



# Doncaster Council

## Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

### Strategy for Attendance and Persistent Absence – Schools 2017 -18.

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**ATTENDANCE STRATEGY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The purpose of this document is to introduce Cabinet to the Attendance Strategy and associated delivery plan for the improvement of Attendance and Persistent Absence at school level.
2. This programme is the LOCYP response to the request for a report that investigated the scale of the issue and how it links with the Doncaster Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017-2021 and the Social Mobility Opportunity Area, enabling teams to maximise their skills and expertise on delivering improved outcomes to children and young people.
3. The Doncaster Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017-2020 clearly articulates 'strengthened partnership working and the acceptance that it is a collective responsibility to ensure that we create the right conditions for children and young people to thrive in Doncaster' (p4) and targets a significant shift in outcomes around attendance.
4. There is a sense of collective responsibility and purpose evident across the Team Doncaster partnership to address the issues that schools in Doncaster face. Building on the evidence of the CYPP the Education & Skills Commission seeks to strengthen schools by improving the quality of teaching and learning, improving teacher recruitment and retention, and by ensuring that there is a broad and balanced curriculum that both meets the needs of pupils and the labour market. This is reflected in our 'Raising aspiration and achievement strategy', which sets out how local partnerships will impact upon school provision and outcomes including, specifically attendance.
5. Attendance is one of the three strands of the work of the Doncaster Growing together Inclusion board, which provides overall governance for this strategy.
6. This is strongly correlated with the ambition and intent of the Social Mobility Opportunity Area. Doncaster is set to receive £6m in funding over the next three years to improve the life chances of children and young people; an initial analysis of the challenges we collectively face has focussed on the home learning environment, narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers, persistent absence, and higher level qualifications.

## EXEMPT REPORT

7. Not exempt.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

8.

- To note that the poor performance of schools in this area is a key issue for Team Doncaster and impacts on a multitude of associated economic and social outcomes for children and young people.
- To explore underlying reasons.
- To give priority to a public attendance campaign that draws attention to the scale of the problem and the social and financial costs of allowing this position to continue, whilst setting out a clear position to the community regarding the value of attending school.
- To endorse the strategic actions in this plan and to monitor the impact of this work, notably:
  - To directly support and challenge all Doncaster schools who are performing below the National Average for attendance.
  - To offer professional development opportunities for school leaders and governors so that they are increasingly able to improve attendance in their settings.
  - To review the work of the DMBC attendance service in order to ensure greater impact upon attendance and persistent absenteeism.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

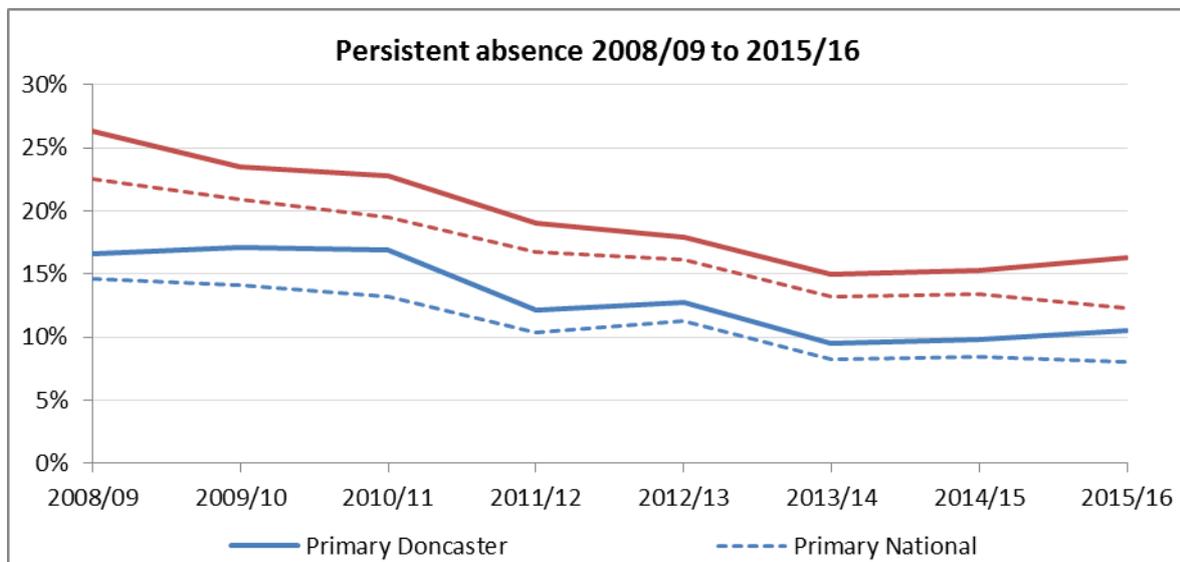
9. The impact of high levels of school absence are a significant problem for citizens, limiting equality of opportunity, employment, economic activity, aspirations and the quality of educational provisions and their outcomes.

10. Whilst children are not attending school they are of much greater risk of harm and this presents a genuine safeguarding risk. For individual citizens there is great risk of longer term

problems with employability, engagement and poverty. Reversing this trend is a priority activity.

**BACKGROUND**

- 11. Doncaster’s attendance and Persistent Absentee figures have been significantly below the National Average in both compulsory phases of education for the last nine years and are worsening.
- 12. Students counted as persistently absent have attended school for less than 90%. This represents half a day per week. Young people with this level of absence has a significant effect on outcomes, with over 90% of students in this category failing to achieve 5 A\*-C with English and Maths at GCSE.
- 13. There are a significant number of schools that are above the National Average for persistent absenteeism, with only three secondary schools at or above the National Average for persistent absenteeism. Seventeen schools have persistent absenteeism affecting over 20% of their cohort. This is a key issue for children in the borough.



14. Aims of the strategy

- To develop collective responsibility for driving improvements in attendance.
- To deliver greater accountability for Doncaster schools around absence and P.A. ensuring that schools have a whole school approach to improving attendance.
- To ensure that school improvement services have a clearly defined role in improving attendance.
- Ensure that the attendance service is having a clear impact upon schools

15. Summary of actions:

- Conducting a Doncaster-wide campaign stressing the fundamental importance of school attendance and highlighting the risks of continuing poor performance in this area.
- To develop a Doncaster wide approach to and ownership of attendance issues.
- To identify schools who are persistently below the National Average for absence and support and challenge them to improve their practice.
- To offer a programme of professional development including networking opportunities that will develop the leadership capacity of schools in this area.
- To provide support and challenge to schools in order to reduce the impact of fixed term exclusions upon whole school attendance.
- To provide renewed leadership to schools by strengthening guidance and expectations around enforcement and day to day practice.

16. What success looks like

- There is effective targeted support in place from across the council for all schools who need to improve attendance and pupil behaviour.
- There is a consistent approach to the managing of attendance and behaviour across Doncaster.
- There is a reduction in persistent absence and an increase in pupil attendance across all schools so that the Doncaster statistics are in line with the national average..
- There is a reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions across all schools.
- There is a diminishing distance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in relation to persistent absence and attendance.
- Improve the quality of provision (educational and therapeutic) available for CYP with behavioural difficulties both in a mainstream setting and in alternative settings.

- There are strong networks and CPD opportunities for those leading behaviour and attendance in schools.
- The L.A. and key stakeholders have a clear role in supporting the improvements in attendance, fixed term exclusion rates and the quality of behaviour provision in Doncaster.

17. Officers have been engaged in working directly with schools since October 2017. We expect to see improvements in rates of attendance and a reduction in persistent absence over the first year of the project. The strategy is expected to maintain its delivery through academic years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

**IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES**

18.

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster’s vital services</i></li> </ul>	<p>Improve social mobility and economic activity by improving school engagement and outcomes.</p>
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	<p>Ensuring that all school prioritise student safety and have robust procedures for minimising school absence. Reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour through school absence.</p>
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our</i></li> </ul>	

	<p><i>Communities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	
	<p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></li> </ul>	<p>Schools become more effective in providing support and guidance for families and ensuring greater engagement with the school system and other agencies.</p>
	<p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p>	<p>The authority will, as part of this strategy, review the effectiveness of its attendance provision in order that it impacts upon a broader range of families and schools.</p>
	<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	<p>Focused training and network events are provided through the Local Authority.</p> <p>Supporting and challenging school leaders in order to improve systems and practices within their settings.</p>

**RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

19. Doncaster's schools are challenged by their Governing Bodies, the Local Authority and OFSTED in order to ensure that children attend school.

20. The Local Authority monitors results and progress and exercises its duties in accordance with the Doncaster School Improvement Strategy.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

21. A local authority has a number of statutory duties concerning attendance and this strategy assists in ensuring these duties are met. Specific relevant duties include identifying children not receiving education and sending a written notice to parents; power to prosecute a parent for a child's non-attendance; publishing a Code for penalty notices to address poor attendance and

administering the penalty notice regime; and to investigate the whereabouts of pupils who have poor attendance and are at risk of being deleted from the schools' admission register.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

22. The total controllable expenditure budget for the Attendance and Education at Home team is £668,290. The staffing posts included within this budget are subject to the on-going LOCYP Functional Analysis.

Any additional expenditure arising from the Attendance Strategy will need to be fully costed to ensure that funding is available from existing resources.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

23. There are no specific HR implications related to the content of this report. If there are HR implications arising from specific elements of the Attendance Strategy and associated delivery plans these will be addressed at the appropriate time.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

24. There are no technology implications arising from this report.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

25. We must give due consideration to the extent to which the Council has complied with its Public Equality Duty and given due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The equality of expectation for all children, including those that disadvantaged, is a core value within all aspects of the work undertaken in education settings and underpins the support and challenge provided by officers.

## **Introduction and Rationale**

The expectation for children and young people to attend school/education every day underpins the focus of this strategy as a key factor in promoting better outcomes for all young people. It is the collective responsibility of schools, academies, Multi Academy Trusts, Local Authorities, Multi Agencies who support children and young people, parents/carers and key partners to promote and support good and improving attendance.

The Doncaster Children and Young Peoples Plan 2017-2020 clearly articulates 'strengthened partnership working and the acceptance that it is a collective responsibility to ensure that we create the right conditions for children and young people to thrive in Doncaster' (p4) and targets a significant shift in outcomes around attendance.

There is a sense of collective responsibility and purpose evident across the Team Doncaster partnership to address the issues that schools in Doncaster face. Building on the evidence of the CYP the Education & Skills Commission seeks to strengthen schools by improving the quality of teaching and learning, improving teacher recruitment and retention, and by ensuring that there is a broad and balanced curriculum that both meets the needs of pupils and the labour market. This is reflected in our 'Raising aspiration and achievement strategy', which sets out how local partnerships will impact upon school provision and outcomes including, specifically attendance.

This is strongly correlated with the ambition and intent of the Social Mobility Opportunity Area. Doncaster is set to receive £6m in funding over the next three years to improve the life chances of children and young people; an initial analysis of the challenges we collectively face has focussed on the home learning environment, narrowing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers, persistent absence, and higher level qualifications. By having a consistent focus on these issues we feel confident we can make significant progress in improving outcomes for children and young people.

The link between attendance, attainment and better outcomes for young people can be measured by the qualifications and relevant skills, including life skills and aspirations to secure a place within further education/training or to secure employment. Attendance is also linked to safeguarding and is a recurrent theme in Serious Case Reviews. The Local Authority and schools must act in a way that protects young people and ensure attendance is high on their respective agendas, take the necessary steps to notice, follow up and alert the necessary agencies when a child or young person is regularly absent or has a prolonged absence from their educational setting. This document will provide a corporate approach for managing attendance and absence in Doncaster.

## **Vision**

A comprehensive strategy to reduce absence and the level of persistent absence that filters through all agencies and settings working with children and young people will be evaluated and reviewed. This document intends to help schools and services efficiently manage pupil attendance and absence procedures as set down by the statutory requirements and the guidance from the Department for Education.

