

# **Bracknell Forest Attendance Strategy**

**2025 –2028**

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## Foreward

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## What the strategy is for?

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022, the Department for Education released new guidance “[Working together to improve school attendance](#)” to help schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and improve consistency of support.

Our strategy defines our commitment to working with schools and other partners to improve school attendance and punctuality across Bracknell Forest. Underpinning this commitment is the understanding that there is a strong correlation between good school attendance and achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.

Securing good attendance cannot be achieved in isolation, and effective practices for improvement requires a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

This strategy is also applicable to where arrangements have been made where pupils attend provisions other than a registered school.

The strategy has been developed with the aim of supporting the Local Authority, schools, other partner agencies and key stakeholders to determine how to work together more efficiently and effectively with existing resources and identify ways to streamline our work processes and maximize resource utilisation in order to ensure that:

- All Children and Young People (CYP) attending school are provided with crucial opportunities to develop academically, socially, and personally, leading to improved health, well-being, and future success.
- Systems are developed by the Local Authority with accurate and contemporaneous data. Data is used to identify patterns, trends and systems that are responsive to those supporting schools to intervene early and prevent escalation of concerns.
- Rigorously track local attendance data to devise a strategic approach to attendance that prioritises the pupils, pupil cohorts and schools on which to provide support and focus its efforts on to unblock area wide barriers to attendance.
- Through adequate training and guidance, the workforce understands that the LAs responsibilities for school attendance, they know who to contact for support. Staff know the legislation, guidance, local policies, and procedures and are confident to address concerns about school attendance. Responses to concerns about pupils’ absence at an individual, institutional, and local level are coordinated across teams. Schools, parents, and children are clear about what support is on offer as well as their responsibilities.

## Who is the strategy for?

- All school and academy trust staff, including headteachers, governors, academy trustees, and alternative provision providers.
- Local authority education and attendance staff, early help professionals, Children’s social care staff, and virtual school heads.
- Statutory safeguarding (including police and integrated care boards) and other local partners including youth justice team.
- Parent/carers

## The Local Context

- The Children and Young People Plan sets out the shared vision of being ambitious about education. The plan includes priority actions for the partnership.
- The Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2025, developed by the local partnership and in conjunction with families sets out the vision for early help in Bracknell Forest and provides the ambitious framework for delivery.
- The Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2023-2027 sets out our borough's ambition that children have quality education and opportunities to fulfill their potential.
- The Learning Improvement Strategy sets out the key priorities within Bracknell Forest for improving outcomes for children & young people.
- Safeguarding Children Thresholds Guidance 2023-2023 provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people, and families, and aims to help identify circumstances when children may need additional support to achieve their full potential.
- The Youth Justice Plan 2024-27 sets out our aspirations for the next 3 years to prevent offending and re-offending by children as well as looking back at what we have achieved over the last year.

## 2023/24 Attendance Data

2023/2024	All mainstream schools			
	Overall Attendance	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Persistently Absence (90% or below)
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	93.3%	4.8%	1.8%	18.4%
Primary School	95.1%	3.7%	1.1%	11.5%
Secondary School	91.5%	6.0%	2.6%	25.4%
<b>Southeast Region</b>	92.8%	5.1%	2.1%	20.1%
Primary School	94.5%	4.1%	1.4%	14.3%
Secondary School	90.9%	6.0%	3.0%	26.6%
<b>Nationally</b>	92.8%	4.7%	2.5%	20.7%

Primary School	94.4%	3.9%	1.6%	15.2%
Secondary School	90.9%	5.5%	3.6%	26.7%

There are 44 schools in Bracknell Forest, of which 24 are state-maintained schools, 13 academies, 6 independent and 1 special school.

From 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, all schools must share their attendance data with the Department for Education which will give schools, local authorities, and academy trusts access to more up-to-date pupil-level attendance data. This will enable easy identification of pupils requiring support and facilitates greater working together whilst also helping to identify trends across pupil groups, schools, local areas, and nationally enables efforts and strategies to be targeted.

Bracknell Forest has access to 'live' data from all schools which will enable the Local Authority to make fully informed strategic decisions and provide leadership in attendance across the area.

