

Manchester's Graduated Approach to Attendance

A Framework For Improving School Attendance

Academic Year : 2024/2025

**MOMENTS
MATTER,
ATTENDANCE
COUNTS.**

Manchester's Graduated Approach to Attendance

Introduction

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

However, some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and agencies should work in partnership with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation.

Evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key for ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people.

- Research by Universities UK indicates that children with poor attendance are 5 times less likely to achieve 5 strong passes at GCSE, preventing them from going on to Higher education or into employment.
- Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

Manchester City Council is committed to ensuring best outcomes and experiences for our children and young people. This starts with good school attendance.

Working Together To Improve School Attendance

Working Together To Improve School Attendance is the revised DfE guidance for all schools, academies and local authorities (February 2024). The guidance will become statutory on 19th August 2024 following a commitment from all political parties to support improved attendance across England. The guidance takes a '*support first principle*'. This means to successfully treat the root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly schools and local partners will need to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families.

Manchester – What We Know?

Phase	PA %	% Attendance
Primary	15.6%	94.4%
Secondary	21.9%	91.8%
All Schools	19.4%	93%

In 23/24, Manchester's overall attendance was 93% (HT 1-5) In addition, 19.4% of our pupils were persistently absent, missing 19 days or more of school. We also know that:

- Around 6,500 pupils missed 15 or more school days through illness in 23/24 many of these through emotional based school avoidance (EBSA);
- Our pupils with an EHCP struggle to engage with school in comparison to their peers. At secondary school the difference in attendance is as high as 10%.
- There are some areas of the City where absence is higher: particularly the Wythenshawe wards where absence can be between 3 – 5 % higher than the City average but also in Crumpsall (90.6%) and Charlestown (90%).

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- Pupils at Child in Need and on Child Protection Plans are less likely to attend school than their peers – absence is around 10% higher for children and young people with a social worker.

A Graduated Approach

The Manchester Graduated Approach to Attendance is reflective of the ambitions laid out in 'Working Together To Improve School Attendance'. It takes an early intervention approach and looks to progress support, aiming to tackle both in school and out of school barriers to attendance. The Graduated Approach also recognises that attendance action should happen early and ideally before periods of Persistent Absence occur. Whilst it is not a directory of services or an exhaustive list of all the support on offer in Manchester it does provide schools and partners with clear a framework or staged pathways into support. Finally, it promotes collaboration so the root causes of absence can be tackled at home, in the community and in the classroom.

The Graduated Approach closely mirrors the Thrive stages of support

Level 1: Thriving in Schools

This stage reflects good, universal attendance practice in schools that **all pupils** can benefit from.

Level 2: Getting Advice and Help

This stage suggests early action that can be taken to tackle emerging absence.

Level 3: Getting More Help

This stage explores further actions that can be taken, often involving agencies outside of school, where a pupil has not benefitted from or is unable to engage with support offered in stages 1 or 2.

Level 4: Getting Risk Support

This stage explores specialist support, statutory services or more punitive measures where high levels of absence are still a major concern.

Our Expectations

Families and Pupils:

encourage and ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually unless there is a valid reason for absence which is accepted by the school.

work closely with the school to resolve any issues when attendance problems occur.

comply with their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the school attendance policy.

avoid term time holidays. A term time holiday may mean a pupil becomes a persistent absentee if they go on to have any further time away from school.

discuss and resolve any issues surrounding their child's attendance with members of school staff. Parents should not keep children away from school whilst they are resolving any issues;

ensure that their child continues to attend their current school until a place is available at another school if a transfer has been requested.