**Aims**

- Overall attendance improves and persistent absence reduces
- Vulnerable groups of pupils attend school regularly in line with their peers
- Children and young people who are disengaged from learning can access provision that provides interest and learning
- Schools provide secure safe environments with high quality teaching and learning
- Parents, schools and partners understand their contribution and engage in promoting good attendance
- Young people will improve their life chances and reach their full potential by attending school regularly
- Young people leave school adequately equipped to access employment or further education and training and develop the relevant life skills to be successful in their adult life

**The priorities of the strategy**

- To create a culture across the borough that reflects the desire to raise aspiration for all Doncaster children and young people
- To develop new ways of promoting good and outstanding attendance whilst continuing to challenge, support and build the capacity of schools' own management of attendance
- To work collaboratively across teams to provide early intervention and prevention
- To identify and support vulnerable groups of children including disadvantaged children, Looked After Children, Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Young carers, children with health needs that impact on their learning, achievement and attainment including both Physical and Mental Health needs, and Minority Ethnic groups especially Gypsy, European Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage.
- To provide high quality, effective and targeted Local Authority Support in a timely manner.
- To ensure the Local Authority supports schools and education settings to make Full and Effective use of Legal Powers
- To ensure the overarching theme of safeguarding children is linked to all priorities.

**Persistent Absence**

Persistent Absence thresholds have changed from when they were first introduced in 2005/6, where pupils with attendance below 80% were originally identified in this category. This is equivalent to 1 day absent per 5 day week.

The threshold was adjusted to 85% and below in 2010/11 to raise expectations in recognition of improvements to attendance nationally. The last a change to 90% threshold level occurred in 2015/16. This is equivalent to ½ day absent per 5 day week.

Persistent Absence Threshold 80%	Up to 2009/10
Persistent Absence Threshold 85%	Up to 2014/15
Persistent Absence Threshold 90%	From 2015/16

All historic figures given for persistent absence are based on the **current** methodology of 90% threshold. This section uses the "5 terms" data as "6 terms" data is not available before 2012/13.

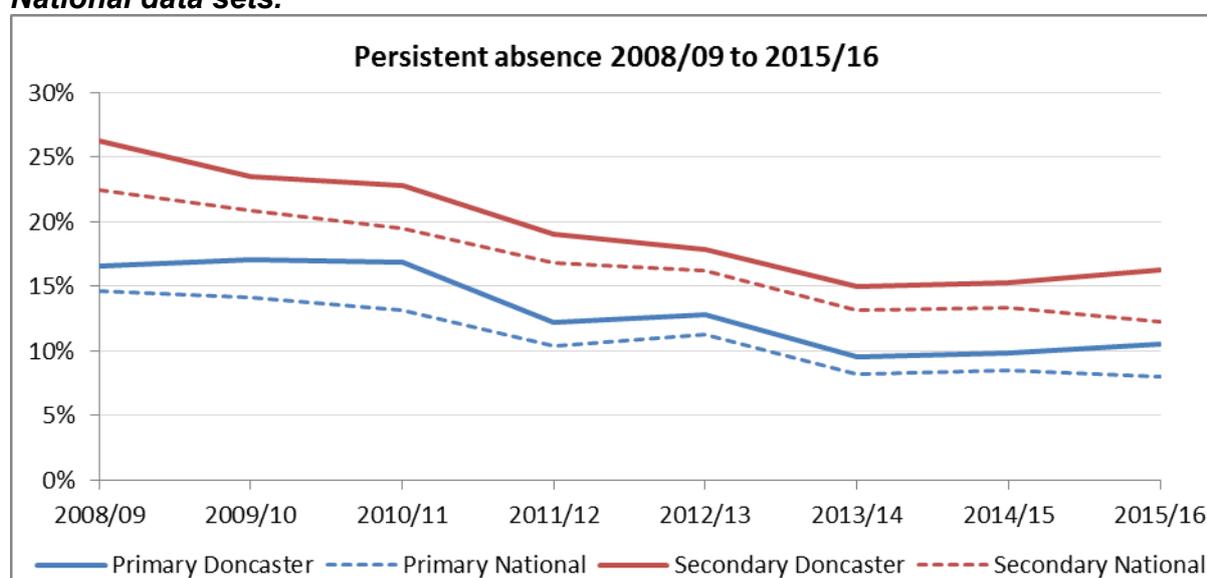
**Primary Mainstream Schools Persistent Absence**

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>Doncaster</b>	16.6%	17.1%	16.9%	12.2%	12.8%	9.5%	9.8%	10.5%
<b>National</b>	14.6%	14.1%	13.2%	10.4%	11.3%	8.2%	8.5%	8.2%
<b>Gap</b>	2%	3%	<b>3.7%</b>	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%	2.3%

**Secondary Mainstream Schools Persistent Absence**

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>Doncaster</b>	26.3%	23.5%	22.8%	19.0%	17.9%	15.0%	15.3%	16.3%
<b>National</b>	22.5%	20.9%	19.5%	16.8%	16.2%	13.2%	13.4%	13.1%
<b>Gap</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	2.6%	3.3%	2.2%	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	3.2%

**Table 1.1- Doncaster Primary and Secondary Persistent Absence compared to National data sets.**



**Graph 1.1 - Doncaster Primary and Secondary Persistent Absence compared to National data sets.**

Table 1.1 and Graph 1.1 show how Doncaster has always been above the figures for persistent absence for eight years, compared with National in both phases of education. In general Secondary schools in Doncaster have had a larger gap between Doncaster schools compared to national data. The highest gap was 2015/16 when the threshold for Persistent absence was increased to 90% with +3.2% above national. The lowest gap for secondary schools was 2012/13 with +1.7% above national. This was the third year when the threshold was 85% for persistent absence. When comparing the gap in 2010/11 when the 85% threshold was first introduced Doncaster gap with national was +3.3%. The trend during the five year period for the 85% threshold was improving up to 2012/13 with slight increases for the next 2 years. When the threshold was increased to 90% the gap widened to +3.2% compared to national figures in 2015/16.

In Doncaster primary schools the largest gap with national was 2010/11 with +3.7%. This coincided with the introduction of the 85% threshold. There was an improvement the following year 2011/12 where the gap was reduced to +1.8%. The gap with national was at its lowest in 2013/14 & 2014/15 at 1.3%. The gap increased when the 90% threshold was introduced in 2015/16 to +2.3%

Overall Doncaster schools have not been in line with national averages for the last 8 years up to 2015/16. Although there were improvements made they were not sustained. Each time the threshold was increased there were widening gaps with national data. This points to a need to focus on persistent absence to close the gaps with national data that must be sustained.

## 96% attendance means a pupil has been absent for 8/190 days in an academic year

### Vulnerable pupil groups

Missed learning in the form of poor attendance, makes young people more vulnerable. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals in Doncaster has been above the national averages in both primary and secondary schools over a period of 8 years up to 2015/16. By focusing on 2015/16 there were 15.8% in primary compared to national average of 14.1% and 14.8% in secondary compared to national average of 12.9%. See table 2.1 below. Family circumstances are more diverse than ever, early childhood development is poorer than many other Authorities. Figures for free school meals in primary schools nationally are higher than secondary schools. Changes in figures year on year show how the threshold for claiming free school meals have changed not necessarily due to families having an increase in income when looking at the drop in percentages from 2014/15, this is reflected at national level as well as in Doncaster.

The largest gap in primary between national data and Doncaster was 2013/14 with a gap of +3.5% in Doncaster compared to national. In secondary schools the largest gap was 2012/13 with a gap of +1.6% from national data. This was also the highest percentage over an 8 year period in Doncaster for both primary and secondary schools, 21.2% and 16.7% respectively.

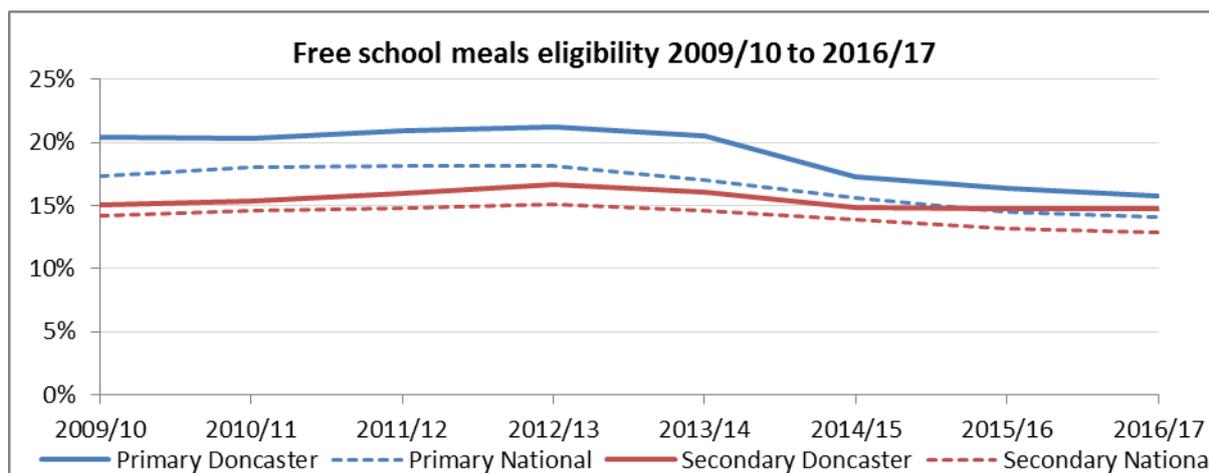
#### Percentage of primary school pupils eligible for free school meals

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Doncaster	20.4%	20.3%	20.9%	21.2%	20.5%	17.3%	16.4%	15.8%
National	17.3%	18.0%	18.1%	18.1%	17.0%	15.6%	14.5%	14.1%
Gap	+3.1	+2.3	+2.8	+3.1	<b>+3.5</b>	+1.7	+1.9	+1.7

#### Percentage of secondary school pupils eligible for free school meals

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Doncaster	15.1%	15.4%	16.0%	16.7%	16.1%	14.9%	14.8%	14.8%
National	14.2%	14.6%	14.8%	15.1%	14.6%	13.9%	13.2%	12.9%
Gap	+0.9	+0.6	+1.2	<b>+1.6</b>	+1.5	+1	+0.9	+1.9

**Table 2.1 – Doncaster primary and secondary schools pupils eligible for free school meals compared to national data.**



**Graph 2.1 – Doncaster primary and secondary schools pupils eligible for free school meals compared to national data.**

Ofsted expect schools to have a clear understanding of their vulnerable groups of pupils in relation to attendance. Schools should be able to analyse their data to demonstrate how each group is performing compared to one another. Missed learning due to poor attendance makes children and young people more vulnerable to lower educational outcomes and places them at risk in terms of safeguarding. Doncaster and partner agencies will need to work collaboratively to ensure the level of support required for these pupils is coordinated effectively to have an impact on individual pupils and families.

#### **Vulnerable cohorts of pupils include:**

- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium
- Children and young people identified as having SEND either as a statutory EHCP or at SEN Support
- Children with a medical condition
- Children Looked After
- Children/young people subject to a child protection plan
- Children/young people classified as a child in need
- Young carers
- Gypsy/ Roma/ Travellers of Irish heritage
- Pregnant School girls/teenage parents
- Children Missing Education – either on a school roll or not allocated a place
- Children/young people who are persistently late to school
- Children and young people on part time or reduced timetables
- Children and young people who are excluded Fixed term/Permanent/ at risk of exclusion

**Good attendance at school is an important factor that ensures pupils have maximum life chances and is strongly linked to educational achievement.**

**Pupils with 95% attendance – 73% achieve 5 GCSE A\*-C or equivalent including English & Mathematics**

**Factors associated with absenteeism**

*Studies have found that many contextual factors are associated with absenteeism. Factors discussed below include neighbourhood attributes, school building conditions, pupil health conditions, and grade retaining policies.*

*A large scale US study by Gottfried (2014) indicates that the neighbourhood context can influence school absenteeism in urban youth. The results from the study show significant relationships between school absences and neighbourhood attributes such as poverty, family structure, homeownership status, and race.*

*Simons et al. (2010) found that building conditions in Upstate New York schools was also a contributing factor. An association was found between student absenteeism and adverse school building conditions such as visible mould, humidity, poor ventilation, vermin, building system or structural problems related to these conditions. These 43 effects were stronger in schools in lower socioeconomic areas and in schools attended by younger students.*

*Researchers have also investigated the impact of certain health factors, along with socioeconomic status. In a US-based study of 920 fourth grade pupils, Baxter (2011) found no statistically significant relationship between absenteeism and Body Mass Index or Socio-economic Status (operationalised as eligibility for free/reduced price school meals). This result does contradict other research (see for example Gottfried, 2014, cited above), and more robust investigation may be needed to understand the interplay of socio-economic status and absenteeism.*

