

Report to Children’s Select Committee	
TITLE:	Regular Update to Children’s Select Committee: Working Together to Improve School Attendance
DATE:	25th May 2023
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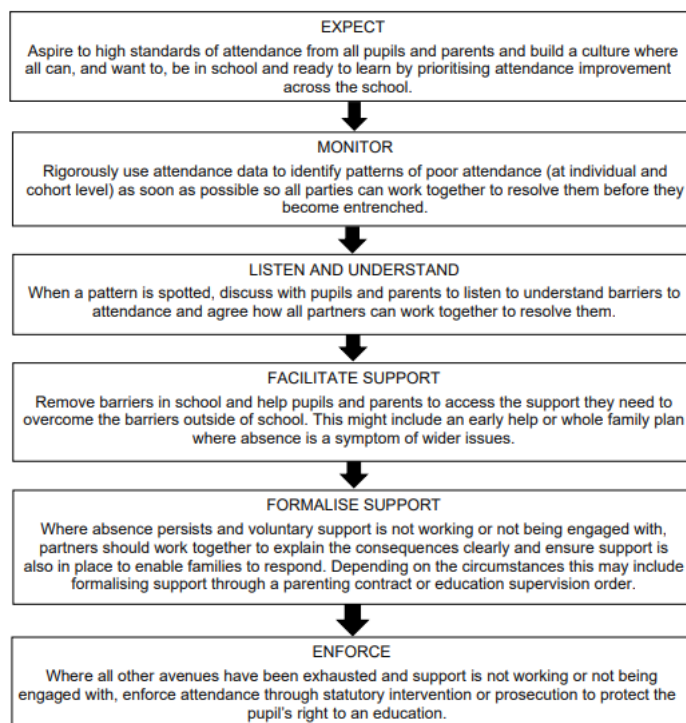
Context:

The DfE Guidance document ‘working together to improve school attendance’ was published in May 2022 for implementation by schools and local authorities from September 2022. The guidance is not yet statutory, but it is the government’s intention for it to become so when parliamentary time allows.

Wiltshire Implementation:

The implementation of Local Authority actions for the new School Attendance Support Team, as referenced in guidance, is fulfilled in Wiltshire by the Education Welfare Service. This team sits within the Targeted Education Service as part of the Education and Skills Directorate.

There is an expectation of partnership working across all agencies to support families to remove barriers to attendance, working collaboratively to:



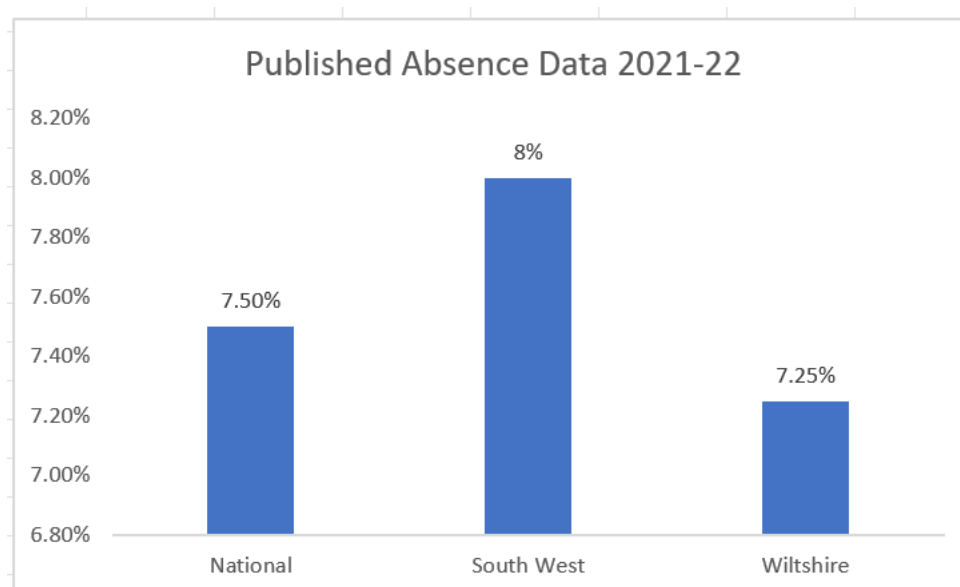
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¹ Working Together to Improve School Attendance, DfE, 2022

In line with the new guidance, local authorities are expected to convene new Targeting Support Meetings, holding termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils. In Wiltshire, during the current academic year, every school has been offered a termly meeting and 88% of schools have accepted and held at least one meeting. Where the offer has not yet been taken up, Education Welfare Officers are in contact with schools to encourage engagement.

Attendance Performance in Wiltshire

Published data shows that Wiltshire's overall absence rate for the last academic year 2021-22 was lower than absence rates nationally and in the South West.



Wiltshire's attendance during the last academic year was 0.25% better than the national average in primary settings. It was 0.32% lower than the national average in secondary settings, and 0.9% lower than the national average in special schools.

Wiltshire's severe absence rate (attendance below 50%) was lower than the national average for primary, secondary and special schools. However, the rate of persistent absence (attendance below 90%) was higher in Wiltshire secondary and special schools than the national average.

During the last academic year, published data shows that the attendance of children looked after and children with a social worker was higher than for children nationally and in the South West region.

Priority Actions

- Complete consultation activity for the Wiltshire Attendance Strategy by July 2023, ready for publication and implementation.
- Embed the offer to schools from the attendance support team, in line with non-statutory guidance, using data to inform priorities for intervention.
- In 2021 the DfE announced an intention to appoint new Attendance Advisers to work with Local Authorities to support implementation of expectations in the new attendance guidance. In July 2023, Wiltshire Council is pleased to be inviting an

Adviser to visit us and work with colleagues in Education, Health and Children's Social Care as we continue to work together to support improvements in school attendance.