letter, ask yourself: does this child feel they belong here? Do they believe school is for them? Do they feel safe, welcomed, and valued every single day? These are not soft questions — they are the most strategic questions you can ask.

Attendance is a **lagging indicator**. By the time a pupil's attendance drops, the real problem has existed for weeks — sometimes months. Disengagement, anxiety, friendship breakdown, a sense of not belonging — these come first. Attendance decline follows. That is why your most powerful lever is not the follow-up letter. It is the relationship that notices something is wrong before the register does.

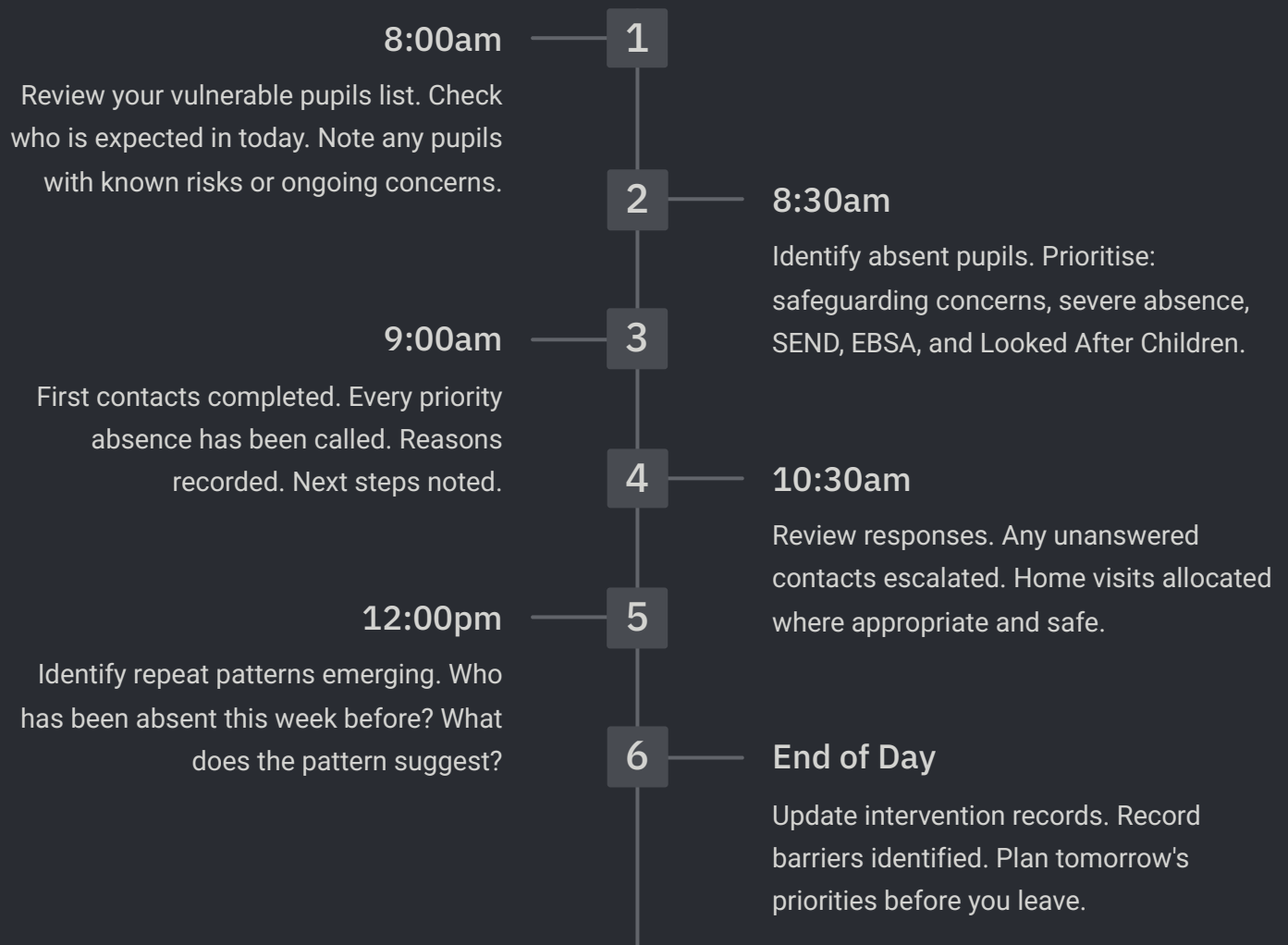
Engagement Is the Leading Indicator



Watch these three signals every week. They will tell you where attendance problems are forming — long before the register does. When a child begins to withdraw from friendships, express doubt about their ability, or stop participating in lessons, your window for early intervention is open. Act within that window.

The Daily Attendance Routine

Consistency is your most powerful tool. The same actions, performed at the same times, every single day, create a system that catches problems early and ensures no child slips through unnoticed. Use this routine as your non-negotiable framework — adapt the details to your school, but protect the structure.



Morning Prioritisation: Who Gets Called First?

Not every absence carries the same risk. Your first thirty minutes of contact calls must be prioritised by vulnerability, not alphabetical order. Use this framework every morning to sequence your first contacts efficiently and safely.

Call First

- Safeguarding concerns
- Looked After Children
- Children in Need
- Severe absence pupils
- EBSA pupils — any absence

Call Second

- Persistent absence pupils
- SEND pupils without prior contact
- Recent intervention cohort
- Pupils with unverified absence

Call Third

- First-time absences with reason given
- Known short-term illness with parent contact
- Authorised absences — welfare check only

 If a safeguarding pupil is absent and there is no contact from home by 9:30am — escalate immediately to the DSL. Do not wait.

The Weekly Attendance Cycle

A structured week gives your whole team rhythm, clarity, and shared purpose. When everyone knows what happens on which day — and why — attendance becomes a consistent whole-school effort rather than a reactive scramble. Protect this structure. It is the backbone of your practice.