*Finally, a quasi-experimental study by Gottfried (2013b) examined the effect of retained pupils (pupils who repeat a year) on the outcomes of other students in the same classroom. Results showed that a greater percentage of retained classmates increased other students' absence rates. Because the effect was only present on unexcused absences, and not excused absences, this suggests that grade retention increases disengagement levels in other students in the classroom.*

(A guide to absence statistics. Department for Education

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602572/Guide\\_to\\_absence\\_statistics\\_2203217.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602572/Guide_to_absence_statistics_2203217.pdf) p42)

**Pupils with attendance below 92% risk dropping a GCSE grade;  
this is equivalent to 17 days absent in a year.**

**Approaches to reduce absenteeism – in line with the impact of absenteeism on achievement**

*A literature review by Kearney and Graczyk (2014) identifies the need for identifying and intervening early, monitoring progress overtime, assessing functional behaviour, and the implementation of evidence-based procedures and protocols, and of team-based approaches.*

*Researchers have also focussed on absence due to ill health (Wilkie 2011; 2012), and approaches to keeping those pupils in education. Wilkie (2012) conducted a qualitative case study of 22 senior secondary students and their mathematics teachers. The study found widespread ambiguities about educational responsibility for students during absence due to ill health. Teachers also demonstrated surprise in finding out that their students wished to continue their studies, and also a degree of hesitance to initiate contact with students. Students nevertheless expressed their desire for teachers to remain involved with them.*

*Wilkie (2011) discusses the potential of using online collaboration to allow for academic continuity for pupils with absence due to chronic ill health. The study finds that early data from the 'Information and Communications Technology addressing educational disadvantage due to remoteness or prolonged absence from school' project (Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, 2007), have demonstrated the potential of videoconferencing, online 'whiteboarding', and interactive whiteboard application sharing for pupils in this situation. The authors also acknowledge that this approach requires particular resources and infrastructures, and support for teachers.*

(A guide to absence statistics. Department for Education

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602572/Guide\\_to\\_absence\\_statistics\\_2203217.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602572/Guide_to_absence_statistics_2203217.pdf) p43

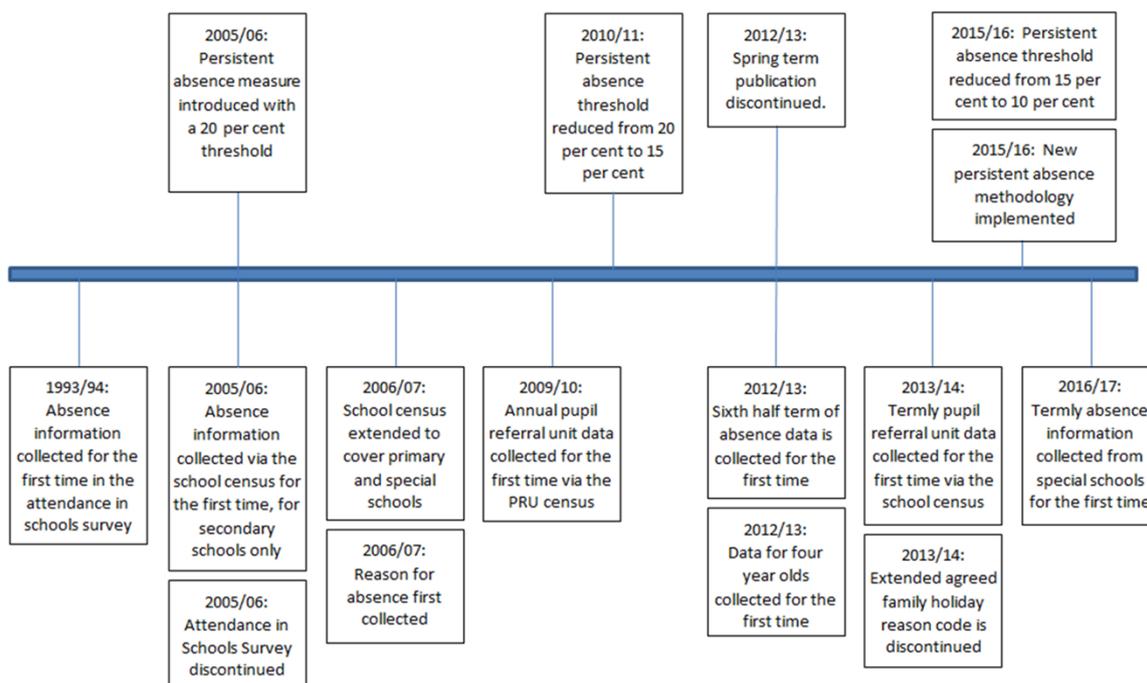
**Pupils with attendance between 80% - 90% only 35% achieve 5 GCSE A\*-C or equivalent including English & Mathematics**

**90% of Persistently Absent pupils fail to achieve 5 GCSE A\*-C or equivalent including English & Mathematics.**

**33% of Persistent Absentees fail to achieve any GCSE grades at all.**

**Pupils with 50% or more absence – only 3% achieve 5 GCSE A\*-C or equivalent including English & Mathematics**

### Attendance data collection – Timeline of key events



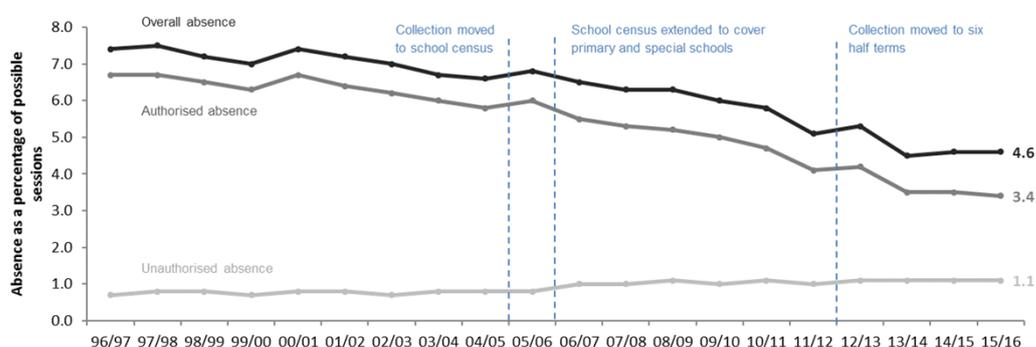
(A guide to absence statistics. Department for Education

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602572/Guide\\_to\\_absence\\_statistics\\_2203217.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602572/Guide_to_absence_statistics_2203217.pdf) p55

### Annex G – Absence rates over time

The chart and table below shows overall, authorised and unauthorised absence rates, comparing absence levels from when collected via the attendance in schools survey to those collected via the school census. Comparisons here are for contextual information only and should be treated with caution as the survey and census did not collect information on the same basis – see background of absence data collection for further information. Current national statistics compare absence rates to the earliest comparable academic year, 2006/07.

**Table 13: State-funded primary, secondary and special schools – Absence rates 1996/97 to 2015/16**



(A guide to absence statistics. Department for Education

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/602572/Guide\\_to\\_absence\\_statistics\\_2203217.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602572/Guide_to_absence_statistics_2203217.pdf) p56)

**Doncaster compared to National - Primary school absence**

		07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Doncaster	Auth	5.2%	5.0%	5.0%	4.7%	4.0%	4.1%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
	Unauth	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%
	Total	5.8%	5.7%	5.8%	5.7%	4.8%	5.2%	4.2%	4.4%	4.4%
National	Auth	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	4.3%	3.7%	3.9%	3.0%	3.1%	3.1%
	Unauth	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%
	Total	5.3%	5.3%	5.2%	5.0%	4.4%	4.7%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%

**Doncaster compared to National - Secondary school absence**

		07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Doncaster	Auth	6.4%	5.9%	5.6%	5.3%	4.7%	4.5%	3.7%	3.6%	4.0%
	Unauth	2.1%	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%	1.8%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%	2.5%
	Total	8.6%	8.1%	7.7%	7.4%	6.5%	6.6%	5.9%	5.9%	6.4%
National	Auth	5.9%	5.7%	5.4%	5.1%	4.6%	4.5%	3.9%	4.0%	3.8%
	Unauth	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.4%
	Total	7.3%	7.2%	6.9%	6.5%	5.9%	5.9%	5.2%	5.3%	5.2%

**Table 3.1 – Doncaster overall absence compared to national 9 year trend**

When comparing the level of absence at primary and secondary level in Doncaster with National figures it is possible to notice that Doncaster has higher levels of absence than national in both phases. The largest gap in primary schools was 2010/11 at +0.7% whereas in secondary schools the largest gap was 2007/8 +1.3%.

Primary school absence in Doncaster compared to national had the largest gap in 2010/11 at +0.7%. The narrowest gap was +0.3% in 2013/14 remaining at +0.4% in the following two years. When considering authorised absence compared to unauthorised absence figures; Doncaster primary schools were in line with national for authorised absence from 2013/14. However the difference in absence was due to the increase in unauthorised absences in Doncaster schools since 2012/13. Doncaster ranged from 1.1% - 1.4% between 2012/13 – 2015/16 compared to national data ranging from 0.8%- 0.9% in the same period. This shows how Doncaster schools were coding absence and not authorising more absences than national levels.

In secondary schools the gap narrowed to a low of +0.6% in 2011/12 and 2014/15 increasing to +1.2% in 2015/16. The increased gap from +0.6% to +1.2% is a huge concern when looking at 2014/15 and 2015/16. The threshold for persistent absence increased nationally to 90% in 2015/16 but additional investigation is needed to explain the increase in absence between the two consecutive academic years.

When looking at fixed term exclusions for Doncaster secondary schools in 2015/16 it is clear to see the increase in absence can be linked to the data for fixed term exclusions almost doubling when compared to 2014/15. At school level Mexborough, Balby Carr, Don Valley, Ash Hill, De Warrenne, Ridgewood & Hall Cross showed marked increases in the number of fixed term exclusions in 2015/16. Outwood Adwick with the highest number of fixed term exclusions had more than doubled in 2013/14 with a slight drop in 2014/15 and 2015/16 yet remained the highest fixed term excluding secondary school in the LA.

A focus on authorised absence compared to unauthorised absence shows how Doncaster has higher levels of unauthorised absence compared to national for the nine years represented in table 3.1. Doncaster unauthorised absence has ranged from 1.8% in 2011/12 to its highest level of 2.5% in 2015/16. National data ranges from 1.3% to 1.5% during the same period. A focus on unauthorised absence and what schools are putting into place to reduce this type of absence to be in line with national should be implemented from 2017/18.

### **Yorkshire and Humber region average attendance is 95.3% and Persistent absence is one of the highest regions nationally at 11.3%**

	<b>Doncaster</b>	<b>Yorks &amp;Humber</b>	<b>Stat Neighbours</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Absence (pri)</b>	4.4%	4.1%	4.1%	4.0%
<b>Absence (sec)</b>	6.4%	5.5%	5.5%	5.2%
<b>Absence (total)</b>	5.3%	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%
<b>PA (pri)</b>	11.1%	8.9%	8.5%	8.2%
<b>PA (sec)</b>	17.5%	14.2%	14.2%	13.1%
<b>PA (total)</b>	13.8%	11.3%	11.1%	10.5%

**Table 4.1 – Absence and persistent absence for Primary and Secondary schools 2015/16**

It is possible to consider Doncaster data with regional, statistical neighbours and national data. Table 4.1 shows how Doncaster compared with all data sets is higher for the levels of absence and persistent absence. When comparing Doncaster with statistical neighbours the gap for absence in primary schools is +0.3%, Secondary schools is higher at +0.9%. The overall gap is +0.6% for all schools in Doncaster compared to statistical neighbours. As a bench mark figure Doncaster needs to firstly come in line with its statistical neighbours, and ideally in line with national data.

The persistent absence gaps with statistical neighbours at primary level is +2.6% compared to secondary schools with a gap of +3.3%. In both cases a focus on the levels of persistent absence that are significantly higher than statistical neighbours is needed to ensure data is aligned to regional, statistical neighbours and national figures.

Data collected from Autumn 2016 for secondary schools showed levels of persistent absence for all secondary schools apart from Danum Academy. The following eight schools were above 20%. Outwood Adwick 20.6%; Trinity 20.9%; De Warrene 22%; Don Valley 24.3%; Ash Hill 25.3%; XP 26.7%; Mexborough 30.3% and Balby Carr 30.8% (placed into Special measures by Ofsted April 2017). There were six schools above national and below 20% for persistent absence – Campsmount and Hall Cross 14.8%; Ridgewood and Rossington 15.9%; McAuley 16.3% and Armthorpe 17.4%. Only 3 schools were at or below national averages for persistent absence during this period – Hayfield; Hungerhill and Sir Thomas Wharton.