Attendance data for 2023/24 shows that Bracknell Forest is ranked above the national and regional average for attendance, with above average attendance in both primary and secondary school settings.

Other outcomes in 2023-24 include.

- We were above the provisional national average in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Very slightly above national in year 1 phonics
- Broadly in line with outcomes at the end of key stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their peers nationally. There is a gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils at every key stage.
- High prior attaining pupils across the borough at all key stages could do better given their starting points.
- As of July 2024, 100% of schools in Bracknell Forest were rated good or better by Ofsted, ranking Bracknell Forest 5th out of 164 local authorities nationally, against this measure.

## What do we want to achieve?

**Our Vision** – All Children and Young people within Bracknell Forest have access to quality education and opportunities to enable them to fulfil their potential.

**Our Mission** – To improve school attendance across Bracknell Forest schools and ensure that children and young people receive support at earliest opportunity, with the right people involved, at the right time.

## Why is good attendance important?

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

Being in school is important to children's achievement, wellbeing, and wider development. Being around teachers and friends in a school or college environment is the best way for most pupils to learn and reach their potential. If children are in school, then they are visible to professionals, and we know that they are safe and provide access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care.

We all have high aspirations for the children and young people in Bracknell Forest. We want them to enjoy life in the borough and beyond, to achieve well, and to thrive as part of a strong and inclusive community and economy. Good attendance at school is vital if they are to realise this ambition and reach their full potential. Children are best supported by those who already have a relationship with them, such as schools, who can organise additional support with local partners as needed. The expertise of our schools and a wide range of agencies including the voluntary and community sector is invaluable.

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. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to join and are keen and ready to learn. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by **building strong and trusting relationships and working together** to put the right support in place.

School is not just about academic success and attainment. It is also centered on learning about the world, about relationships and about individuals. It is about trying new things, making new friends, and finding a place in the world. To miss school is to miss the multifaceted experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have and the quality of life that we lead.

Attendance is a key protective factor and offers the best chance to identify children's needs and provide support, which helps safeguard them from harm and ensures they can access the resources necessary to address any challenges.

## Who is responsible for ensuring good attendance?

It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure that their child receives appropriate full-time education according to their age and ability. This involves ensuring a child is registered at a school and attends regularly and on time.

Whilst regular school attendance is predominantly the responsibility of parents and carers, schools play a pivotal role in ensuring that children and young people attend school regularly. This involves playing a proactive role in the promotion of regular attendance and creating a school environment that children and young people feel happy and safe in.

School attendance is everyone's business, and several stakeholders are involved in helping to ensure good attendance, for example the Education Welfare Team at the Local Authority, Children's Social Care and Health Care professionals.

## **What are our roles?**

### **The role of parents/carers and pupils**

Parents and carers are asked to:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time unless there is a valid reason for absence which is agreed with the school's headteacher.
- Work closely with the school and local authority to resolve any issues when attendance problems occur.
- Comply with their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the school attendance policy.
- Mandatory School Attendance – No Holidays During Term
- Discuss and resolve any issues surrounding their child's attendance with members of school staff.
- Ensure that their child continues to attend their current school until a place is available at another school, if a transfer has been requested.
- Following and supporting the schools safeguarding policy, ensuring that communication is effective and timely when reporting any absences.

Children and young people are asked to:

- Attend school regularly and punctually in accordance with the agreed timetable.
- Stay in school for the school day unless arrangements are agreed with the school.
- Ensure they arrive at school in correct uniform and equipped for the school day.
- Follow the school rules.

### **The role of Schools and academies**

- Have a whole-school ethos which reinforces good attendance.
- Set annual targets for attendance and monitor progress towards them.
- Track and monitor attendance to ensure early intervention is put in place including those specifically of a safeguarding nature.
- Appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to take strategic responsibility for attendance and ensure all school staff are clear about their individual responsibilities and accountabilities in relation to attendance.
- Ensure that staff receive appropriate training and development opportunities



in relation to attendance.