Monday Attendance Briefing. Share the weekly data with staff. Name improvements. Identify concerns. Set the tone for the week.	Tuesday Case Reviews. Work through your risk register. Review interventions in progress. Escalate where needed. Assign actions.	Wednesday Parent Meetings. Mid-week is ideal — parents are more available and you have enough weekly data to have a meaningful conversation.
Thursday Attendance Mentoring. One-to-one time with pupils on your concern list. Curiosity-led conversations. No consequences — just connection.	Friday Celebration. Recognise every improvement. Send positive messages home. End the week on a note of success — it matters more than you think.	

Weekly Cycle: What Good Looks Like

A well-run weekly cycle is measurable. By Friday afternoon, you should be able to answer yes to these questions. If you cannot, the cycle needs adjusting — not abandoning.



Monday briefing delivered to all staff

Every tutor knows this week's attendance focus. Concerns have been named. Positive news has been shared.



Every high-risk pupil reviewed by Tuesday

No pupil on your red RAG rating has gone a full week without their intervention being reviewed and updated.



At least one parent partnership meeting completed

A genuine, planned conversation — not a reactive phone call. Evidence of listening, co-planning, and review.



At least one pupil celebrated publicly

An assembly mention, a postcard home, a call from a senior leader. Celebration is not optional — it drives culture.

The Attendance Risk Register

Your risk register is a live, working document — not a filing cabinet. It should be open on your screen every morning and updated every day. The register tells you, at a glance, who needs your attention most urgently and what is already in place to support them.

Student	RAG	Barrier	Attendance %	Intervention	Review Date	Owner
Example Pupil A	 Red	Anxiety / EBSA	42%	Phased return + CAMHS	Friday weekly	SENCO
Example Pupil B	 Amber	Family stress	78%	Mentor weekly	Fortnightly	HoY
Example Pupil C	 Green	Transport	88%	Parent agreement	Monthly	Tutor

Every entry must have an owner — a named adult who is responsible for that child's progress. A register without owners is a list. A register with owners is a system.

RAG Rating Guide

● Red — Immediate Intervention

Severe absence (below 50%), safeguarding concern, EBSA, Looked After Child with declining attendance, or any pupil where the risk level is escalating rapidly. Daily review. Named lead. Weekly family contact minimum.

● Amber — Monitor Weekly

Persistent absence (below 90%), attendance declining over three or more consecutive weeks, emerging EBSA indicators, or a pupil in an at-risk group with no clear improvement. Weekly review. Intervention active. Parent contact fortnightly.

● Green — Universal Support

Attendance between 90–95% with a known, manageable barrier. No safeguarding concern. Positive parent relationship. Intervention in place and showing results. Monthly review sufficient.

📌 A pupil should only move from Red to Amber after a sustained period of improvement — not after a single good week.

Early Warning Indicators

Attendance rarely falls overnight. The signs appear weeks — sometimes months — before the register reflects them. Your most powerful early intervention tool is your staff team's collective knowledge of children. When someone says "they seem different lately" — that is a data point. Take it seriously.

Train your tutors and pastoral staff to notice and report these signals immediately. One signal alone may mean nothing. Two or three together, in the same child, over the same period — that is a pattern, and a pattern demands a response.



What to Watch For — Early Warning Signs



Late Arrivals

A pupil who begins arriving late consistently — even by five or ten minutes — is often managing anxiety about entering the building. Note the pattern. Ask gently.



Frequent Illness Complaints

Headaches, stomach aches, and vague physical complaints — particularly on Monday mornings or before specific lessons — are often anxiety presenting physically.



Known Family Stress

Bereavement, parental separation, financial hardship, or domestic instability at home will manifest in school. Knowing a family's context is part of your role.



Friendship Changes

Sudden isolation, falling out with a peer group, or spending break times alone are powerful early indicators. Social belonging drives attendance.



Behavioural Shifts

Withdrawal from activities they previously enjoyed, reduced participation in lessons, or a sudden change in mood. These shifts are signals — not defiance.

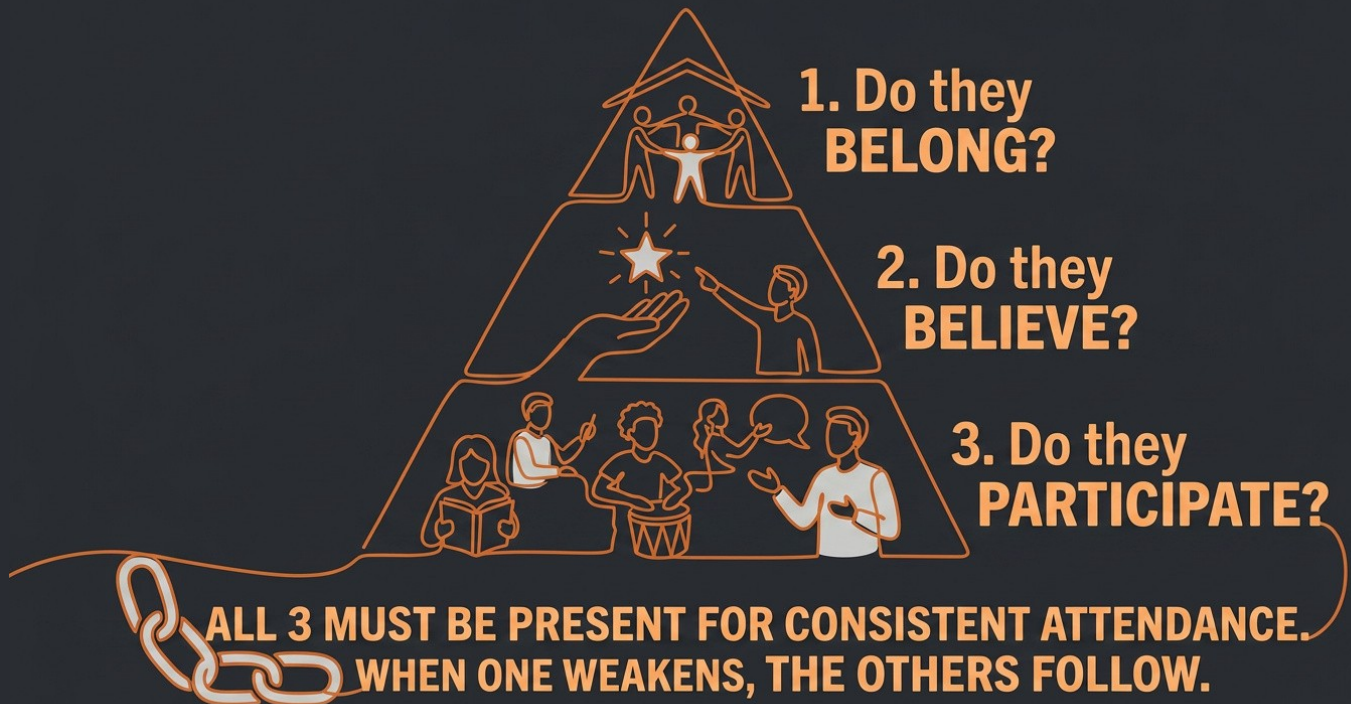


Loss of Confidence

A pupil who begins saying "I can't do this" or who stops volunteering answers has often experienced a knock to their self-belief. Catch it early. Rebuild deliberately.

