

Behaviour and attendance: in-depth audit for secondary and middle schools

Booklet 9: Attendance

Guidance on using the in-depth audit

Only use this booklet if you have identified *Attendance* as needing further investigation. This booklet suggests a number of ways to proceed and decide on any action required. There are three elements to the process:

- preparing for the audit;
- seeking the views of key parties;
- deciding on the action required.

Preparing for the audit

There are two aspects to preparation: communication; and collection of key data and information.

Communication: it is important to ensure that staff and anyone else involved in the process are briefed about the following:

- the reason for the audit and its specific focus;
- who will be involved as well as how others can contribute;
- how evidence is going to be gathered;
- how the process fits into the normal routines;
- the proposed time scale including updates on progress, final outcomes, prioritised actions and support programme.

Collection of key data and information: it is recommended that prior to the audit you:

- study any relevant policy documents;
- locate references to attendance in the most recent Ofsted report;
- gather and analyse patterns in the data on attendance for the last three years;
- analyse registers, lateness procedures and lunchtime departures.

Seeking the views of the key parties

There are three issues to decide:

Whose views to seek: decide on which staff to involve, and whether pupils, parents, governors and other groups outside the school should be included. For this in-depth audit, it is recommended that those involved should include:

- the senior pastoral manager;
- the Education Welfare Officer;
- office staff who field late arrivals/telephone calls about absence.

How to seek their views: decide whether to use discussion groups, individual interviews and/or questionnaires. This booklet provides prompts for discussion groups and individual interviews as well as questionnaires for pupils and staff. For instance, you might want to conduct individual interviews with those listed above and hold a group discussion with some or all of the following:

- a representative group of tutors;
- the pastoral team;
- a group of subject leaders;
- a representative group of Key Stage 3 pupils;
- a representative group of Key Stage 4 pupils;
- a representative group of parents;
- NQTs.

These are suggestions only. You will know the right combination of people to involve. In addition, adapt the prompt sheets and questionnaires to suit your circumstances. They are available to download from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy website (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3).

What protocols to establish: this is a particular issue if your school does not regularly conduct group discussions or questionnaires. You will need to address a number of issues including:

for interviews and group discussions

- deciding who will conduct the interviews and how and who will brief them;
- identifying the size and makeup of groups for the discussions;
- wherever possible, using normal school routines and timeslots.

for questionnaires

(NB. only use questionnaires if the interviews and group discussions do not provide the range of views that you need.)

- deciding on the sample size;
- considering any changes needed to the questionnaires provided in this booklet;
- explaining the use and purpose of the questionnaires very clearly to participants;
- explaining any rules that apply, e.g. not to name individuals;
- assuring participants of the need for confidentiality;
- dealing sensitively with pupils and staff who may have been victims of bullying or harassment;
- deciding on the arrangements (i.e. the timescales for completion, when they can be completed, who will collate and analyse the data).

If you also decide to use your normal observation schedule and routines, this will enable you to explore the effectiveness of processes. In the classroom setting this may include:

- the registration process;
- the use of rewards and sanctions;
- the promotion of good attendance;
- the transmission of information about absence within established school systems;
- the responsiveness of measures such as first-day calling.

Prompts for use in interview or discussions

Attendance

Prompts	Key points
<p>Improving attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What plans exist for improving attendance? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of our existing policy? • How do we know? • What more can be done to ensure that we meet our attendance targets? 	
<p>Monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we monitor trends and patterns in relation to attendance? • How do we use the data to inform policy and practice? • How effective is the monitoring in identifying causes of absence? • What more can be done to improve our analysis and interpretation of attendance data? 	
<p>Absences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What routines exist for pursuing questionable absences? • How do we monitor and review our systems? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of our current practices? • What more can be done to reduce questionable absences? 	
<p>Lateness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What routines do we have for addressing lack of punctuality in school and late arrivals to lessons? • How do we monitor and review our systems? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of our current practices? • What more can be done to improve punctuality in school and lessons? 	
<p>First-day phone calls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a named member of staff to make the phone calls? • How long after morning registration does this take place? • Who is responsible for following up phone calls? 	

Prompts	Key points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the school have agreed procedures? • What impact do the phone calls have on pupil attendance? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the system? • What more can be done to improve the use and impact of first-day phone calls? 	
<p>Post-registration attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What routines do we have for addressing post-registration attendance? • How do we monitor and review the data collection procedures? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of our current practices? • What more can be done to improve post-registration attendance? 	
<p>External partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the school drawing on the support of external partners, such as the EWS, Connexions, the police or others to address attendance? • Is the partnership working effectively? • What more can be done to engage external partners to support the school in improving attendance? 	
<p>Re-integration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What arrangements exist to re-integrate pupils absent for extended periods? • Who has responsibility for this in the school? • What are the strengths and weaknesses in our current practices? • What barriers exist to making our practice effective? • What more can be done to improve our re-integration practice? 	
<p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are staff supported in developing strategies to improve good attendance? • What are the strengths and weaknesses in our current practice? • Have our strategies become embedded in teaching and learning? • What more can be done to promote attendance in the school and the community? 	