Further investigation of primary schools with high levels of persistent absence needs to be carried out to identify which primary schools are partner schools for the schools with the highest levels of persistent absence. This would allow a locality action plan to be developed to concentrate resources to make improvements.

From the cabinet report that prompted this document nine primary schools were reported to have persistent absence ranging from 20.1% to 34.2% (Hexthorpe 20.1%; St Marys 20.8%; Grange Lane 22.2%; West Road 22.4%; Hillside 22.6%; Waverley 22.7%; Toll Bar 31.9%; Moss Road Infants 33.3% and Holy Family 34.2%). When we consider the figures for Persistent Absence, nationally is 8.2%, regionally 8.9% and statistical neighbours is 8.5% a focus on primary schools with excessively high levels of persistent absence must be implemented.

### **How schools can promote attendance and reduce persistent absence**

In order for attendance and persistent absence to improve across Doncaster opportunities to identify and share good practice will be necessary. Nationally recognised good practice in schools who have successfully tackled poor attendance and persistent absence have the following in place:

- The Attendance Leader is a member of the Senior Leadership Team who provides reports to The Senior Leadership Team/Governors and directs the strategic leadership of attendance across the school
- The Attendance Policy is regularly reviewed - annually- clearly identifies how attendance is managed and monitored, with clear systems, roles and responsibilities of staff/leaders and shared with all stakeholders to reflect practice within the school. Governors are consulted along with other stakeholders and ratify the policy
- There is a dedicated Governor responsible for attendance, who is knowledgeable and actively engaged in monitoring pupil attendance to support and challenge the school leadership team
- There are realistic yet challenging annual targets set by governors and used as an indicator of whole school performance and progress
- All registers are completed in line with the school procedures as part of safeguarding children by encouraging punctuality and regular attendance to school
- An admission and attendance register is accurately kept by the school and regularly quality assured by a senior member of the leadership team and are in line with statutory requirements
- Follow the statutory regulations and requirements for removing pupils from the admissions register
- All registers record a morning and an afternoon attendance mark for all pupils

- First day calling procedures are in place with robust and timely follow up to ensure all pupils are accounted for in terms of safeguarding
- The school analyses its data in terms of whole school, groups, vulnerable cohorts and individual pupils to spot patterns and any changes in attendance to promote efficient and timely monitoring and referral systems that provide support when appropriate
- The school uses the national attendance codes correctly as regards authorised and unauthorised absence, including a rigorous approach to sanctioning holidays in term time in line with LA and national guidelines.
- Notify the LA of any unexplained absences above 10 continuous school days clearly documenting what the school had done to ascertain the whereabouts of a child as part of safeguarding procedures
- The school works in partnership with parents/carers by actively seeking to develop effective and strong links for the benefit of pupils.
- Have a system of interventions that are internal to the school or external such as Early Help Assessments to support a pupil to improve their attendance
- Make referrals to the LA for any statutory casework / fixed penalty notices whilst continuing to support a child to attend using whole school systems
- Keep accurate records of interventions/support offered to encourage good and improved attendance. Early intervention, a chronology of all contact linked to pupil absence with the pupil, parents/carers and other agencies. This evidence may be required if legal proceedings are in place
- Archive registers for three years and make them accessible to LA Officers when required
- Schools across the LA share good practice and work together to ensure children have access to fulltime education
- Free schools/Academies can purchase support from the LA

## **Pupils who are persistent absentees in Primary School are likely to be Persistent Absentees at Secondary School.**

### **How the Local Authority will promote attendance and fulfil statutory duties**

- The local authority receives national data sets as part of the Statistical First Release (SFR) in order to measure the success of Doncaster, whilst being in a position to make comparisons with the Yorkshire and Humber region, with statistical neighbours and at national level.
- The national figures will be the benchmark to make direct comparisons with individual schools. This ensures targets are linked to national expectations and raises aspirations as part of school improvement across Doncaster.
- The LA will set realistic but challenging attendance targets for attendance and persistent absence. Progress against these targets will enable the LA to demonstrate that the early intervention and prevention approach is having a positive impact on the children, young people and families that have been supported across all schools.
- The LA will track and monitor attendance as a means of targeting resources in support of early intervention and prevention to support schools as they manage attendance at school level.
- The LA will offer a traded service of Officers that schools can choose to access as additional support and to fulfil statutory processes. This service will be coordinated by a Senior Officer as LA Lead for Attendance.
- A team of LA Officers, school staff and partners will form an Attendance Strategy Group to deliver this plan, monitor its effectiveness, report to key members of the LA and schools

- Ensure all multi agency safeguarding processes are followed and feedback to schools
- Provide opportunities for school professionals to receive regular updates, share good practice and access relevant training
- Develop strategies to promote and celebrate good attendance at schools and for pupils attending out of authority provision
- The strategy will consider any changes to local authority and schools responsibilities around part time timetables and exclusions.

### **LA Statutory duties**

- Where children of compulsory school age are not receiving suitable education, the LA has a duty to initiate legal proceedings
- Monitor and challenge school attendance registers and data for all schools who access LA support
- To ensure all schools comply with the Registration Regulations, England 2006 and all other legislation related to attendance
- To follow and implement the appropriate legislation linked to child employment and entertainment.
- To have a rigorous and robust process for Children Missing Education and ensure schools are aware of the process and engage with it effectively
- To issue penalty notices for absence following the agreed protocol
- To comply with the legal duty to service School Attendance Orders on parents/carers
- When a parent/carer breaches a School Attendance Order the LA will initiate proceedings against them
- Where a child of school age is not receiving suitable education the LA has a duty to consider the use of an Education Supervision Order.

**Free School Meal Pupils attendance nationally is 93% compared to Non Free School Meals Pupils attendance nationally is 95.9%.**

**Free School Meal Pupils Persistent Absence nationally is 21.6% compared to Non Free School Meals Pupils attendance nationally is 8.2%.**

### **Admissions, Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service**

#### **Statutory Duties of this team include Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education**

- ✓ Prepare court papers and attend trials to fulfil the responsibilities of the full casework and evidence strong support and challenge
- ✓ Ensure the safeguarding of children not seen in accordance with the 10 day reporting
- ✓ Issue Penalty Notices in line with the locally agreed protocol

### Children Missing Education

- ✓ Children Missing Education (CME) are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll and who are not receiving a suitable education elsewhere: for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision (Education and Inspections Act 2006)
- ✓ Children missing from education are amongst the most vulnerable in our communities. They may be from disadvantaged families, travelling communities, immigrant families, be unaccompanied asylum seeking or trafficked children, or be at risk of neglect or abuse and it is vital that all practitioners work together to identify and re-engage these children back in to appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. Any child who is identified as not being on roll at a school and not receiving any appropriate education MUST be placed on the Children Missing Education Register. This includes children who have applied for a school place but not yet admitted to a school and children who have been removed from a school register before being placed on another school roll. Doncaster Council has developed and implemented a robust, effective and sustainable system for monitoring and preventing children being missing from education. The procedures in place will ensure early identification, location and engagement of the children who are missing from education and will ensure Doncaster Council meets its statutory duties relating to the provision of education and safeguarding the welfare of children missing education (Section 14 (1), S7, S437 (1), S19 (1), S19 (4a) of the 1996 Education Act, S175 of 2002 Education Act, Circular 11/99 Social Inclusion: the Local Education Authority role in pupil support, Children's Act 2004;)
- ✓ The procedures will help to ensure that all children in Doncaster achieve the five core outcomes under the Children's Act (2004): 'Being Healthy; Staying Safe; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution; Achieving Economic Well-Being'. It is the responsibility of all professionals who work with children to ensure the following procedures are implemented.
- ✓ It is often the case that another agency becomes aware of the existence of a child living in the area but not in education before the Local Authority becomes aware. Links are made with all relevant stakeholders in order to raise awareness of children missing from education and the procedures to notify the Local Authority.

Children go missing from the education system for various reasons. For instance, they may:

- Fail to start school at Reception, never entering the authority's system
- Fail to complete transition between Key Stage 1 and 2 or Key Stage 2 and 3
- Be excluded from school and further provision is not immediately put in place
- Be withdrawn by parent/carer
- Have parents/carers who chose Elective Home Education, but following advice and support the education provided is unsuitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special needs they may have
- Leave Private/Independent Schools
- Seek refuge due to Domestic Abuse
- Become homeless
- Have long-term medical or emotional health problems
- Move to a different Local Authority and no school place is identified

- Arrive in the country via asylum, refugee status or as EU nationals
- Leave the country

Children not engaged in education provision can be exposed to greater risks including being at risk of physical harm or neglect, sexual exploitation, anti-social behaviour and/or criminal activity. These children need to be re-engaged back into education quickly in order to achieve their full potential and reduce the risk of harm.

- ✓ At the time of writing this report Doncaster have 233 active cases on CME of which 205 are pupils who have applied for and are waiting to go on roll at a school.

### **Elective Home Education Team – Statutory duties**

- ✓ Parents who elect to home educate must inform their child's school, in writing, of their intention to do so. On receipt of this letter a school can remove the child from their roll. The school should forward the parent's letter, together with the school's information form, to the Local Authority via the School's Portal system (LAGAN). The Local Authority Elective Home Education team will then contact parent to request further information and to arrange a visit if appropriate. If a child is on roll at a Special School then a Review must be called as the Local Authority have to agree to the removal from school roll to home educate. If the child has never attended a school then parents are under no legal obligation to inform the Local Authority that they are home educating.
- ✓ A parent who elects to home educate takes on full responsibility for their child's education provision, including any financial costs. They do not have to follow the National Curriculum or adhere to 'school hours'. Parents do not have to accept a visit from the EHE Officer and may choose to submit a written report instead.
- ✓ Parents are responsible for providing an education that is 'full time and suitable'. The Local Authority has no statutory duty to monitor EHE but has duty to intervene if they believe a suitable education is not being provided. In Doncaster the aim is to support parents by providing advice and guidance around home education. If, however, following this support it appears that suitable provision is not in place steps would be taken to return the child to school. A referral is made to the In Year Fair Access Panel for a school place to be allocated. A School Attendance Order may be issued if the child does not attend the allocated school.
- ✓ At the time of writing this report the current number on EHE in Doncaster was 380, approximately 90 of these are Travellers. The figure is steadily rising. Nationally the number on home education is rising with some Authorities reporting that their numbers have tripled or quadrupled. In Doncaster (and Nationally) the rising numbers also reflect a change in the circumstances for a family choosing to home educate. There has been an increase in SEN pupils particularly those on the Autistic Spectrum or those awaiting a diagnosis. That number has gone from below 5% of the cohort to above 10% in three years. There has also been a rise in the numbers of pupils at risk of exclusion, those with attendance issues at risk of prosecution and those with Social Care/Early Help involvement – Doncaster's most vulnerable young people. The EHE team endeavour to visit any new EHE family where concerns have been expressed either by school or another agency promptly so that a return to school can be actioned, where necessary, with as little interruption to the child's education as possible. The EHE team would also challenge schools where parents indicate that they have been 'encouraged' to home educate i.e. to avoid prosecution, exclusion.
- ✓ For some families the decision to home educate is both rewarding and successful with their children progressing on to lead fulfilling lives. Children from this cohort do go on to take

GCSEs, enrol at sixth forms, enter University. The EHE Officer aims to support these families by providing useful information and signposting to opportunities available in Doncaster. Currently the EHE Officer is working with a local school to look at providing a GCSE exam centre that can consistently provide opportunities for EHE young people to take a range of GCSE exams.

### **Admissions, Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service – Traded Offer to schools**

Since April 2017 schools have an opportunity to purchase support from the Local Authority by requesting the level of service they believe they need to support their overall attendance and persistent absence.