The Engagement Triangle

Before you look at attendance data, ask three questions about every child you are concerned about. These three questions will tell you more than the register ever can — and they will point you directly towards the right intervention.



Use these three questions as your diagnostic tool every week. In your Tuesday case reviews, run every pupil on your risk register through them. If you cannot answer yes to all three, you have found your intervention focus. Address the root — do not just chase the symptom.

Engagement Triangle: Weekly Diagnostic Prompts

Ask These Questions Weekly

- Who in my concern group seems isolated this week?
- Who has stopped putting their hand up in lessons?
- Who has stopped attending a club they used to love?
- Who has a trusted adult they can go to today?
- Who has had a positive interaction with a staff member this week?
- Who do I not have a clear picture of right now?

What the Answers Tell You

If a pupil cannot name a trusted adult — they need one assigned today, not next week. If they are disengaged from learning — work with class teachers to find a success moment this week. If they are socially isolated — involve the PSHE lead, pastoral team, or a peer mentor. Every answer leads to a specific, practical action. That is the purpose of the diagnostic.

- 📌 One positive adult relationship can be the difference between a pupil attending or not. Do not underestimate its power.

Attendance Conversations That Work

The words you choose when speaking with a pupil about attendance shape everything that follows. A poorly worded question creates defensiveness, shame, or silence. A well-crafted question creates trust, openness, and a path forward. This is a skill — and like all skills, it improves with deliberate practice.

The golden rule is simple: **curiosity before consequence**. Before anything else, you want to understand. Your pupil needs to feel that this conversation is happening because someone cares about them — not because they are in trouble. That feeling, created in the first thirty seconds of a conversation, determines whether the next ten minutes will be useful or not.



Conversation Starters: What to Say and What to Avoid

✗ Never Open With...

- "Why weren't you here?"
- "You've missed X days — that's not good enough."
- "Your parents need to make sure you're in school."
- "If this continues, we'll have to take further action."
- "Everyone else manages to get in."

✓ Always Open With...

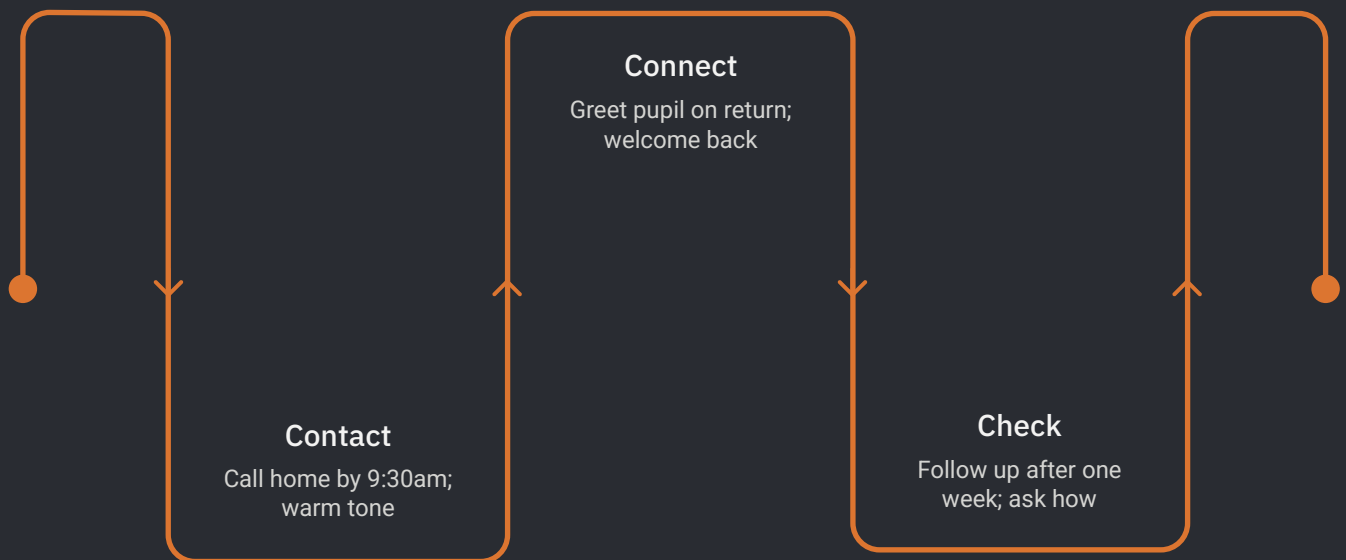
- "How are things? I just wanted to check in."
- "What made today feel difficult?"
- "What's one thing we could change to make it easier?"
- "Who at school makes you feel good about being here?"
- "What would a really good day look like for you?"

After the opening, listen. Do not fill silences too quickly. What a child says in the pause between your question and their answer is often the most important thing in the conversation. Write it down. It will guide your next intervention.

"The child who won't talk to you today will talk to you eventually — if you have always shown up with curiosity rather than consequence."

The First Day Response

How a school responds on the first day of any absence sets the tone for everything that follows. A fast, warm, non-judgemental response communicates that this child is noticed and valued. A slow or transactional response communicates the opposite — and absence becomes easier the next time.



The first day response is not about enforcing attendance — it is about demonstrating that this child matters. A parent who receives a genuine, caring call on day one is far more likely to become a partner in their child's attendance journey. A parent who receives a generic automated message is not.

