Attendance in Schools - effective governance oversight

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better governor

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Aims of this session:

to consider the role and responsibilities of governance relating to pupil attendance;

to reflect on recent Ofsted research and DfE guidance on attendance;

to focus on how governors' questions deepen knowledge, ensure compliance, and enrich our strategic overview.

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Why is attendance under the spotlight?

Pupil attendance

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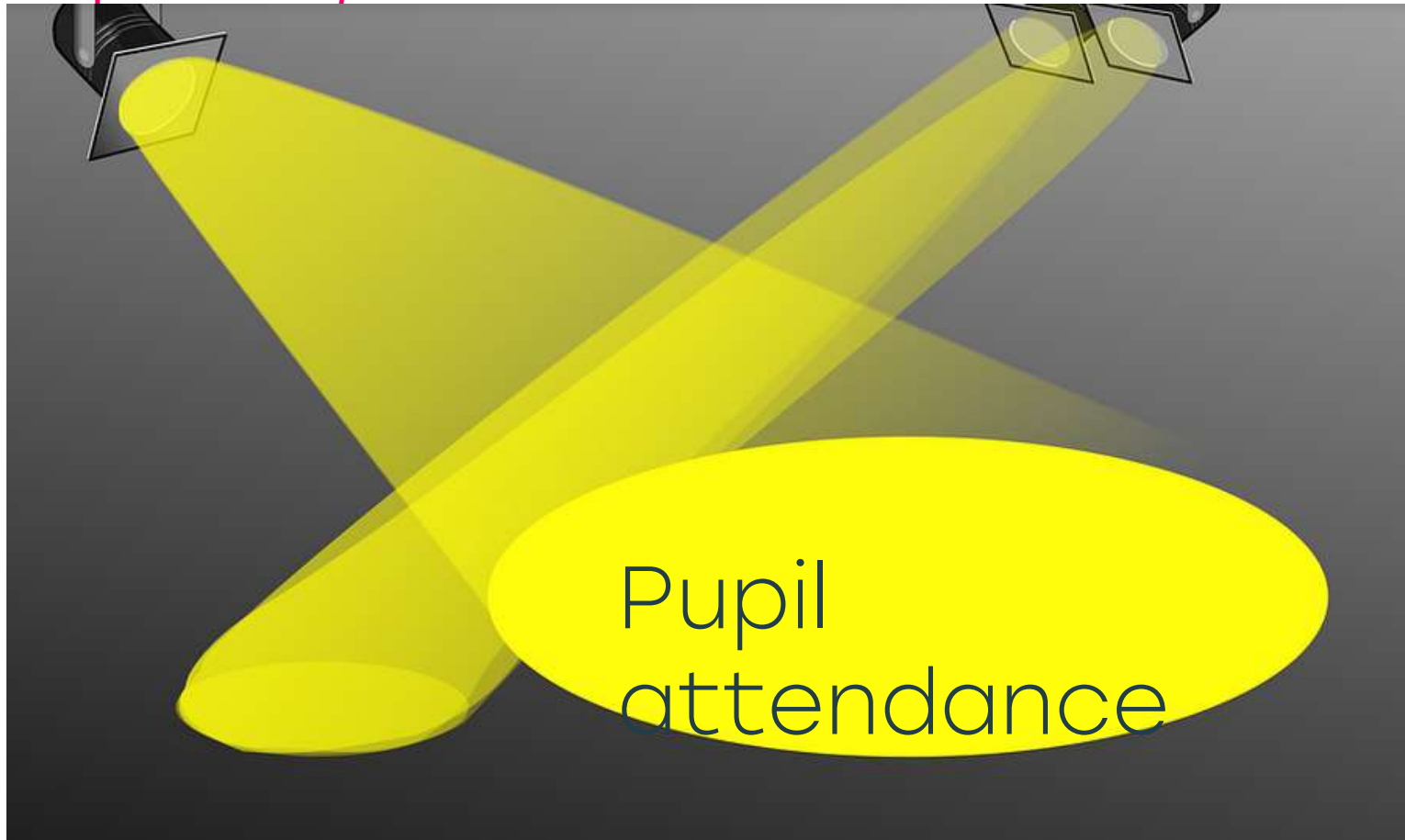
The backdrop:

Headline facts and figures - 2022

Summary

proportion of open settings including inset	proportion of students attending
99.9%	**89.7%**
same on 3 Mar	down from 92.2% on 3 Mar

Open Rates

- **99.9%** all state-funded schools were open on 17 Mar 2022, same on 3 Mar 2022.

Pupil absence

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) related pupil absence in all state-funded schools was **2.5%** on 17 Mar, up from **0.7%** on 3 Mar.
- Among pupils absent for COVID-19 reasons, the main reasons for absence on 17 Mar were: pupils with a confirmed case of COVID-19 (**2.0%**), and pupils with a suspected case of COVID-19 (**0.2%**).

Pupil on site attendance

- Attendance in all state-funded schools was **89.7%** on 17 Mar, down from **92.2%** on 3 Mar.