Schools:

- appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to take strategic responsibility for attendance matters and ensure all school staff are clear about their individual responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to school attendance;
- have a whole-school ethos which encourages good attendance and reflects the Manchester Inclusion Strategy;
- ensure that staff receive adequate training and development opportunities in relation to attendance;
- comply with statutory registration and off-rolling procedures;
- submit data returns on attendance to the DfE and LA as required;
- adhere to the LA guidance on Children Missing Education ;

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- implement and regularly review their attendance policy;
- clearly communicate their attendance policy to all staff, pupils and parents including publication on the school website;
- ensure parents/carers are supported in promoting the regular and punctual attendance of their children;
- provide easily accessible support to pupils who have become, or are at risk of becoming, disengaged from the education system and work with other partners and agencies to support pupils and families;
- involve medical personnel in relation to long-term medical absences
- discuss attendance as part of the agenda for SEND reviews;
- ensure that senior leaders regularly analyse and report school attendance data to the governing body
- implement a clear escalation process – graduated approach- for managing attendance, prior to local authority involvement, with clarity about respective roles and responsibilities at each stage;
- contact parents on the first day of absence
- Notify the local authority if a pupil is on a part time timetable

Local Authority:

The Manchester Inclusion Strategy articulates the principles of inclusion for all education settings in the City. Manchester believes that regular and punctual attendance is key to academic and social development. This in turn safeguards vulnerable young people and will improve their life chances. Attendance and Inclusion therefore are key priorities for our work with children, young people, families, partners and schools.

The local authority will:

Have an Attendance Support team with named officers for each locality of the City;

- Provide a Manchester model Attendance Policy;
 - Coordinate statutory action using Manchester's Statutory Action Escalation Pathway;
- Provide half termly data reports for schools to track and benchmark progress;
Offer Targeting Support Meetings (TSM) to schools who are at or below City averages or where there are concerns for particular cohorts or areas;
Coordinate an offer of early help via locality based Early Help Hubs;
Identify a lead practitioner for pupils who are experiencing multiple challenges;
Ensure school attendance is a priority for families of children with social workers;
Provide model documents such as Attendance Agreements/contracts;
Provide an EHCP coordinator for SEND/EHCP pupils;
Provide regular training linked to improving school attendance;
Host termly Attendance Networks for all schools;
Manage part time timetable submissions;
Manage 15-day statutory sickness returns incl a related Section 19 Offer

Stakeholder and Partners:

Support schools to break down out of school barriers to attendance understanding that attendance is everybody's business;
Work alongside families, schools and the local authority;
to prioritise attendance concerns especially when those concerns reach level 3 and 4 of the graduated approach;
Access training and development opportunities linked to school attendance;
Use the Early Help Assessment when identified as a lead practitioner