Working with Parents and Families

Parents and carers are your most important partners. Not your adversaries, not the problem, and not simply recipients of your letters. When families feel listened to, respected, and genuinely supported — they engage. When they feel blamed, threatened, or judged — they withdraw. And when families withdraw, attendance almost always worsens.

Every parent interaction should begin from the same starting point: **we are here because we care about your child**. This is not a platitude — it is a frame that changes the entire dynamic of the meeting. Start there, and stay there, even when the conversation becomes difficult.

Parent Meeting Framework

Use this structure for every planned parent attendance meeting. The order matters — do not jump to action planning before you have genuinely listened. A parent who feels heard in the first ten minutes will be far more engaged with the plan you co-create in the second ten.

1 Welcome & Frame

"We're here because we care about [child's name] and we want to understand what's happening." Set the tone in the first sixty seconds.

2 Listen First

Ask open questions. What is happening at home? What does their child say about school? What barriers are they aware of? Listen without interrupting. Take notes.

3 Share What You Know

Share the data — gently and clearly. Use it to illustrate the pattern, not to judge the parent. "Here's what we're seeing from our end — does that match what you're experiencing?"

4 Co-create the Plan

Build the support plan together. What can the school do? What can the family do? What does the child need? Write it down with both parties' contributions visible.

5 Agree Review

Agree a specific date for the next conversation. Make it a promise, not a threat. "We'll speak on [date] to see how things are going — and to celebrate any progress."

When Parent Conversations Are Difficult

Some parents arrive angry, defensive, or disengaged. This is almost always a sign that previous interactions with school have felt threatening or judgmental. Your job in these moments is to hold the frame — warm, curious, solution-focused — even when it is not immediately reciprocated.

When a Parent Is Angry

Acknowledge their frustration first. "I can hear that this has been really difficult — and I want to make sure we actually help today, not just add to the pressure." Do not become defensive. The anger is usually about fear, not you.

When a Parent Disengages

Short sentences. Simple questions. Reduce the formal structure. Sometimes a five-minute informal chat at the gate achieves more than a forty-minute meeting in an office. Meet them where they are.

When a Parent Blames the School

Listen without becoming defensive. "That's really important feedback — can you tell me more?" Often there is a legitimate concern underneath. Acknowledge it. Even if you disagree, the relationship matters more than winning the point.

When Nothing Seems to Work

Bring in a different trusted adult. A family support worker, a learning mentor, or a different senior leader can sometimes unlock a conversation that has stalled. Escalate the relationship, not the consequence.

Persistent Absence Strategy

Persistent absence — defined as attendance below 90% — requires a structured, graduated response. But structure without humanity is just bureaucracy. Every step of this ladder must be delivered with the same warmth, curiosity, and commitment to the child that defines your practice. The ladder is about escalating *support*, not escalating *pressure*.

Always evidence support before considering legal measures. Any legal pathway that has not been preceded by a comprehensive, documented support journey is not only ethically wrong — it is also likely to fail and damage the relationship with the family permanently.

Persistent Absence Intervention Ladder



Universal Support

Quality first teaching, positive tutor relationships, welcoming environment, good communication with all families. This is the foundation for every pupil.



Tutor Intervention

Tutor notices pattern. Weekly check-in begins. Positive contact home. Barrier identified. Recorded on the register.



Attendance Mentor

Weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions. Attendance Champion involved. Tailored support plan agreed. Parent informed and engaged.



Parent Meeting

Formal but warm meeting. Support plan co-created. Barriers documented. School commitments and family commitments agreed.



External Agency Support

Early Help, Family Support, CAMHS, or other external partners involved. Multi-agency plan developed. Review date set.



Legal Consideration

Only when all support has been offered, documented, and declined without improvement. Pursued reluctantly, as a last resort, with full evidence file.

Severe Absence Strategy

Severe absence — attendance below 50% — requires an entirely different response to persistent absence. These pupils are not simply missing school; they are, in many cases, experiencing significant crisis. The response must be intensive, coordinated, and deeply relational. Speed matters. Consistency matters. A named adult who never gives up matters most of all.

Daily Review

Every severely absent pupil is reviewed every single day. No exceptions. The Attendance Champion is personally aware of their status each morning.

Named Adult

One consistent, trusted adult owns this child's journey. They are the face the child and family see. Not a rotating cast of staff — one person, consistent.

Weekly Family Meeting

A regular, structured, compassionate meeting with the family. Not a review of consequences — a review of support, barriers, and what is working.

Personal Timetable

Where appropriate, a reduced, bespoke timetable that builds from success. Start with what the child can do — not what they cannot.

Mental Health Support

Severely absent pupils almost always have mental health needs. CAMHS referral, school counselling, and wellbeing support should be in place or actively pursued.

Friday Review

Every week ends with a review of every severely absent pupil. What happened this week? What is planned for next week? Is the intervention working?

EBSA: Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is not truancy. It is not a choice. It is a deeply distressing experience — for the child, and for their family — in which anxiety about school has become so overwhelming that attendance feels impossible. Treating EBSA with consequences, pressure, or ultimatums does not work. It makes things worse. Always.

The starting question for every EBSA case is this: **What is school communicating to this child?** Not what the child is communicating to school. Ask it honestly. The answer will tell you where to begin.

EBSA Framework: What Works

EBSA Requires...

- **Relationships** — one consistent, trusted adult the child chooses
- **Predictability** — the child knows exactly what will happen and when
- **Safety** — physical and psychological — every day, every room
- **Gradual exposure** — small, achievable steps agreed with the child
- **Co-production** — the plan is built WITH the child, not FOR them
- **Patience** — recovery takes time; measure in weeks, not days

EBSA Is Worsened By...

- Punishment or sanctions for non-attendance
- Ultimatums and deadlines ("You must be in full-time by...")
- Pressure from multiple adults simultaneously
- Unpredictable environments and last-minute changes
- Meetings that feel interrogative rather than supportive
- Treating avoidance as defiance

📅 An EBSA plan must be reviewed weekly. What worked last week may not work this week. Stay responsive.