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Why attendance matters:

- if pupils are not in school, they are probably *not* learning;
- regular attendance and punctuality are lessons for life;
- Missing 10.1% of school (current absence rate) equates to missing a year and five weeks out of a child/young persons time at school.

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Attendance – the role of governance

The board should set and safeguard an ethos of high expectations of everyone in the school community. This includes high expectations for the behaviour, progress and attainment of all pupils and for the conduct and professionalism of both staff and the board themselves. The board should foster a common culture, set of values and ethos across the whole organisation, ensuring it is reflected consistently in both its policies and its practices.

DfE Governance Handbook 2020

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Attendance – what the law says:

School attendance

Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities
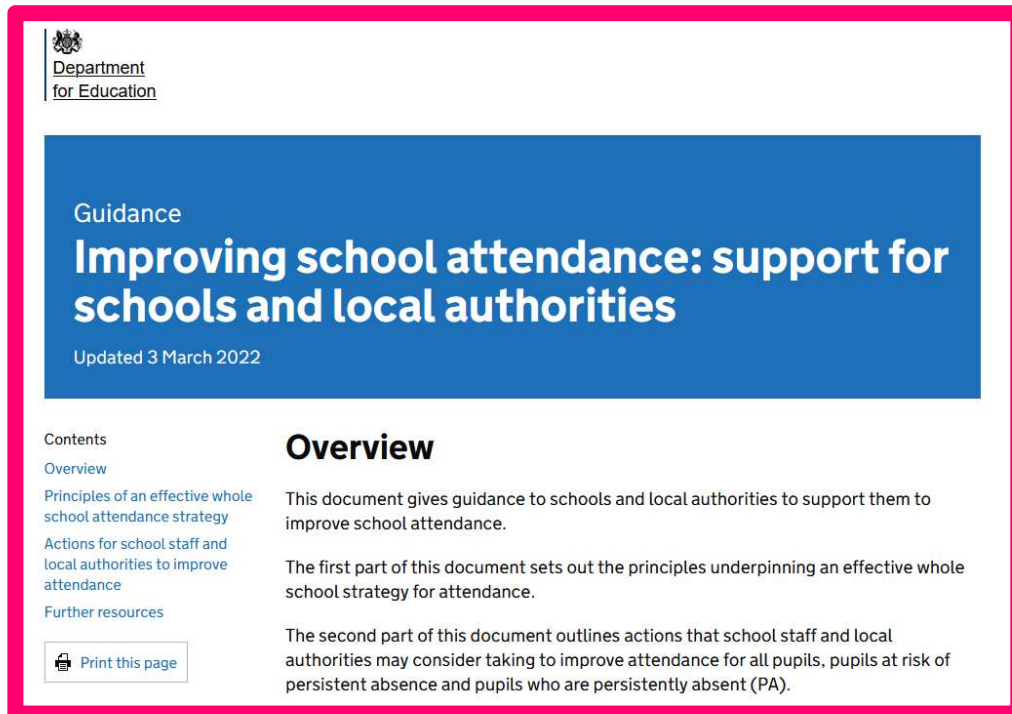
August 2020

What does the law say and what do I have to do?

This guidance summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.

These requirements are contained in:

10. The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
11. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
12. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
13. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
14. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
15. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

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DfE Guidance:

Two themes:

- Whole-school attendance strategy;

- Actions to improve attendance.

Poll

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Questions for Governors to ask:

- How do I know that attendance is effectively promoted?

- Is attendance a recurring agenda item?

- What are current attendance levels?

- Is Covid having an ongoing impact on attendance in the school/trust?

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Actions to improve attendance:

- school leaders;
  - all pupils;
  - at risk of persistent absenteeism
  - persistent absenteeism
- teaching staff;
- pastoral staff, home school link workers etc.

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Ofsted research

Research and analysis
Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence
Published 7 February 2022

- *aspects of attendance and how schools tackle the challenges they face;*

- common approach to low attendance: *'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do*

Attendance – a new report from Ofsted

- Autumn Term issues:
  - pupils were anxious;
  - pupils or parents had specific health needs, including those identified at that time as clinically vulnerable;
  - pupils had disengaged from education during the pandemic.

- Pupil anxieties:
  - family members ill or pupils' concern that this might happen;
  - seeing parents under more stress than usual;
  - experiencing domestic violence;

Securing good attendance:

- communicating expectations to parents/carers;

- communicating expectations to pupils;

- finding out what the problem is;

- having the 'right' people in place;

- noticing patterns;

- the importance of ambition;

- the role of governors;

Questions for governors to ask:

- Has the school/trust leadership seen the report?

- Which of the *securing good attendance steps* do we have in place?

- Do we have a thorough analysis of reasons for non-attendance?

- What impact is support having?

- What more could governors do?

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Any Questions?

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References:

- Attendance Data (DfE)
https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak

- DfE Guidance (3rd March)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance/framework-for-securing-full-attendance-actions-for-schools-and-local-authorities

- Ofsted Research
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence

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Thank you