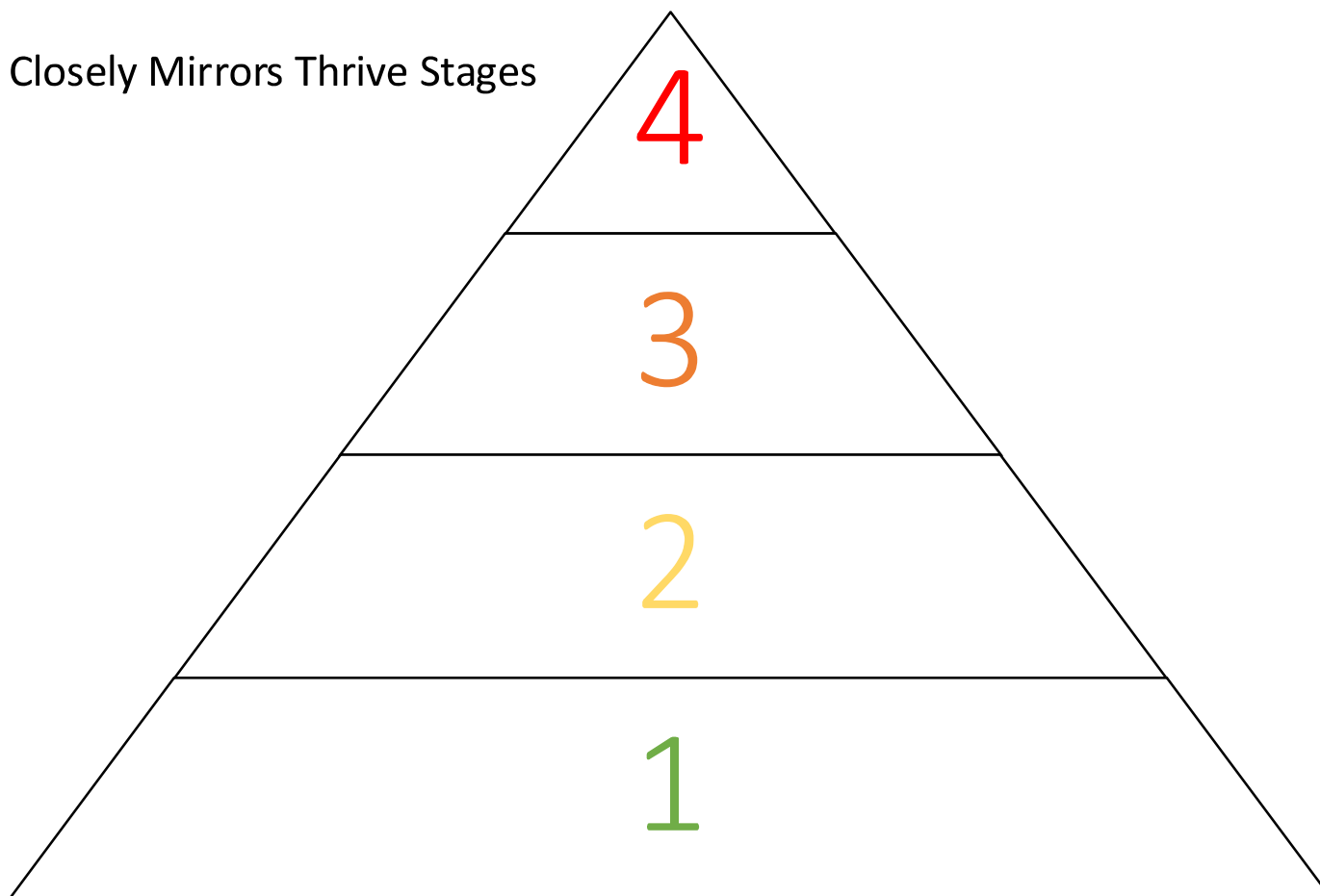


Children's & Education Services

The Stages



Closely Mirrors Thrive Stages



Getting Risk Support

Those who need more extensive and specialized goals-based help

Getting More Help

Those who have not benefited from or are unable to use help, but are of such risk that they are still in contact with services.

Getting Advice & Help

Those who need focused goals-based input

Universal- Thriving In Schools

Universal offer on attendance support: good practice

1. Universal – Thriving In Schools

Stage - Summary

The core attendance offer in all schools, for all pupils. This stage looks at universal practice to support good attendance in schools.

A universal offer will include whole school strategies that ensure every child and young person, whatever their age, identity, circumstance or ability has a sense of belonging, feels respected and is valued for who they are. This aligns with the Manchester Inclusion Strategy and the Rights Respecting Schools programme.

Schools and agencies will work in partnership with families to promote positive relationships.

Suggested Action

- School attendance policy published on website
- Parent friendly version of attendance policy
- Attendance lead on Senior Leadership Team
- School Mental Health lead in place
- Appropriately trained staff
- First day calling
- School based 'Notice to Improve' Letters
- A commitment to whole school trauma-informed approaches
- Robust transition planning

Data

- Regular, internal monitoring of attendance data:
 - Reporting on Persistent Absence (missing 10% or more) and Severe Absence (missing 50% or more)
 - Reports to Senior Leadership Team
 - Reports to Governors
- Submit data to DfE data dashboard
- Pupil 'causing concern' trackers

Positive Approaches

- Rewards systems for good attendance
- Attendance focused assemblies
- Right Respecting School Status (evidence shows Rights Respecting Schools have better attendance)
- Listening and responding to the 'Voice of The Child'

2. Getting Advice and Help

Stage- Summary

Early Interventions to improve school attendance and tackle emerging absence.

Stage 2 is focused on goals-based input which may identify next steps and further support.

Stage 2 begins to look at broader areas where early identification of need can help tackle low level non-attendance for instance beginning to explore some of the out of school barriers to absence through an EHA. Schools can also begin to utilise their community assets such as youth providers and Family Hubs.