EBSA Practical Steps: This Week

If you have a pupil with suspected or confirmed EBSA, here is what to do in the immediate term — this week, not next half-term.

01

Name the Trusted Adult

Ask the child — or their parent — which member of staff they feel most comfortable with. That person becomes the lead. Ensure their timetable reflects this commitment.

02

Map the Anxiety

What specifically triggers the anxiety? Transition times? Specific lessons? Corridors? Lunchtime? The more precise your understanding, the more targeted the intervention.

03

Design a Safe Entry Point

Can they enter through a side door? Arrive five minutes early? Have a quiet space to decompress on arrival? Remove the barrier — do not just expect the child to overcome it alone.

04

Build the Plan with the Child

Sit with the child and co-create a step-by-step plan. Agreed steps, agreed timescales, agreed review. Make it visual. Make it theirs.

05

Review Weekly Without Fail

Every Friday, review what worked and what did not. Celebrate any step forward, however small. Adjust for next week. Never go more than seven days without a review.

Vulnerable Learner Groups

Certain groups of pupils are statistically more likely to experience attendance difficulties — not because of who they are, but because of the additional challenges and barriers they face. As Attendance Champion, you must know every pupil in these groups by name and ensure each one has a tailored, active support plan that is reviewed regularly.



Looked After Children (LAC)

Every Looked After Child must be reviewed at every PEP meeting. Named adult in school. Virtual School Head informed of any attendance concern immediately. Attendance tracked separately and discussed at each review.



SEND Pupils

Attendance barriers for SEND pupils are often environmental or sensory, not motivational. Review EHCPs and SEN support plans for attendance as a specific outcome. Adjust provision before escalating concern.



Pupil Premium / FSM

Financial barriers — uniform, transport, food, equipment — can quietly drive absence. Ensure Pupil Premium funding is actively addressing these practical barriers, not just used for academic interventions.



Young Carers

Young carers often miss school because they are needed at home. Identify and flag every known young carer. Ensure they have a support plan, a pastoral lead, and that the family is connected to external support services.

The Tutor Toolkit

The form tutor is the most powerful attendance lever in your school. Not the Attendance Champion. Not the headteacher. The tutor — the adult who sees a child every morning, who notices when they look tired, when they stop laughing, when they arrive late for the third time this week. Invest in your tutors. Equip them. Support them. They are your first line of response.

Every tutor should be able to answer five questions about every pupil in their form at any given point in the term. If they cannot, you have a gap in your system — not a failing tutor. Give them the time, the data, and the coaching to do this well.

What Every Tutor Should Know and Do

Know their attendance figures

Every tutor should receive a weekly attendance summary for their form. They should be able to name their three most concerning pupils and explain what support is in place for each.

Welcome every child, every morning

Registration is not an administrative task. It is a daily act of relationship. A tutor who greets each pupil by name, notices when something seems wrong, and responds with warmth is performing the most powerful attendance intervention available.

Notice and report changes

Any change in mood, behaviour, engagement, or social relationships should be flagged to the pastoral team within 24 hours. Tutors are not expected to solve the problem — they are expected to notice and report it.

Celebrate improvement

A pupil whose attendance has improved from 72% to 80% deserves a genuine acknowledgment. Make it personal, specific, and warm. "I've noticed you've been in every day this week — that's brilliant, and I wanted you to know I've noticed."

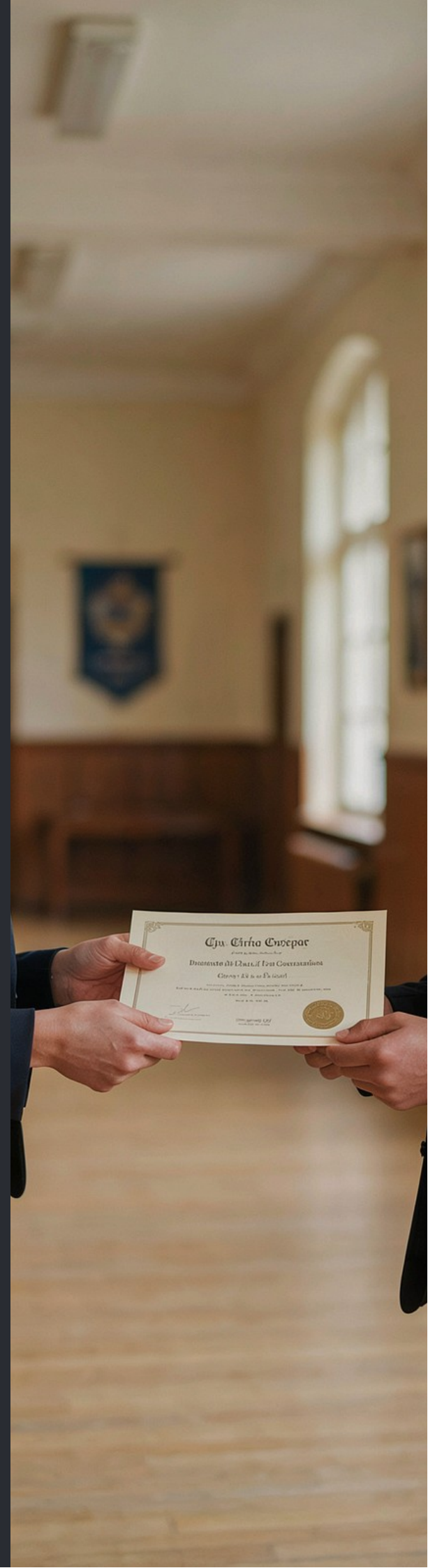
Contact parents positively

Every tutor should make at least one positive parent contact per half-term, per pupil. Not to report a problem — to celebrate something. These contacts build the relationship capital you need when a difficult conversation becomes necessary.

Rewards and Recognition

Celebration is not a nice-to-have. It is a strategic tool. When a child who has struggled with attendance walks into school and is publicly — or privately — recognised for their improvement, something shifts. They feel seen. They feel that the effort was worth it. And they are more likely to come back tomorrow.

The most important principle of attendance recognition is this: **celebrate improvement, not just perfection**. A pupil who moves from 60% to 75% has achieved something extraordinary — their story deserves to be told, regardless of whether they have reached the 90% threshold. Never wait for perfection. Celebrate every step forward.