- ✓ Provide bespoke tailored support for the individual school to reduce Overall Absence and Persistent Absence
- ✓ Analyse data to plan intervention, offer advice and guidance to schools
- ✓ Work to tackle Overall Absence and Persistent Absence in partnership with other Doncaster agencies and services
- ✓ Ensuring that Doncaster residents with siblings and friends in different schools are supported and challenged with some consistency across Doncaster
- ✓ Support full complex cases with barriers to attendance through quality casework, assessments of need, family work, intervention and wider multi agency approaches through to legal proceedings when appropriate
- ✓ Support the Implementation of a whole school policy and initiatives to tackle attendance
- ✓ Undertake regular checks of attendance registers and ensure processes are in place with school to ensure a timely and planned approach to non attendance and punctuality
- ✓ Support schools to promote and reward good attendance
- ✓ Provide updates in legislation and implementation around attendance
- ✓ Support schools to identify and initiate Penalty Notices unauthorised absences due to holidays in term time when it is part of the schools attendance policy
- ✓ Liaise and check with other agencies including the Early Help Hub for wider service involvement and to avoid isolated working or duplication.
- ✓ Issue Penalty Notices in line with the locally agreed protocol
- ✓ Provide quality assurance for school attendance registers, coding and data production.
- ✓ Work with partners to cascade relevant information to protect the most vulnerable
- ✓ Education Welfare Officers work with schools to identify and support children and young people who are not attending school regularly. This role involves complex casework and implementing initiatives.
- ✓ Home visits are made to the family homes and assessments are undertaken as appropriate alongside referrals to other agencies and partners for additional support.

**Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) pupils with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) attendance nationally is 92.3% compared to pupils without SEND & EHCP attendance 95.8%.**

**Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) pupils with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) Persistent Absence nationally is 22.6% compared to pupils without SEND & EHCP Persistent Absence is up to 3 times lower at around 7.5%.**

Individual schools should have systems that will allow them to create reports to identify if they are in line with national data for SEND and other vulnerable groups. It is expected that schools can demonstrate how vulnerable groups perform to cohorts within their own school as well as national levels.

**Irish Traveller attendance nationally is 82.1% and Gypsy Roma Traveller pupils is 87.3%.**

**Irish Traveller persistent absence nationally is 63.2%.**

## Role & responsibilities of wider partners

### The Behaviour and Inclusion Team

- Ensure statutory functions in respect of Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusions from any education setting are adhered to without exception.
- Ensure pupils who are permanently excluded are financially supported to access high quality alternative education provision.
- Triage and case manage in collaboration in schools to reduce permanent exclusions and the frequency of Fixed Term Exclusions within the Authority by coordinating managed moves, provision changes, personalised learning and OOA placements via the Behaviour Panel.
- Management of Alternative provisions- PRU's, AP providers & cluster Learning Centres to ensure they are providing outstanding education provision for young people with specialist needs.
- Develop outreach provision that meets the needs of young people and focuses on progress towards clear outcomes
- Lead Outstanding Behaviour Programme including multi-agency collaboration
- Add value to current behaviour support practices within schools, academies & PRU's via training and Network opportunities

### Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) (Social Care)

- ✓ DCST Children's Social Care under take assessments of children in collaboration with other relevant professionals.
- ✓ The assessment will look at all aspects of the child's developmental needs, including their educational needs.
- ✓ Social workers include educational needs and attendance when working with families and ensure that good attendance is built into plans as a priority, children not on a roll in school identified by Social Care will be referred to Children Missing from Education / Admissions and Attendance Pupil Welfare Service. The Attendance, Admissions & Pupil Welfare Service will also make referrals to the D.C.S. Trust, supporting Working Together 2015.
- ✓ Securing good school attendance and educational provision is paramount to raising aspirations and achievement. Professionals will include attendance statistics in any early help, stronger families, PEP, team around a child, CIN plans and CP Plans. Any named social worker will be notified without delay where absence is noted, and the DCST Social Workers will work in

partnership with named designated safeguarding leads in schools/academies to recognise any risks identified with poor attendance, for example CSE.

### **Communities Area Team**

The aim of the Stronger Families Programme is to improve the way families are supported to improve their lives using a whole family approach through a lead practitioner model and building resilience; as well as reduce the demand on high cost services by identifying and intervening in families earlier.

- Doncaster successfully delivered the first phase of Stronger Families between 2012 and 2015, supporting over 1000 families and successfully *'turning around'* (DCLG criteria) 870 families as agreed with the Government.
- This has enabled Doncaster to be eligible for the Expanded Programme (AKA Phase 2) which is proposed as a 5 year programme (2015 -2020) with the first year guaranteed and the subsequent four to be agreed after the General Election May 2015 as part of the Autumn Spending Review statement in November.
- The Expanded Programme is named as such because it does just that, it has widened the eligibility criteria for families to be included so that local areas will be able to include the families that are of most concern to them, high cost or fit local priority issues. This programme is based on 6 family themes which families must have at least two to be eligible. These themes are:
  - 1. Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.**
  - 2. Children who have not been attending school regularly.**
  - 3. Children who need help.**
  - 4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness.**
  - 5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.**
  - 6. Parents and children with a range of health problems.**
- Stronger Families is not a service that can be referred into, it is a transformational programme and hence Stronger Families is everyone's business.
- We have there sought to embed the programme into all current services, agencies and partners current working rather than creating a separate team / service.
- There is additional support for services/ agencies / partners in terms of the innovation fund and posts are also funded by the programme to empower the change required to deliver true service transformation and enable services to work holistically across the family in a "stronger families ethos" of working

### **Magistrates**

- Legal Services, represented by the lawyer who has conduct of the particular matter, will fulfil the legal obligations in relation to the legal process concerning enforcement of school attendance and will liaise with the Local Authority Attendance leader to address any issues of concern. Key to this process is ensuring accurate and up to date documentations and statements are produced timely and provided to Legal Services for the court process.

- Legal Services will promote Doncaster's school attendance enforcement guidance and prosecution policy with magistrates and will seek to raise awareness of relevant issues through the Court as necessary. This will help to ensure that magistrates have a shared understanding of attendance issues and the criteria used when pursuing a prosecution with the aim of achieving better outcomes for our young people through evidencing the importance of education and the strategies Admissions Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service use to try to effect change before a prosecution.
- There is therefore likely to be a reduced likelihood of ineffective outcomes as a result of legal action having been taken against the parent of a non-attending child.

## **Police**

- There are 4 School Police Officers across Doncaster. Part of their work includes supporting children and young people to attend school regularly. Depending upon their availability Police Officers have attended school attendance panel meetings for individual pupils if they are involved with the police.
- Officers will stop pupils who are out in the community during school time to check why they are not in school. As follow up they will contact the school to say they have stopped a pupil in the community. Police officers reinforce the expectation that pupils should be in school.
- Police Officers have been known to support school staff to do home visits when pupils are not in school. This is on an ad hoc basis due to resource and other duties taking the first priority.

## **Local Authority Safeguarding Team**

- Working together, schools and the wider council staff must understand mandatory reporting duties and how to refer concerns to social care and access Doncaster Safeguarding Children Board (DCSB) child protection policy and procedures. Line managers are responsible for ensuring their staff can demonstrate their understanding via induction 1:1 meetings and Performance Development Reviews (PDR).
- Safeguarding training - all staff must access Safeguarding training at Level 1.
- DCSB has a free online learning module for staff to complete. DCSB/Engage Doncaster advertise a range of face to face additional safeguarding courses for example Signs of Safety and Early Help. All staff need to be aware of how to access safeguarding training. Other types of training linked to Safeguarding include: Designated Safeguarding Lead Level 3; Anti bullying; LGBTQ support and Trans toolkit; Prevent; FGM; CSE; Online safety; Safeguarding Health checks in partnership with Partners in Learning (PiL); Governor training and policy and procedures.
- The package provides appropriate training and advice to schools on safeguarding the welfare of children and child protection issues. This might include giving advice about vulnerable children, risk factors and record keeping for safeguarding. It covers training specific to children looked after by the Local Authority, young carers, children subject to child protection plans, and those living with domestic abuse.
- When schools are investigating patterns of absence they should consider Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) indicators, advice is provided by the team (3 minute guide).
- Reporting and ensuring schools implement any lessons learned from local or national serious case reviews where attendance was a factor.

## Post 16

The Education and Skills Act 2008 increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning, requiring them to continue in education or training to age 18 or until they achieve a full Level 3 qualification, whichever is the sooner.

For Raising the Participation Age, learning is defined as:

- ✓ Full-time education, school, college or home education
- ✓ Work based learning including Apprenticeship
- ✓ Part-time accredited education or training for 280 hours per year (the equivalent of 1 day per week) if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours per week

## Virtual School – Looked After Children

- ✓ Doncaster Council is the Corporate Parent to 538 Children Looked After (CLA) of whom 444 are of compulsory school age and attend schools in and beyond Doncaster. The Virtual School is a way of thinking about all these children as if they were pupils of one school with a Virtual School Head overseeing all aspects of their education including their attendance.
- ✓ Raising the educational attainment of all CLA is both a national and local priority and the Virtual School Head has a statutory duty to monitor outcomes for CLA and ensure that all staff are working together to promote the educational attainment of CLA by Doncaster wherever they are placed.
- ✓ (Children's Act 2004 S52). This includes working with the Admissions Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service to ensure that all CLA have good attendance.

## Virtual School – Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) and English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- ✓ The team supports vulnerable minority groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage, in having equitable access and inclusion into education.
- ✓ The Virtual School holds regular monitoring meetings with schools at which attendance is discussed for all GRT pupils. Where patterns of poor attendance are identified support and challenge takes place.
- ✓ Schools are also recommended to produce an annual report to their Governors which includes data showing how the attendance of GRT pupils as a group compares to the rest of the school. Key to this process is identifying what actions the school is taking to improve attendance for these vulnerable ethnic minority groups.
- ✓ The Virtual School also plan to offer training for the local authorities EWOs as well as school attendance officers around strategies to improve GRT attendance, (early in the autumn term) engaging parents in the whole process.

## Early Years

Research demonstrates that Children with poor attendance in their Early Years provision have little chance of recovering lost learning at the same rate as their peers who have attended regularly.

- ✓ The Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage (2017) and the Common Inspection Framework (2015) expects Early Years practitioners to promote good attendance within their settings.
- ✓ The reasons for children to attend regularly at their Early Years setting are to support their learning and development, to make sure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities.
- ✓ Good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance practice may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for a child or family and may have a vital part to play in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.
- ✓ The Early Years Inspection Handbook states: *'Although attendance at the setting is not mandatory, providers should be alert to patterns of absence that may indicate wider safeguarding concerns,. Inspectors will explore how well providers work with parents to promote children's good attendance, especially the attendance of children for whom the provider receives the early years pupil premium' (Page 41, point 160)*
- ✓ The EYFS guidance states that providers *'should have good policies and procedures in promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS; this includes keeping accurate records of the daily times of arrival and departure for each child. It is in the best interests of children and families that all settings are aware of effective practice. Settings are required to keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS (3.76 a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of each child's key person;)*
- ✓ The Early Years Service advises settings through both direct intervention, guidance and training of the following;
- ✓ Doncaster schools should operate similar procedures in their maintained Nursery and Reception classes as they do in compulsory mainstream to promote good attendance
- ✓ Through the Doncaster Early Years Entitlement Funding agreement and the Doncaster Early Years Safeguarding Audit that has been implemented across settings, there is an expectation that Private, Voluntary and Independent Settings will follow up on absences.
- ✓ The guidance in the Directory states that providers should seek to find reasons for any absence and the likely date of return and inform the Local Authority as soon as possible if the child is not returning to the setting. The Local Authority will not reclaim funding for a child who is temporarily absent during their free entitlement hours.
- ✓ Safeguarding training courses advise that if a setting has safeguarding concerns about a child and this child subsequently leaves the setting or a child has extended or an irregular pattern of attendance, this information is passed on to Social Care as quickly as possible, and also that, Early Years providers should have a protocol and operate a first day absence telephone call to the parent/carer. If there is a pattern of attendance or non-attendance a home visit is made.
- ✓ Before a child starts school a transition document is completed by any registered setting within Doncaster and given to the receiving school so as the receiving school have knowledge of their attendance whilst at nursery.

### **Elected members**

- ✓ Provide scrutiny of attendance, the initiatives and the breakdown of data across Doncaster. Support celebration events and media coverage.
- ✓ Consider central resources and wider partnership working.
- ✓ Link with council wide attendance management and strategy for council staff
- ✓ Identify a member as the Attendance Champion.