- Comply with statutory registration and procedures in line with Children Missing Education statutory guidance for removing a child from roll.
- Submit attendance returns to the DfE and LA as required.
- Contact parents on the first day of absence.
- Take appropriate action and inform the LA when any pupil is absent for more than 10 days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised.
- Clearly communicate their attendance policy to all staff, pupils, and parents
- 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.
- Ensure that that senior leaders regularly analyse and report school attendance data to the governing body and use it to inform planning to further improve attendance.
- Implement a clear escalation process for managing attendance, prior to local authority involvement, with clarity about respective roles and responsibilities at each stage.
- Provide learning materials/opportunities where a child is absent that are regularly assessed and marked where a child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure that a 'individual health care plan' is put into place to effectively support a pupil with medical conditions that may impact on school attendance
- For those pupils who have a social worker and/or a youth justice worker, if there are any unauthorised absences, suspensions, or the potential of a permanent exclusion to inform Children's Social Care and any other professionals, as appropriate.

## **The role of the local authority**

Our belief that regular and punctual attendance is key to academic and social development underpins the local authority's procedures for managing attendance. We will continue to develop partnership working ensuring that attendance is on everyone's agenda.

When appropriate, if support options provided to parents have not succeeded, we will take the lead role on behalf of any school in using legal powers as a last resort to address poor attendance.

The local authority will:

- Hold multi-agency meetings and help create action plans with schools and relevant services for those children with very low attendance.
- Meet with schools' Attendance Champions to review policies, data, and best practice.

- Offer Early Help support to work with families to improve attendance where required.
- Ensure school attendance is a priority for families for children with a social worker and youth justice worker.
- Ensure the SEND and Inclusion Teams, provide support and guidance to families with EHCP and SEND needs.
- Support schools to ensure they can gather enough evidence to move to legal intervention where needed.
- Identify children who are not receiving an education.
- Ensure our statutory duties for school attendance are fulfilled.
- Design and deliver a communications campaign to raise the profile of school attendance across all stakeholders.
- Share good practice.

## **The role of other agencies and stakeholders**

### **Early Years**

Whilst attendance in early years settings before the age of 5 is not statutory, early years is where lifelong habits are established. Even for very young children, there are positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance, whatever the weekly pattern of childcare or schooling. This includes not only coming to every planned session, but also being there on time. Securing good early years attendance therefore is an important foundation on which children will go on to thrive throughout their school life and beyond. Our early years staff will provide advice, guidance and support to families and settings to help secure good attendance.

### **Virtual School**

The Virtual School will monitor attendance for children looked after (CLA) and provide specific advice and bespoke support to help improve the attendance for this cohort of children regardless of whether they are placed in or out of borough. Where the attendance of a child looked after is a cause for concern or appears to be falling, the Virtual School Education Support Officer will contact schools, carers, and social workers to explore the cause for absence and discuss next steps. Stakeholders are equally advised to contact the Virtual School should they have any concerns regarding attendance for CLA. The Virtual School offers training to Designated Teachers to support them in the role of raising and monitoring the attendance of CLA and Previously Looked After Children (P-CLA)

From September 2024, the Virtual School Head role has been extended to promote practice that supports the attendance and engagement of kinship children in education.

For children with a social worker (CWSW), the Virtual School will ensure that an attendance monitoring system (Studybugs) is in place for Social Care to be able to track the attendance of this cohort of children.

### **Family Hubs**

Engagement with young children and their families through local Family Hubs is a key opportunity to work with parents to ensure that they understand the importance

of their role in ensuring good attendance at school. Staff working in these settings are well placed to support parents and to emphasise the crucial role parents play in their child's learning and development. Our Family Hub teams play a critical part in school readiness planning. When children start school, family hub staff support families during their 1-1 interventions to support transition, working with the school staff to ensure a positive start, which includes good attendance. Similarly, they will support with transition to new schools and when moving from a primary to secondary setting. During whole family work schools and educational staff are invited to team around family (TAF) meetings for all children open to Early Help where attendance is monitored, and smart actions included in the support plan where attendance is a concern.