Recognition Frameworks: What to Celebrate



Improvement

Any measurable improvement in attendance — week on week, month on month. Celebrate the direction, not just the destination.



Resilience

A pupil who came in despite finding it genuinely difficult. Resilience deserves recognition — especially for EBSA pupils making brave steps.



Consistency

A full week, a full half-term, a personal best. Consistency is a habit being built — acknowledge it before it becomes invisible.



Effort

The effort it takes some pupils simply to walk through the door is immense. That effort deserves recognition, even when the outcome is imperfect.

Recognition methods: postcards home, phone calls from senior leaders, assembly mentions, attendance boards, personal conversations, form-tutor acknowledgment, whole-class celebration of form attendance. Use all of them. Vary them. Keep them meaningful.

The Attendance Data Dashboard

Data without context is noise. Data with context is intelligence. Your dashboard exists to give you intelligence — to help you see patterns before they become crises, to identify groups that are falling behind, and to measure whether your interventions are working. Use it every morning, not just when someone asks for a report.

96%

Target: Overall

National expectation. Know your school's current position against this figure every week.

10%

PA Threshold

Persistent absence threshold. Any pupil below 90% attendance triggers a targeted intervention.

50%

Severe Absence

Pupils below 50% attendance require daily review and an intensive, named-adult support plan.

5

Key Groups

Track PP, SEND, FSM, LAC, and EHCP pupils separately. Gaps between groups are as important as overall figures.

What Every Leader Should Know

These are the questions every senior leader and Attendance Champion should be able to answer without hesitation. If any answer is unclear or unavailable, it represents a gap in your intelligence system — and a gap in your ability to intervene effectively.

Whole School

- Overall attendance this week
- Trend: up, down, or stable?
- Number of persistent absence pupils
- Number of severe absence pupils

Vulnerable Groups

- PP attendance vs non-PP
- SEND attendance vs non-SEND
- LAC attendance (every pupil named)
- FSM attendance vs non-FSM

Year Groups & Forms

- Which year group has the lowest attendance?
- Which tutor form is improving most?
- Which tutor form is declining?
- Day-of-week patterns — any Mondays trend?

Trends Over Time

- Attendance this week vs last week
- Attendance this month vs last month
- Attendance this term vs same term last year
- Direction of travel for PA and severe absence cohorts

Attendance Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in attendance is not about finding fault — it is about ensuring your systems are actually working for the children they are designed to serve. Do your interventions happen when they are supposed to? Do pupils know who their trusted adults are? Are families genuinely listened to? These questions should be asked regularly, honestly, and with the willingness to act on the answers.

The best quality assurance is not done to staff — it is done with them. Involve your tutors, pastoral leads, and senior leaders in the QA process. The most powerful questions are the ones asked in a room where people feel safe enough to answer honestly: "Is this actually working?" and "What is stopping us from doing this better?"

QA Audit: Questions to Ask Each Half-Term

→ Are interventions timely?

Is there a gap between when a concern is identified and when an intervention begins? If the average gap is more than five school days, the system is too slow. Review your trigger points and response protocols.

→ Does every vulnerable pupil have a trusted adult?

Ask ten pupils on your concern list: "Who in school would you go to if something was wrong?" If they cannot name someone immediately – or the person they name is not aware of that role – act today.

→ Are families genuinely listened to?

Review your parent meeting records from the last half-term. Is there evidence of listening, co-production, and follow-through? Or do records show one-way conversations and action plans built without family input?

→ Is attendance owned by everyone?

Ask a random selection of classroom teachers: "Who is responsible for attendance at this school?" If the answer is always "the Attendance Champion" or "pastoral" – you have a culture problem, not just a systems problem.

→ Are we celebrating as much as we're intervening?

Count the number of positive contacts home in the last month. Now count the number of concern-based contacts. The ratio tells you a great deal about your school's attendance culture.

The Leadership Toolkit

Attendance is a leadership priority — not a pastoral administration task. When senior leaders visibly own attendance, model the right language, and hold the right conversations with staff, the culture shifts. When attendance is treated as someone else's problem, it becomes everyone's excuse. Leadership sets the tone, and tone determines culture.

Weekly Headteacher Action

- Review attendance summary every Monday
- Name one pupil to celebrate publicly
- Ask the Attendance Champion: "What do you need from me this week?"
- Attend at least one difficult parent meeting per term

Governor Monitoring

- Receive monthly attendance data report
- Hold termly attendance deep-dive with SLT
- Named link governor for attendance
- Attendance included in SDP and self-evaluation

SLT Collective Responsibility

- Every SLT member has named oversight of a year group's attendance
- Attendance referenced in every performance management cycle
- Staff trained termly in attendance conversations
- Attendance culture visible in the physical environment

Monthly Strategic Review

Once a month, step back from the daily operational rhythm and look at the bigger picture. The monthly strategic review is your opportunity to assess whether your whole-school approach is working — not just for individual pupils, but as a system. Use this agenda as your framework.



The monthly review should involve the Attendance Champion, a senior leader, and — where possible — a governor link. It should produce a written record with actions, owners, and dates. Without this, strategic drift is inevitable.

The Attendance Champion Weekly Checklist

This is your go-to checklist every week throughout term time. Laminate it. Pin it up. Open it every Monday morning and work through it systematically. These are the non-negotiables – the minimum actions that ensure no child falls through the gaps during a busy week.

Daily (Every Day)

- ☐ Review dashboard before 8:30am
- ☐ Identify and prioritise absent vulnerable pupils
- ☐ First contacts completed by 9:00am
- ☐ Review responses and escalate if needed by 10:30am
- ☐ Update intervention records before leaving
- ☐ Plan tomorrow's priorities

Weekly (Each Week)

- ☐ Monday: Deliver attendance briefing to staff
- ☐ Tuesday: Review risk register – all cases
- ☐ Wednesday: Parent meetings completed
- ☐ Thursday: Pupil mentoring sessions held
- ☐ Friday: Celebrate at least one pupil or form
- ☐ Friday: Review all severe absence pupils
- ☐ Friday: Submit weekly leadership report

Monthly Champion Checklist

1

Governor Report

Prepare a concise, data-informed report for governors. Include trends, group comparisons, intervention impact, and celebration highlights.