Attendance

Staff questionnaire

	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
The procedures for parents to notify the school about absence work well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are confident that we know when truancy occurs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents are discouraged from taking family holidays during term time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Patterns of poor attendance are identified early	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff actively promote good attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils are rewarded for good attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils with poor attendance are well-supported	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am effectively supported by (if appropriate)

• Education Welfare Officers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Social Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Health Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Educational Psychology Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• BEST (Behaviour Support Team)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Police	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Other (please specify) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The procedures in place for identifying the following are effective

• Lateness to school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Lateness to lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Post-registration truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The reason for poor attendance at this school is usually to do with

• Poor relationships with other pupils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Poor relationships with staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Dislike of certain subjects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Inability to cope with the work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Teaching styles used	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Bullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Issues outside of school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Timetable structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Other (please specify) _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Three ways that we manage attendance issues well

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three ways that we could improve attendance

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For the things that we could improve, I consider this aspect of attendance to be:

Issue number	1	2	3
• An urgent priority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• A priority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• An issue we should address this year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• An issue we should consider at some point	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Not a big issue for us	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Pupil questionnaire cover

You do not need to write your name on this questionnaire but please circle your year 7 8 9 10 11

Please indicate your gender:

Male **Female**

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes No

What is your ethnic group **(this could be based on your skin colour, language, culture, ancestry or family history, etc. Ethnic background is not the same as your nationality or place of birth)**? Choose one section from [a] to [f] then tick the appropriate box.

[a] Asian or Asian British	[b] Black or Black British	[c] Chinese	[d] Mixed	[e] White	[f] Any other ethnic group
Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background	African <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Chinese background	White and Black African <input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian <input type="checkbox"/> White and Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Mixed background	British <input type="checkbox"/> Irish <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

What is your religion?

None <input type="checkbox"/>	Buddhist <input type="checkbox"/>	Muslim <input type="checkbox"/>	Jewish <input type="checkbox"/>
Christian <input type="checkbox"/>	Hindu <input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh <input type="checkbox"/>	Any other religion <input type="checkbox"/>

Attendance

Pupil questionnaire

	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Staff remind us about good attendance during				
• Tutor time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Assemblies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Other times (please say when)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents let the school know when I am absent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I stay away from school only when I am ill or have a medical appointment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family takes me out of school for holidays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I have been absent on several occasions staff question me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I do not bring a note, staff ask for one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I forget to bring a note, staff keep asking until I bring one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils are rewarded for good attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils who have problems with attendance are given help to improve their attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If the following happens my tutor finds out				
• Lateness to school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Lateness to lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If the following happens my parents find out				
• Lateness to school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Lateness to lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Non-attendance at lessons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Truancy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pupils truant from school because they				
• Have problems with other pupils	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Have problems with some staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Dislike certain subjects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Cannot do the work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Do not like the way the lessons are taught	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Are bullied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Feel life outside of school is more interesting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Have family problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Have health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• Other (please say what)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following three things would help to improve attendance at this school

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Attendance – typical common findings and next steps for schools

What are we aiming for?

- Good and improving levels of attendance in all year groups.
- Constant scrutiny of attendance records to ensure there are no specific groups for whom attendance is a problem.
- Good communication between form tutors, year heads and education welfare staff to ensure good monitoring.
- Rigorous investigation of the reasons for pupils' absence.
- Appropriate recognition and reward for pupils with good and improving levels of attendance.
- Appropriate work with the families of pupils who are poor or inconsistent attenders or whose attendance causes concern in any way.
- Good levels of attendance in specific periods, e.g. on Mondays and Fridays, the day preceding a holiday.
- Good levels of punctuality throughout the school day and specifically for the first period of the day and the first period of the afternoon.
- Good procedures for monitoring post-registration truancy.

Examples of common findings	Next steps
Registration in lessons does not offer an accurate view of lateness as the process is applied inconsistently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a post-registration survey.
Identified group shows signs of poor attendance, e.g. Year 11 pupils who have fallen behind with course work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the construction of individual and group attendance plans, identifying appropriate targets and required support.
Post-registration truancy is not accurately reflected in the school's attendance figures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently take a whole-school sample, i.e. ask class teachers to register all pupils at a certain time in one specific lesson.
There is evidence of parentally-condoned absence. A group of pupils is persistently late.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents with very clear guidelines on punctuality and attendance. • Identify parents of persistently late pupils and poor attenders and target support with the help of external services.