Good communication and relationships between schools, agencies and families is important to get effective advice and help.

Suggested Action

School

- Early Help coffee mornings
- School based parent meetings
- Parenting contract
- Resources in the Inclusion Strategy Toolkit
- Targeted Support Meetings
- Linking in with other schools with siblings – joint plans of action
- Liaise with school Designated Teacher regarding Children Looked After and contact Virtual School if necessary

Early Support

- Initiate an Early Help Assessment (EHA) / strength-based conversations
- Young Carers identification/assessment
- Early Help Hubs for advice and support
- Youth Services such as Youthzone, Powerhouse, Hideout etc
- Local School Clusters
- Governor Panels
- Local Family Hub

SEND/Health

- Reasonable adjustments
- Initiate the School Support Pathway for Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA)
- Use of 'planning for change' document to address health needs early
- Healthy Schools pathway
- M Thrive Hub Consultation
- Parent Special Educational Need & Disability (SEND Champions)
- SEND 'drop ins'
- Outreach/advice from special schools/Bridgelea

Other Areas:

- Career pathways
- Career Connex Referrals to avoid Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)

Statutory / Legal Action (Prosecution should always be a last resort)

- Local Authority 'Notice to Improve letter'

3. Getting More Help

Stage - Summary

Suggested Action

Stage 3 is for those who have not benefited from or are unable to use help offered in stages 1 & 2, but are of such risk of persistent and severe absence that they are in contact with services and support.

At stage 3 schools will be looking to get more help through offers of outreach and targeted involvement from services such as Early Help, M Thrive or CAMHS.

Stage 3 is also where legal action should be considered if previous support has not been successful and where it is felt a prosecution route will change behaviours.

School

- Manchester's Alternative Provision Framework (MIAPS) / Alternative Provision on a part time basis
- Manchester's Alternative Provision Framework (MIAPS) / Alternative Provision on a full time, temporary basis
- Parenting/Attendance contract
- Use of resources in the Inclusion Strategy Toolkit
- Targeted Support Meetings (delivered by the Attendance Team)
- Develop chronologies to provide to parents demonstrating support offered. This can also be used when making onward referrals
- Liaise with school Designated Teacher regarding Children Looked After and contact Virtual School if necessary

Targeted Support

- Request for targeted support to Early Help Hubs
- M Thrive consultation or request for support
- Engage Panels
- Advice and Guidance Service (AGS) drop-ins

SEND/Health

- Continue to follow the School Support Pathway for Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA)
- School Health Service (Health Schools) support on Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA)
- Early review of Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) outreach- involving other agencies/support
- CAMHS referral
- Support can be offered through Advice and Guidance Service (AGS) drop in and follow up screening

Statutory / Legal Action (Prosecution should always be a last resort)

- Local Authority 'Notice to Improve' Letter
- Request a Penalty Notice
- Direct prosecution including interviews with Attendance Team (PACE interview)

4. Getting Risk Support

Stage - Summary

Those who have not benefited from or are unable to use the help offered in stages 1, 2 & 3.

Those who need more extensive and specialised goals-based help to improve attendance and may be at the stage of 'educational neglect'.

Suggested Action

School

- Ensure safeguarding obligations continue to be met – home visits
- Ensure safeguarding obligations continue to be by working in partnership with lead practitioner
- Develop an Impact Chronology

SEND/Health

- Referral to Section 19 Panel (Manchester Hospital School/Leo Kelly)
- Early review of EHCP

Statutory Action

- Actions at level 4 can include the use of parental responsibility measures such as penalty notices.
- A family is likely to have received several penalties linked to the Statutory Action Pathway.
- A family may have already been prosecuted

Educational Neglect

- At stage 4 it could be that the pupil is close to 'educational neglect' particularly if the family have refused to work in partnership with the school or other services.
- Support can be offered through Advice and Guidance Service (AGS) drop-in and follow up screening

Lead Practitioner and Social Worker

- Where there is already service involvement robust actions should be written into family plans in partnership with schools
- Where a child is looked after, continued support will be offered from the Virtual School