**Parents and Carers**

- ✓ Parents have a responsibility to ensure their child has regular attendance to school.
- ✓ They have legal responsibilities to ensure regular attendance at nursery and in schools and academies.
- ✓ Parents are expected to respond to concerns about attendance working in partnership with schools, Admissions Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service and other relevant support services

**Governing Bodies**

- ✓ As part of the overall Leadership and Management of a school or Academy, the governing body must reassure itself that the school keeps admission and attendance registers in accordance with the regulations. By identifying a Governor with responsibility for Attendance to work with the designated senior Leader for Attendance there will be a better understanding of the attendance practice of the school.
- ✓ The Governing body should also ensure that the school has an attendance policy and practice which reflects Doncaster Council's School Attendance Strategy, receive termly information in relation to Overall Attendance and Persistent Absence and ask the Head teacher/Principal to account for a decline in absence or poor rates of progress or celebrate share and promote the good practice throughout the school.

**School partnerships**

- ✓ Work together to develop common policy and practice across all schools in Doncaster Council.
- ✓ Offer peer support and scrutiny on improving attendance. Consider, where appropriate, the pooling of resources to support school attendance.
- ✓ Seek representation for pupils with attendance difficulties through links with the Health and Well Being Board and Doncaster Children's Safeguarding Board

**Systems Support Team**

- ✓ Provide relevant, accurate and up to date information and data to enable practitioners to monitor and manage attendance of pupils within Doncaster schools and academies.
- ✓ Assist services in developing appropriate strategies for increasing attendance, and understanding the reasons for absence by assisting relevant professionals in the interpretation of data / information

**Youth Offending Service**

- Pre-sentence reports include information for the court about how a young person is doing at school including their attendance and behaviour to help inform sentencing.
- Post sentencing young people on a Youth Conditional Caution or court order are allocated a Case Manager who completes an AssetPlus assessment which includes how they are engaging with school. If there are problems that require support then a referral is made to the YOS Education Co-Ordinator. Support can include transporting young people to school to

improve their attendance, working with the young person and their family to encourage good attendance (e.g. visual timetables where appropriate) and behaviour and attending school meetings. EPIC early intervention crime prevention clients may also be referred for a short piece of education work if required.

- We work to a target of 90% of young people engaged in ETE at the end of their order.
- The YOS Education Co-Ordinator attends and produces reports for DMBC Secondary Inclusion Panel, a multi-agency approach to improving behaviour and attendance. Checks are done for IYFAP Panel and the Panel is attended if any clients are discussed.
- The YOS Education Co-Ordinator works collaboratively with the Virtual School, Education Welfare Officers (including CME) and school Attendance Officers as required (attend attendance meetings, home visits, school visits, etc.) to improve attendance of clients.
- During a young person's order they will have regular appointments with their Case Manager who will encourage good school attendance and behaviour. This will also happen at order reviews.
- If a young person receives an Intensive Surveillance and Supervision requirement with their order then 15 hours of education becomes an enforced part of their order with breach of order possible for missed education attendance.

## Health

- ✓ Clinical Commissioning Group (CMG), Medical Officers, General Practitioners, School Nurses, Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- ✓ Health practitioners are encouraged to support improvements to attendance by offering, when possible, appointments for pupils of compulsory school age out of school hours.
- ✓ Health practitioners should aim to address inappropriate condoned parental absence for medical reasons and consider the ability of the pupils to access appointments for specialised services (e.g.) CAMHS and work with schools/academies and locality teams to address these matters
- ✓ Health practitioners attend any support meetings where health was identified as the main reason for poor school attendance and work with the child, family and other professionals to ensure physical health needs were being met and any appointments accessed. Should a parent persistently fail to take a child to an appointment, then this could be seen as Neglect and the appropriate action would be taken in relation to safeguarding the child.
- ✓ The School nursing team offer an e clinic appointment system where young people can have an 'on line' chat with the team. We have Facebook and Twitter and the School nursing app where young people can access our team for support and advice.
- ✓ Every secondary school has a Health & Well-Being clinic every 2 weeks where young people can access the team face to face
- ✓ We have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) where a young person, family member or professional can refer in to our service at any time.

## Education Standards and Effectiveness Officers

- ✓ Discuss Overall and Persistent Absence rates with Headteachers /Principals and liaise with Admissions, Attendance and Pupil Welfare staff regularly.
- ✓ Provide support and challenge in the process of target setting when appropriate
- ✓ Share schools' good practice in relation to attendance
- ✓ Support schools to improve through the school of concern process

## School of concern:

The Local Authority has a clear legal responsibility to monitor school performance and to intervene where necessary. The Education Standards and Effectiveness team will work gather information from a range of sources including StEPS reports, parental concerns and OFSTED inspections. There are a variety of potential triggers for a school being classified as a 'school of concern'. Poor attendance is one of these potential triggers alongside other areas such as attainment, progress, exclusions or safeguarding concerns. When a school is identified as a School of Concern the L.A. will work with schools and academies in order to diagnose priorities, broker support and ensure that there is clear impact. The L.A. will monitor this through a sequence of 'School of Concern' meetings

### **Early Help Hub**

With parental consent the Early Help Hub uses data to identify vulnerable families which includes young people with issues such as Persistent Absenteeism, SEN/D, school exclusions and Anti-Social Behaviour. This information is then shared with relevant practitioners who can support the family appropriately. The Early Help Hub and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs include Senior Education welfare practitioners.

### **The Pupil Level School Census**

The Pupil Level School Census is a termly electronic return. Information about absence will be collected for each pupil who has attended for at least one session during a particular period. The periods and dates of returns are:

- Between 1 September - 31 December on 3rd Thursday in January
- Between 1 January - Easter Sunday on 3rd Thursday in May
- Between Easter Monday - 31 May on 3rd Thursday in September

The September census will also collect data for 1 September to 31 May replacing the annual Absence Return

**Next steps actions as follow up from this report:**

1. Create an LA Attendance Strategy Team with representatives from different teams within the LA to collaborate and disseminate information to their teams and become part of their individual team action plans for academic year 2017/18 in to 2018/19.
2. All schools to receive a letter at the start of autumn term 2017 informing them about the Doncaster focus on reducing persistent absence and increasing attendance across all schools. All schools with PA above National figures (autumn term 2016 figures) of 13.1% = Secondary; 8.2% = Primary; 26.9% = Special schools; all schools = 10.5%; will become target schools from September 2017. This should be for Primary and Secondary schools. The letter will also explain schools who are above National will fall into the category of School of Concern.
3. The School of Concern category for attendance will include challenge, support and building capacity of schools to improve attendance and reduce Persistent Absence so it is in line with national with the aspiration of being better than national figures. Each school in this category will be set a target for attendance and Persistent Absence for the academic year 2017/18.
4. Training for School Governors regarding Attendance and Persistent Absence. Chair of Governors to receive notification of falling into the category of school of concern and what they can do to ensure their school improves. Headteachers/Principals performance management to reflect this category to show improvement and movement to achieve the new target during the academic year.
5. In line with data, the use of pupil premium funding to promote attendance for disadvantaged pupils will be a focus of the input from School Improvement. Also, SEND funding will be considered for those pupils who receive additional funding to meet the needs of their SEND.
6. A regular termly network and training event will be provided at the beginning of each term. This will be aimed at the School Strategic Leader for Attendance and the School Attendance Administrator. This will be an opportunity to access training, share good practice and develop strategies for schools to implement and report back on in subsequent Network meetings. There should be other training events/ support made available for schools to buy in as needed.
7. The LA will take the lead on borough wide Attendance initiatives at key points in the year where the data shows attendance usually dips. November; March and May are indicated as months of the year when there is a dip in attendance. This should complement/inform whole school initiatives run during these months. The support from partners to supply prizes and incentives for individual pupils with 100% and improved attendance during these months are needed. This will need to be marketed and promoted across the borough during these times.

8. The Attendance traded service must be regarded as a quality service that schools will want to buy in. It must be value for money and targeted at areas that have maximum impact. This will need to be developed further based on intelligence from the attendance team and schools. Doncaster could allocate some time free with the expectation the school buys in top up as a target school.
9. If the LA does not currently have a fast track initiative, to implement it by launching with schools and settings to provide guidance of when this will apply. Need to ensure Legal Services are kept up to date with this as it will result in a need for increased court time for the Fast Track penalty notices to be issued by the magistrates.
10. The use of Fixed Penalty Notice fines for absence will be routinely issued where pupils are not regularly attending and parents/carers are failing to ensure regular attendance to school in line with the Education act 444. This will need to be driven by schools who will refer cases on to the Attendance Team to carry out legal work and progress cases through this system.
11. Schools should ensure pupils are able to access fulltime education by refraining from using part time timetables for extended periods of time.
12. In year admissions should ensure a pupil is allocated a school swiftly and schools must ensure they are enrolled onto their admissions roll and register within a specified time frame to reduce the amount of time a pupil is without education provision.
13. An EWO/ LA Officer should be allocated to a pupil who is awaiting a school place to ensure they are safeguarded and quickly placed on a school roll. Maybe not with over 200 cases. Currently an administrator maintains records and alerts the CME team if a pupil has not taken up an offer of a school place.
14. School Improvement Officers will routinely provide support to schools to train staff to analyse data, identify strategies and interventions to improve attendance in the short and long term.
15. Schools will be required to review and update their Attendance Policy to ensure it reflects practice, meets legal requirements and demonstrates how staff work collectively to promote good and improving attendance. This will include whole staff training.
16. An attendance code analysis should be carried out at LA level and schools level to understand how the use of relevant coding explains absence data in particular. This can also be done at pupil level to explain the types of absence as a means of preventing absence in the future.
17. A focus on the use of 'B' and 'D' codes to ensure they are correctly applied.
18. A focus on codes for exclusion 'E' and the use of 'C' code and reasons for use at school level. Particularly pupils who receive a reduced timetable for a period of time to avoid exclusion.
19. The use of illness code 'I' to identify pupils and areas where high numbers of absence is caused by illness. This may require the support of health professionals to identify pupils with ongoing medical needs and the support they need to improve school attendance. This will include physical and mental health professionals.

20. The Virtual school team working to support Children in Care to improve their attendance to school and challenge schools to provide a full time education for this cohort of children.
21. Staff training via Partners in Learning to promote attendance via subject leader network meetings and other training for school professionals.
22. The use of Specialist Leaders in Education (SLE) with expertise in Attendance to support, challenge and build capacity with a commitment from schools to release SLEs with this expertise to share best practice.
23. At the end of the academic year celebrate success of schools to reduce Persistent Absence and increase Attendance.
24. Schools to reinforce how staff should welcome pupils back into school following absence, how they catch up with missed work/ lost learning, provided with support to return to school after an extended absence, e.g. circle of friends, copies of notes from lessons missed and an opportunity for an adult to get them back on track.
25. Schools to identify key pastoral staff and their capacity to support pupils with poor attendance.
26. Schools to carry out 'pupil voice' surveys such as 'The Lifestyle survey' to identify their views on attendance to school.
27. Multi agency approach to support pupils to access education and receive full time education.
28. Investigate how schools support disadvantaged pupils by utilising their pupil premium funding to encourage good and improving attendance for this cohort of pupils.
29. A focus on unauthorised absence and what schools are putting into place to reduce this type of absence to be in line with national should be implemented from 2017/18.
30. Further investigation of primary schools with high levels of persistent absence needs to be carried out to identify which primary schools are partner schools for the schools with the highest levels of persistent absence. This would allow a locality action plan to be developed to concentrate resources to make improvements.
31. When we consider the Persistent Absence figures for nationally is 8.2%, regionally 8.9% and statistical neighbours is 8.5% a focus on primary schools with excessively high levels of persistent absence must be implemented.
32. Conduct an Attendance Deep Dive for schools with exceptionally high levels of PA.

### **Monitoring and reviewing**

Doncaster Council in partnership with its schools and academies owns the attendance strategy and is accountable for its delivery. This strategy will be reviewed in July 2019

### **Priorities and success criteria**

- Attendance to increase across Doncaster schools and close the gap between the National Average to be in line or better than National average
- Persistent absence will decrease across Doncaster schools and close the gap between National average to be in line or better than National average
  
- Attainment to increase based on data that links GCSEs to attendance resulting in improved levels of attainment and outcomes for pupils, this includes vulnerable pupil groups; disadvantaged learners; SEND; LAC, Young Carers, minority ethnic groups
- Reduction in the number of young people Not in Employment Education or Employment (NEET)
- Reduction in absence due to holidays in term time
- Reduction in the number of children accessing education provision on a part time or reduced timetable
- A reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions that create absence and persistent absence
- Reduction in number of children requiring Child in Need (CiN); Child Protection Plans; taken into the care of the LA.
- A reduction in the use of absence codes for unauthorised absence
- Attendance/absence codes are correctly utilised to reflect the reason for absence or attendance as part of education provision
- Action plan to be achieved, reviewed and developed in line with key findings.