2

Intervention Audit

Review every active intervention on the risk register. Is it working? Is it still the right intervention? Does it need to be escalated, maintained, or stepped down?

3

Vulnerable Group Review

Deep-dive into PP, SEND, LAC, and FSM attendance. Are any groups falling further behind? What specific action is needed this month?

4

Celebrate Success

Identify your most significant attendance improvement story this month. Share it with staff, with governors, and – most importantly – with the pupil and their family.

5

Self-Evaluation

Complete the Attendance Champion self-evaluation tool. Are you meeting the National Attendance Portal standards? Where do you need support or development?

The Intervention Menu

Not every pupil needs the same intervention — and one of the most common mistakes in attendance practice is applying the same response to every situation. A child missing school due to anxiety needs something very different from a child whose family is experiencing housing insecurity. Use this menu to match the intervention to the barrier, every time.

Barrier Type	Intervention Options	Who Leads
Anxiety / EBSA	Phased return, safe space access, trusted adult, CAMHS referral, co-produced plan	SENCO + Attendance Champion
Family stress / circumstance	Early Help referral, family support worker, parent partnership meetings, practical support	Pastoral Lead + DSL
Friendship / social issues	Peer mentor, social skills group, structured break-time support, restorative conversation	Tutor + PSHE Lead
Learning difficulties / frustration	SEN review, timetable adjustment, in-class support, success-building activities	SENCO + Class Teacher
Practical barriers (transport, uniform)	PP fund application, travel support, uniform exchange, breakfast club access	Pastoral Lead
Mental health	School counsellor, CAMHS, designated mentoring sessions, wellbeing check-ins	DSL + Pastoral Lead

Case Study Templates: Recording What Matters

Good records are not bureaucratic box-ticking. They are the evidence of your commitment to a child. They tell the story of what has been tried, what has been heard, what has worked, and what has not. When a case is escalated — to a multi-agency meeting, to the local authority, or to legal review — your records are the evidence of the school's care. Invest in them.

Attendance Action Plan

A live document co-created with the family and pupil. Includes barrier identification, agreed actions by all parties, review dates, and evidence of progress. Updated at every formal meeting.

Parent Meeting Record

A structured record of every parent meeting — not just the school's perspective, but the family's voice. Capture what the parent said, what they committed to, and what the school committed to in return.

Attendance Pupil Passport

A one-page summary of a pupil's attendance journey — their barriers, their trusted adults, their successes, their active interventions, and what helps them most. Shared with every member of staff who works with that pupil.

Case Conference Record

A detailed multi-agency meeting record. Attendees, actions, owner for each action, review date, and a clear narrative of the decision-making process. This is your most important safeguarding document in attendance work.

EBSA Support Plan

A bespoke, co-produced plan that captures the child's anxiety triggers, their safe spaces and trusted adults, the graduated re-engagement steps, and the weekly review record. Never more than two pages — make it usable, not archival.

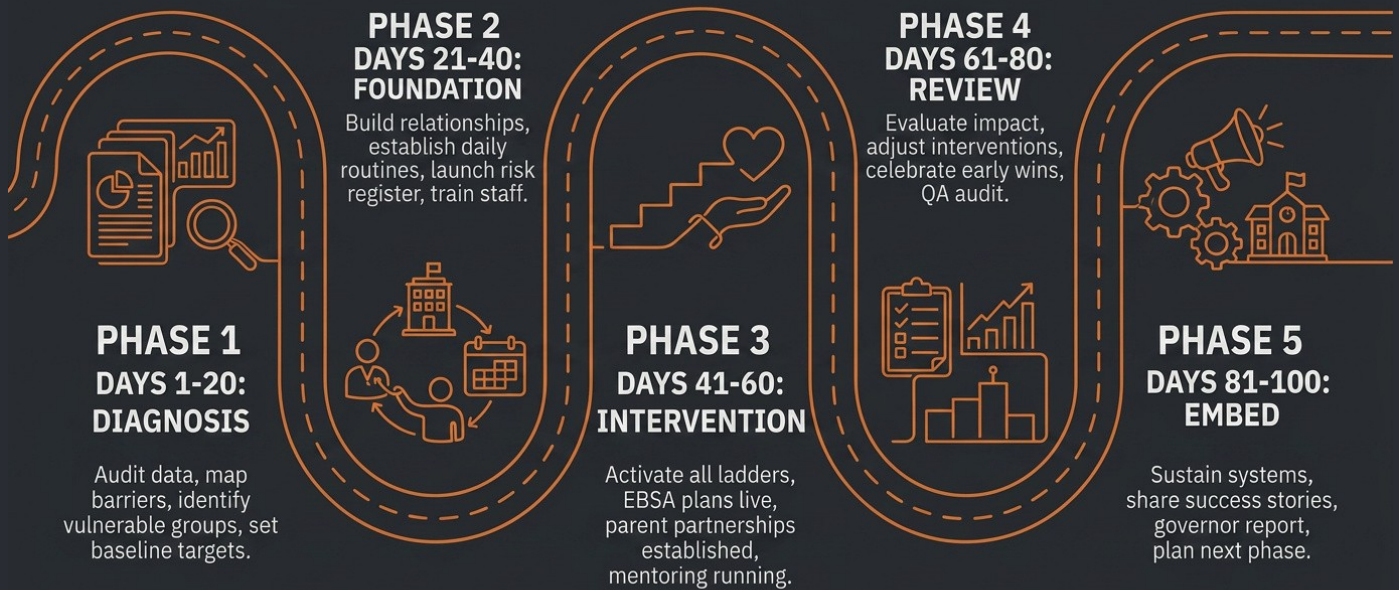
The 100-Day Improvement Plan

If your school needs a significant improvement in attendance — whether overall, for a specific group, or following an Ofsted recommendation — a structured 100-day improvement plan gives you focus, pace, and measurable milestones. One hundred school days is roughly one academic term plus a fortnight. Long enough to see genuine change. Short enough to maintain urgency.