## **Appendix 1**

From the cabinet report Summer 2017

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current position regarding persistent absenteeism in schools and academies across the borough and ascertain if underlying issue of high levels of persistent absence across the authority can be attributed to the attendance of any particular vulnerable group of children or young people, or rather a generic issue around wider attendance issues linked to school culture, aspiration and achievement.

### **Proposed Actions/Update**

5. The steps actioned illustrated below provide the basis of a broad suite of actions to be undertaken to target schools with high persistent absence, and thus monitored and challenged under the schools of concern process.
  - In the absence of a substantive Admissions, Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service Manager, which has proven hard to appoint to, identify an interim resource to over the development of this programme.
  - Establish a secondary Senior Standards and Effectiveness Officer with oversight for attendance; to be recruited as part of the recruitment drive to appoint to the remaining vacant management posts.
  - Develop a borough wide strategy and programme for attendance, including the adoption by schools identified as causing concern in relation to persistent absence, including devising a clear action plan and targeted interventions from traded services, standards and effectiveness and attendance services, reinforcing the importance of good attendance.
  - Use the school of concern process to raise attendance issues with individual schools. The school of concern process now includes the schools identified above, all of which have persistent absence figures higher than the national average.
  - Aligning with the recommendations identified in the behaviour review, liaise with the behaviour service to challenge specific schools with high exclusion rates, mitigating, where possible an adverse negative impact on attendance.

- Monitor the effective use of pupil premium to ensure that individual schools with high levels of persistent absence target funding appropriately, against a clear action plan, the details of which can be assessed through the schools of concern process.
- Match the schools with the highest levels of absence with appropriate 'traded services', including the attendance service provision, provided through the attendance and pupil welfare service.
- Proactively work with those schools of concern without 'traded services' buy back to purchase the service on a bespoke/targeted basis.
- Through education services, including standards and effectiveness and attendance and pupil welfare services, provide robust challenge to those schools where persistent absenteeism is a significant issue.
- As part of an overall action plan, develop targeted initiatives in specific secondary academies to encourage good attendance. This would involve a whole school approach to developing resilience, self-esteem and aspiration where students can develop an understanding of the importance of attending school in terms of future prospects and life chances.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

6. The following options have been considered when reviewing persistent absence issues across schools in Doncaster.
  - Do nothing – this is not an option as raising persistent absence figures significantly impacts upon the achievement of children and young people, their life chances and potentially surrounding communities
  - Develop a targeted and focussed borough strategy and action plan to identify an action plan as part of the schools causing concern process and support schools with significantly high figures of persistent absence.

**Appendix 2****Legislation Statutory Intervention – Attendance Legal proceedings**

The Admissions Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service carries out the Local Authority's legal function to enforce school attendance from the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010.

**The available measures are:**

- Prosecution of parents under sections 444 (1) / 444 1 (A) of the Education Act 1996
- Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996 states 'if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, his / her parent is guilty of an offence'. This offence is one of 'strict liability', a legal term that means that the offence is committed whether the parent knew the child was absent or not. It is not a defence to say that the parents have tried everything in their power to get the child to school. The parent's efforts could be raised in mitigation if they were found guilty but would not amount to an outright defence. Defences against Section 444 are specific and set out in that section of the Act. The penalty for the offence is a fine of up to £1,000 for each parent with the option of a conditional or absolute discharge. One of the available defences, absence due to an 'unavoidable cause', only relates to a cause connected with the child.
- Section 444 (1)(A) Education Act 1996 as inserted by S72 Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2000, includes that both parents can be prosecuted for an aggravated offence when the child fails to attend school with the parent's knowledge but the parent fails without reasonable excuse to cause the child to attend. This offence carries a maximum fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.
- The aggravated offence was introduced after the consultative exercise 'Tackling Truancy Together'. If parents facing the aggravated offence fail to turn up at court it is likely that a warrant for their arrest would be issued.
- The possible outcomes following a conviction for the lesser offence are a fine, an Education Supervision Order, Community Order, a Parenting Order, a Conditional Discharge or an Absolute Discharge. For the aggravated offence all the above are an option, however a custodial sentence is possible.

**PACE Cautions -Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.**

- The Code of Practice attached to the act sets out the conduct that persons who are charged with the duty of investigating offences or charging offenders' should observe when carrying out their duties, in particular the conduct of interviews and recording of statements under caution.
- School Attendance Orders S437-443 Education Act 1996  
School Attendance Orders (SAOs) are used when a child of compulsory school age is not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education and where the Local

Authority believes that the child should attend school will be served in writing to the parents requiring them to satisfy the Local Authority within a period specified. They are not to be used for children who are on the roll of a school. Failure to comply with an SAO will lead to a prosecution under section 443 and is a criminal offence carrying a maximum fine of £1,000 per parent.

- Parenting contract (Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003) is a voluntary agreement / contract between school and the parent; sometimes the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.
- Penalty Notices (inserted into the Education Act 1996 by section 23 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003; and Section 105 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) will be considered when holidays are taken in school time, impacting on a pupils attainment following warning, the Penalty Notice will be issued and needs to be paid within a maximum of 28 days, failure to do may result in prosecution for the non-attendance.

#### **Education Supervision Order (ESO):**

- The Local Authority may apply for an ESO, when appropriate, rather than a prosecution against parents for poor attendance. Before initiating a prosecution under section 444(1) or (1)(A) of the 1996 Education Act, or after failing to comply with a SAO a Pupil Welfare Officer will consider whether it is appropriate to apply for an ESO under Section 36 of the 1989 Children Act to the Family Court. The ESO is usually granted for a period of up to 12 months at a time.
- The purpose of an ESO is to place a young person who is not being properly educated under the supervision of the Local Authority as opposed to the parent having full responsibility for the choices regarding the child's education therefore enabling the Local Authority more control in educating a child of compulsory school age.
- ESOs are 1989 Children Act Orders and as such the welfare of the child is paramount. Parents must obey the reasonable directions given under an ESO and persistent failure to comply is a criminal offence in the Magistrates Court under Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act.

#### **Parenting Orders**

- Magistrates may impose a Parenting Order under S8 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 if they feel this is suitable and could help prevent further pupil absence. The Order will require parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions for up to three months. It may specify other requirements, for example, ensuring the child is escorted to and from school for up to 12 months. Non-compliance with a Parenting Order can result in a further prosecution by the Police and carries a fine of £1,000 if convicted.

#### **Penalty Notices for parents of Truants**

- Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduces Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution.
- The penalty is £120 but is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice.

- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the matter may proceed to court for prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the 1996 Education Act 17
- If the attendance of a child improves but the Penalty Notice remains unpaid then the parent may still be prosecuted

### **Appendix 3**

The local procedures on DSCB website refer to procedures for challenging attendance - see

[http://doncasterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p\\_ch\\_missing\\_educ.html?zoom\\_highlight=attendance](http://doncasterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_missing_educ.html?zoom_highlight=attendance)

#### **Definition and Overview**

The statutory guidance Children Missing Education (September 2016) sets out the key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME). Local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have considered this statutory guidance and, where it is not followed, the local authority should have reasonable grounds for not doing so.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have;

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life;

Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Local authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

*Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education (September 2016).*

#### **Risks**

Each year children living in Doncaster will either fail to start in a new school or appropriate education provision, become lost from school rolls or fail to re-register at a new school when they move home.

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable, and it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as

possible. It is important to establish the reasons for the child being missing at the earliest possible stage.

Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools;
- Children from refugee and asylum seeking families;
- Children from families who are highly mobile;
- Children at risk of a forced marriage;
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect.
- Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk.

Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education.

When families move between local authority areas it can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and share information in order to ascertain where a child has moved. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

Research has shown that many children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education.

Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently – both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education.

## **Indicators**

### **Schools**

As a result of daily admissions registration, schools are particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability by making reasonable enquiries, and refer (see also Referrals Procedure) any concerns about the child to Children's Services.

Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority.

In the more general circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies, the Head Teacher should inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and Education Welfare Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive schools days without provision of reasonable explanation.

Maintained schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. Further information about schools' safeguarding responsibilities can be found in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2016 statutory guidance.

All schools are required to notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Schools will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and the local authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries. The type of procedures may include the appropriate person checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral (see Referrals Procedure) should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

## **Other Agencies**

Where any agency in contact with children and families believes that a child is not on the roll of a school or receiving education otherwise, then this information should be passed to the Pupil Tracking Officer with any details they have of the child in question. If they have concerns about the welfare of the child they should refer to Children's Services.

## **Pupil Tracking Officer**

The Pupil Tracking Officer (or CME Officer) should ensure through the Education Welfare Officer that reasonable enquiries are made - e.g. home visits, liaison with the Children's Services Trust and/or Housing - and notify the school if it appears that the child has moved out of the area.

If no information is forthcoming within 2 days, the Pupil Tracking Officer should alert her/his manager, who should inform the Children's Services Trust and the Police in writing.

## **Protection and Action to be Taken**

Head teachers should inform the Pupil Tracking Officer and the child's social worker immediately a child subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing.

In the following circumstances a referral to Doncaster Children's Services Trust and /or the Police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection Plan;
- The child is subject of Section 47 enquiries;
- The child is Looked After;
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

Where a child on a school roll is missing, the child's name may not be removed from the school roll until s/he has been continuously absent for at least 4 weeks and both the school and the education service have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil and her/his family. After 4 weeks the child's Common Transfer file should be uploaded to the Department for Education secure site for the transfer of pupil information when a pupil moves between schools. The CME Officer in the Local Authority must also be informed.

In these circumstances the child's name is kept on a centrally held register, and should be clearly identified as missing from education.

Where the child's name has been removed from the school roll, but s/he has not been located, the Head Teacher should arrange for the pupil's records to be retained until the child is located. They may be held centrally according to local arrangements.

Where a Head Teacher has been notified by a parent that a pupil is receiving education other than at school, and has removed the child's name from the school roll, notification must be given to the education service within 10 school days; the pupil's records should then be transferred to the education service to be stored in accordance with local arrangements.

If a school receives a new pupil without receiving information about the pupil from his or her previous school, the school should contact the Pupil Tracking Officer.

If the Pupil Tracking Officer becomes aware the child has moved to another school s/he should ensure all relevant agencies are informed and arrangements made to forward records from the previous school.

### **Issues**

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability.

Schools should endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

- By preventing poor school attendance and truancy;
- By acting once absence has occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school;
- By taking action to trace children whose whereabouts are not known.

### **Further Information**

This guidance should be read in the context of the statutory duties upon local authorities and parents as set out in the following:

- The Education Act 1996 section 436A;
- The Education Act 2002;
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children Act 2004;
- Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education (September 2016);
- Elective Home Education Guidelines;
- School Admissions Code;
- School to school service: how to transfer information;
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006, as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school roll); The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; as amended The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. In particular the guidance provides for professionals seeking to exercise their duty under the following Acts to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002;
- And Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. Additionally, this guidance seeks to ensure that the duty to co-operate to improve the well-being of children under section 10 of the Children Act 2004[32] is discharged. All schools will have a designated teacher for looked after

children. These teachers are ideally placed to assist when identifying those looked after children currently in school who may be at greater risk of going missing from education.