The 100-Day Plan is not a document written once and reviewed in a drawer. It is a working tool — reviewed weekly, adjusted monthly, and celebrated at every milestone. The plan is only as good as the conversations that happen around it.



100-Day Plan Structure



At day 50, pause and ask honestly: is the plan working? If the data is not moving in the right direction, the answer is not to push harder on the same actions. Review the diagnosis — is the barrier you identified in Phase 1 the real barrier? Adjust the plan accordingly.

Frequently Asked Questions

These are the questions most frequently asked by Attendance Champions, pastoral staff, and school leaders. The answers are deliberately practical — designed to be used in real situations, not just read in principle.

What do I do when a parent refuses to engage?

Try a different contact method first — a text, a handwritten note home, a conversation at the gate, or an offer of a home visit. If refusal continues, document every attempt carefully and escalate to Early Help. Never stop attempting contact — the record of your attempts matters as much as the outcome.

How do I manage attendance when a pupil has a medical condition?

Work with the family and the pupil's medical team to understand realistic expectations. A medical management plan, agreed reasonable adjustments, and regular review meetings replace standard attendance targets. Never penalise attendance that is medically unavoidable — but do ensure medical evidence is in place and updated.

When should I refer to the local authority?

When your school's full intervention ladder has been exhausted, evidence is comprehensive, support has been actively offered and not engaged with, and attendance remains significantly below 90% with no improving trend over six to eight weeks. Always seek legal guidance from your LA before proceeding.

How do I build a positive attendance culture if the school has always been reactive?

Start with celebration, not correction. Spend your first month identifying every pupil who has improved attendance this term — however small — and celebrate them visibly. Then involve staff in identifying one change each they can make to their practice. Culture shifts through small, consistent actions, not grand policy announcements.

The Annual Attendance Planner

Term time has its own rhythms, and attendance patterns are not random — they are predictable. September brings the new start energy; November brings the first slump. January has post-Christmas anxiety spikes. April follows Easter disruption. June sees the summer countdown effect. Knowing when attendance typically dips allows you to plan proactively rather than react after the fact.



The National Attendance Portal Standards

The National Attendance Portal Attendance Champion Standards define what outstanding practice looks like. These are not aspirational ideals for some point in the distant future — they are the benchmarks for your practice this term, this week, and today. Use them as a professional development framework, not a compliance checklist.

Outstanding Attendance Champions are distinguished not by the data they produce, but by the culture they create. A school where every child is known, every absence is noticed, every improvement is celebrated, and every family is treated as a partner — that is the hallmark of outstanding practice. The data will follow.



Outstanding Attendance Champion Standards

Creates a culture of belonging before accountability

Every system, policy, and conversation is designed to make children feel they belong in school — before any consequence is considered. Belonging is not assumed; it is actively built, daily.

Uses engagement data alongside attendance data

Attends to participation, relationships, and wellbeing signals as leading indicators. Does not wait for the register to reflect what the relationships already show.

Intervenes early rather than reacting late

Builds systems that catch concerns at the earliest possible stage. Prioritises the first week of decline, not the sixth. Invests in prevention as seriously as intervention.

Builds trusted relationships with pupils and families

Is known and trusted by the most vulnerable pupils and families in the school. Relationships are not a by-product of the role — they are the core of it.

Ensures attendance is owned by every staff member

Has successfully built a whole-school culture in which every tutor, teacher, and support staff member sees attendance as part of their professional responsibility — not someone else's job.

Balances challenge with compassion

Holds high expectations and pursues every concern relentlessly — whilst always leading with empathy, curiosity, and genuine care for each child's experience of school.

The Golden Rules of Attendance

Know Every Child

Not as a data point — as a person. Know their name, their story, their trusted adult, and what makes school hard for them.

Relationships First

Every system, policy, and conversation is built on relationship. Without it, nothing else works. With it, almost anything is possible.

Intervene Early

The window for effective early intervention is small. Act in the first week of decline — not the sixth. Speed and warmth together are your most powerful tools.

Listen Before Judging

Every absence has a reason. Your job is to understand it before you respond to it. Curiosity and judgement cannot coexist — choose curiosity, every time.

Celebrate Success

Recognition drives culture. Celebrate improvement, resilience, effort, and consistency — not just perfection. Every step forward deserves to be seen.

Never Give Up

The hardest cases are the ones that need you most. Show up. Keep going. One consistent, caring adult can change a child's entire relationship with school.

"Attendance is everyone's responsibility. But the Attendance Champion is everyone's reminder of why it matters."

Appendices: Templates & Resources

The following templates are available to download from the National Attendance Portal. Each has been designed for immediate use — adaptable to primary, secondary, special, and alternative provision settings. Every template aligns with the frameworks and processes described in this toolkit.

Pupil & Planning Records

- Attendance Action Plan
- Attendance Pupil Passport
- EBSA Support Plan
- Attendance Mentor Notes
- Case Conference Record
- Attendance Review Template

Family & Communication Records

- Parent Meeting Record
- Home Visit Form
- Attendance Risk Register
- Attendance Improvement Plan

Leadership & Governance

- Weekly Attendance Dashboard
- Tutor Attendance Checklist
- Leadership Attendance Review
- Governor Monitoring Template
- Attendance Champion Self-Evaluation

 All templates are available at the National Attendance Portal. They are living documents — adapt them to your school's context, language, and needs.

A Final Word to Every Attendance Champion

"Measuring success not only by improved attendance percentages, but by stronger relationships, improved wellbeing, and sustained engagement."

This work is not easy. There will be weeks when the data does not move, when parents do not engage, when pupils do not come in despite everything you have done. In those weeks, remember why the role exists: not to hit a target, but to ensure that every child in your school has at least one adult who will not give up on them. You are that adult for many children. That matters more than any percentage.

The most powerful thing you will do this week is not write a report, or update a register, or send a letter. It is to sit with a child who is struggling and say — with your words, your presence, and your time — *you belong here, and I am not going anywhere.*

This toolkit belongs to you. Use it every week. Adapt it. Improve it. Share it with your team. And come back to it on the hard days — because on those days, it will remind you of everything you already know, and everything you already are.

NATIONAL ATTENDANCE PORTAL — ATTENDANCE CHAMPION TOOLKIT V1.0