**Attendance and P.A. strategy- Objectives, actions and initial timeframe for set up:**

Objective and actions	Timeframe for set up
<p><i>To develop collective responsibility for driving improvements in attendance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create an LA Attendance Strategy Team with representatives from different teams within the LA to collaborate and disseminate information to their teams and become part of their individual team action plans for academic year 2017/18 in to 2018/19. AAPW to clarify and communicate high expectations for officers, schools, governors and parents. This includes holidays, language around expectations, evidence based decisions.</li> <li>✓ The LA will take the lead on borough wide Attendance initiatives at key points in the year where the data shows attendance usually dips.</li> </ul>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ MO to approach 4 officers with strategic roles around attendance in order to convene a group for 9/17. Identify common strands of strategy for their areas.</li> <li>✓ MO Set out timeline of activity.</li> <li>✓ Consider high profile launch of Doncaster Attendance strategy with elected members , senior and middle leaders etc. 9/17</li> <li>✓ Investigate partners for the delivery of an LA led Attendance campaign at key times in the academic year based on best practice and data led.</li> </ul> <p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consider high profile launch of Doncaster Attendance strategy with elected members , senior and middle leaders</li> <li>✓ Publication of expectations and strategies to support initiatives to all professionals involved.</li> <li>✓ Clear messages are communicated to all key teams within council including elected members, social care colleagues, LOCYP managers, behaviour, school effectiveness etc.</li> <li>✓ November- ‘second wave’ of strategy launch after HT in media, schools and council with info re ‘fast track’, clear message on holidays etc.</li> </ul>
<p><i>To deliver greater accountability for Doncaster schools around absence and P.A.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All schools to receive a letter at the start of autumn term 2017 informing them about the Doncaster focus on reducing persistent absence and increasing attendance across all schools. All schools with PA above National figures (with some regard to proportionality) become ‘focus schools’.</li> <li>✓ The Focus school category for attendance will include challenge, support and building capacity</li> </ul>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ LG/MO Profile and risk assess all schools against 3 year trend in data with S&amp;E colleagues</li> <li>✓ LG/MO to speak to PR/ LH. Both to speak at ‘School briefing’ about this strategy 9/17.</li> <li>✓ Letter to schools should alert them to becoming an attendance focus school and how the LA intends to support them. Include an invitation to a meeting of schools in this category to launch the programme with schools in this category.</li> <li>✓ MO/LG/SP All focus schools have termly visit from MO/SP/LG so that provision is evaluated and action plans are drawn up and reviewed. A timeline for ‘deep dives’ is published.</li> </ul>

<p>of schools to improve attendance and reduce Persistent Absence so it is in line with national.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training for School Governors regarding Attendance and Persistent Absence. Chair of Governors to receive notification of falling into the category of school of concern and what they can do to ensure their school improves. Training available for governors with attendance role.</li> <li>✓ Schools will be required to review and update their Attendance Policy to ensure it reflects practice, meets legal requirements and demonstrates how staff work collectively to promote good and improving attendance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support and capacity building provided to schools by officers with a track record of improving attendance and reducing PA to ensure credible support to schools as part of launch.</li> <li>✓ The L.A. strategy for pupil premium will link explicitly to on-going work on auditing and improving attendance policy and practice in schools.</li> <li>✓ Develop a training slide set to be used with a range of audiences regarding attendance and PA</li> <li>✓ Agree an LA Target for attendance and PA for 2017/18 and 2018/19 moving towards national averages and then to be better than national averages.</li> </ul> <p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All attendance focus schools to have a clear support plan led by the LA that is developed with the school and regularly RAG rated half termly. LA to use the support plans to identify the type of support schools need collectively and provide training/share practice. Support plan to be available for school governors as part of monitoring process.</li> <li>✓ Arrange a training session with SESOs to explain the attendance strategy and how they can challenge school leaders with regard to attendance. Also signpost where schools can obtain support.</li> <li>✓ Governor training session to be developed with key messages regarding attendance and advice/guidance for Governors to challenge school leaders, encourage GB to set a performance target for the schools leadership that includes attendance/PA target to be achieved during 2017/18</li> <li>✓ Info pack and model policy sent to schools 10/17</li> <li>✓ Session at Attendance network 11/17</li> <li>✓ Offer a critical friend approach to current school policies for attendance, Officers with expertise in developing and reviewing policies that reflect school practice to provide this service. This can be follow up from the SESO meetings.</li> <li>✓ School briefing meetings will include exchange between SESO and AAPW over attendance targets and strategies/pupil premium action planning.</li> </ul>
<p><i>To ensure that school improvement services have a clearly defined role in improving attendance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A regular termly network and training event will be provided at the beginning of each term. This will be aimed at the School Strategic Leader for Attendance and the School Attendance Administrator.</li> <li>✓ School improvement officers conduct termly discussion with schools regarding PP attendance when reviewing PP outcomes and plans.</li> <li>✓ Offer a programme of staff training on managing attendance through PIL.</li> <li>✓ Introduce termly attendance networks</li> </ul>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ MO to meet with PIL to discuss brokering, training and SI package. 9/17</li> <li>✓ LG/MO to meet PR re use of attendance data in SI meetings. 9/17.</li> <li>✓ LG/MO to produce pack of info to guide conversations. 9/17</li> </ul> <p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training for school leaders on data analysis and targeting pupils/pupils groups for intervention through Behaviour and attendance network.</li> <li>✓ Termly network meetings to spotlight good practice in schools so others can implement interventions and campaigns in their own schools. Create a learning community that is mutually supportive</li> </ul>
<p><i>Ensure that the attendance service is having a clear impact upon schools</i></p>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ MO/SP to undertake evaluation of EW team- looking at KPIs and consistency of work. 9/17</li> <li>✓ MO/ SP Action planning with EW team regarding whole</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Quality assure the strands of work undertaken by the attendance team.</li> <li>✓ Refocus resources in order to maximise impact-including allocation of additional resources to areas of need.</li> <li>✓ Consider using ‘fast track’ initiative if officers and members are convinced that this will work locally.</li> <li>✓ Consistent use of FPN.</li> <li>✓ An attendance code analysis should be carried out at LA level and schools level to understand how the use of relevant coding explains absence data in particular</li> <li>✓ Base SLA for AAPW on a clear analysis of need and likely impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attendance strategy. 9/17</li> <li>✓ If Fast Track is implemented work with Legal Services/ Magistrates to ensure additional time is allocated for the Fast Track cases.</li> <li>✓ MO/ SP Identify and clarify operational and S.I. roles in supporting schools to review and improve attendance. 9/17</li> <li>✓ MO/SP 09/17 to study evaluations of FT strategies and report to A.D.s on its impact</li> <li>✓ Single attendance target setting process for all schools agreed by L.A.</li> </ul> <p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Launch Fast Track system with schools to ensure they fully understand which cases are suitable for this process. Provide examples of case studies/scenarios to help them to identify how best to utilise this system.</li> <li>✓ SP/MO Use of extra time to implement FT and system reviews of attendance. EWO and AAPW team managers support strategy timeline in schools.</li> <li>✓ Code analysis at LA and individual school level to be shared with key stakeholders and inform next steps</li> <li>✓ All schools set targets for absence and P.A. Based on how to achieve the LA targets for attendance and PA set for 2017/18 and 2018/19.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Minimise the impact of weaker behaviour practice upon attendance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Behaviour strategy includes attendance and school improvement representatives.</li> <li>✓ Minimise the use of part-time timetables across the authorities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure that behaviour team members sit on Attendance strategy group and vice versa. 9/17</li> <li>✓ Work with behaviour colleagues to profile extent and impact of this practice 9/17</li> <li>✓ MO/LG to be part of the task and finish group of the Behaviour Review to establish guidance and best practice for reduced timetables.</li> </ul> <p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A focus on reduced timetable practice across schools to be highlighted across stakeholder groups including Governors to challenge schools who regularly use this as an intervention. As part of the focus on attendance schools should be transparent about the number so of pupils on reduced timetables. Ensure that any pupil on a reduced timetable is monitored and reviewed regularly. Guidance and best practice to be school Improvement Teams to have this item as a regular agenda item for their visits. 11/17</li> <li>✓ Share AP with schools for reducing and monitoring PT timetables. 11/17</li> </ul>
<p><i>Ensure that admissions functions rapidly in order to minimise time out of school.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure that in-year admissions are all processed rapidly so that children lose as little time as possible.</li> <li>✓ Ensure that IYFAP and inclusion panels are screened, minuted and policed so that practice is transparent and based upon a collective will to achieve the best outcomes for Doncaster</li> </ul>	<p><b>September 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ MO/SP Analysis of current data on IFAP.</li> <li>✓ MO to meet with heads in order to gather views regarding improvements to IYFAP processes and build consensus for fortifying partnerships around mobility.</li> <li>✓ Clear strategy for ensuring cohesion, parity and equality across all L.A. panels 9/11</li> <li>✓ MO/LG to be part of the New panels task group identified in the Behaviour Review</li> </ul>

<p>children.</p>	<p><b>October/November 2017</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Conduct an in depth analysis and review of reasons why pupils are presented at IFAP, how long it takes from being identified as requiring a school place and the time frame before they are accessing full time education.</li> <li>✓ New IYFAP procedures in place.</li> </ul>
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**Appendix 5 – Letter to Focus schools –September 2017**

Dear (Name of Headteacher/Principal)

**Doncaster Council Attendance Strategy 2017/18**

A new Local Authority strategy focused on school attendance is being launched this academic year following an LA review of school attendance and persistent absence. In the Doncaster Children and Young People’s Plan 2017-2020 school attendance and persistent absence were highlighted as areas where significant improvement is required. This not just a priority for the local authority, but for all partners, as reflected in the problem diagnosis for the Social Mobility Opportunity Area, which again highlighted persistent absence as a key challenge that Doncaster faces. We believe that the local authority has a key role to play in supporting schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence so that outcomes for children in all school can improve further.

From the data held by the Local Authority and compared with national data, Doncaster is one of the lowest ranked Local Authorities in the country for attendance and persistent absence. National figures show the Doncaster average for attendance in primary schools is 95.6% compared to National of 96%. In Secondary schools the data shows national averages at 94.8% and Doncaster schools 93.6%. When focusing on persistent absence Primary schools national average is 8.2% compared to Doncaster at 10.5% Secondary persistent absence national 13.1% compared to Doncaster at 16.3%. Ofsted compare schools to national averages as regards attendance and persistent absence data. The aim is to bring Doncaster schools in line with national data in the first instance, moving towards being better than national average in the future.

As part of the Attendance Strategy, schools with lower attendance and higher persistent absence than national will become a focus for support from the local authority. From centrally held data (name of school) will be a focus school 2017/18.

LA Officers plan to visit identified schools in the autumn term 2017 in order to agree how we can support you to make improvements. There will be a series of network meetings for school Attendance Leaders and their Attendance Administrator this academic year. Individual schools can be supported by Attendance Specialists with a track record of improving attendance at school and Local Authority Level. Governors will be provided with training on Attendance and Persistent absence to enable them to effectively support and challenge their schools on Attendance.

Impacting on system wide issues requires collective leadership and appropriate support programmes. On this basis, an initial meeting will be scheduled at your school at a mutually convenient time to discuss how the local authority can support your school to improve attendance. A Local Authority Officer will be in contact with you over the coming weeks in order to discuss this further.

Old letter.

Dear (Name of Headteacher/Principal)

### **Doncaster Council Attendance Strategy 2017/18**

A new Local Authority strategy focused on school attendance is being launched this academic year following a LA review of school attendance and persistent absence.

You will be aware of the strong links between raising pupil attainment and improving progress with pupil attendance, based on your own school data. At Local Authority level it has been decided that schools need to be supported to improve overall attendance and reduce persistent absence to improve outcomes for children and young people in Doncaster.

From the data held centrally and compared with national data, Doncaster is one of the weakest Local Authorities for attendance and persistent absence. National figures show the Doncaster average for attendance in primary schools is 95.6% compared to National of 96%. In Secondary schools the data shows national averages at 94.8% and Doncaster schools 93.6%. When focusing on persistent absence Primary schools national average is 8.2% compared to Doncaster at 10.5% Secondary persistent absence national 13.1% compared to Doncaster at 16.3%. Ofsted compare schools to national averages as regards attendance and persistent absence data. The aim is to bring Doncaster schools in line with national data in the first instance moving towards being better than national average in the future.

As part of the Attendance Strategy, schools with lower attendance and higher persistent absence than national will become a focus school. From centrally held data (name of school) will be a focus school 2017/18.

It is intended that individual schools will be visited by LA Officers in the autumn term 2017 to discuss attendance and identify the support needed to improve. There will be a series of network meetings for school Attendance Leaders and their Attendance Administrator this academic year. Individual schools can be supported by Attendance Specialists with a track record of improving attendance at school and Local Authority Level. Governors will be provided with training on Attendance and Persistent absence to enable them to effectively support and challenge their schools on Attendance.

An initial meeting will be scheduled at your school at a mutually convenient time to discuss the focus school for attendance strategy and how the Local Authority can support your school to improve attendance. You will be contacted by a Local Authority Officer in September 2017.