### **Health Services**

The school nursing service is available to all children in Bracknell Forest schools. The school nurses can support with the delivery of health promotion reflecting local and national priorities in collaboration with the Bracknell Forest Public Health Team, supporting the local whole-school health promotion approach through the Healthy Schools Programme. The School Nursing team delivers school staff training for the following medical conditions and management of severe allergic reactions, asthma and epilepsy enabling these children to attend and remain in school. Their role in attendance can often be key and the local authority engage with the services on a regular basis. The local authority recognise that many families rely on these services to maintain good levels of attendance.

Health visitors also play a vital role in supporting school attendance in early years settings by providing families with resources, guidance, and interventions that promote children's well-being and encourage regular participation in educational activities.

### **Youth Justice Team**

The youth justice team, work with children primarily to prevent and divert them from entering the criminal justice system but also by supporting some children not to re-offend. Youth Justice professionals understand the strong link between poor attendance at school and children becoming involved in offending, anti-social behaviour and exploitation. Youth Justice case workers and specialists play a crucial role in identifying and addressing barriers to attendance ,including unidentified learning, behavioural and mental health needs and communicating them to the school and other involved professionals through the Youth Justice Education meeting and other multi agency forums Youth Justice case workers and specialists promote the importance of school attendance to both parents and children and offer parenting support and signposting to other support services

## Our four Priorities

Our four priorities will inform a detailed multi-agency action plan, that will set out specific actions, the actions we will take to achieve the overarching priorities and the deliverable dates.

### We are in this together; ensure clear roles and responsibilities for all partners

<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b>What outcomes are we seeking?</b>	<b>How will we know we are making a difference?</b>
<p>We will regularly bring schools and partner agencies together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice.</p>	<p>All schools and partner agencies will work together in a consistent way.</p>	<p>100% of schools will be represented at our network forum meetings and will engage in the communications from the Local Authority in respect of school attendance.</p>
<p>We will ensure that we produce and collectively adhere to consistent processes and clear communication pathway.</p>	<p>All schools have access to the same information and deliver the same messages.</p>	<p>Other services and partners will attend/present at our network meetings.</p>
<p>We will work in partnership with schools to give clear messages on attendance to parents and carers through a variety of media.</p>	<p>Parents and carers are taking responsibility for their child's school attendance.</p>	<p>We will see less children with attendance issues and being taken out of school for holidays during term time.</p>
<p>We will hold regular meetings with school using their attendance data to identify.</p>	<p>Early support is offered to schools, children, young people, and their families.</p>	

<p>pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.</p> <p>We will provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.</p> <p>We will take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.</p>	<p>All children, young people and their families will feel better supported to unblock the barriers to school attendance.</p> <p>Children and Young people are attending school.</p>	<p>Regular attendance tracking, monitoring and reporting of different cohorts of children are available.</p> <p>EH assessments are being used within our schools and referrals are made when needed.</p> <p>Attendance assessments are being completed by our family workers.</p> <p>Our Education Welfare Officers are attending Team Around Family meetings where needed.</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are being issued when needed and prosecution is taken forward when appropriate in a consistent way across schools.</p> <p>Other legal support is being considered and discussed during our school meetings.</p>
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**We are consistent with shared approach and training**

<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b>What outcomes are we seeking?</b>	<b>How will we know we are making a difference?</b>
<p>Resources will be made available to schools to help identify relevant intervention pathways and signpost families to access support.</p> <p>A named contact and contact details within the LA will be made available to schools and parents/carers.</p> <p>Training will be made available to schools.</p> <p>All plans including Early Help, Children in Need and Child Protection will seek to identify and tackle the root causes of absence.</p>	<p>Families have access to support available to them from relevant services and partner agencies at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Consistent advice and support are being provided to schools, parents, and carers.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest schools are all trained in the same way and given the same message, ensuring consistent approaches are being taken within our schools.</p> <p>School attendance is on everyone's agenda and all service areas are taken responsibility for school attendance.</p>	<p>A decrease in Early Help referrals as support is being provided by the schools or CYP and families can be supported by partner agencies.</p> <p>Communication and collaboration will be effective and responsive to addressing and supporting attendance.</p> <p>Schools are being consistent in their approaches for example how they record schools' absences and when they issue FPNs.</p> <p>Attendance of the schools at training sessions and evaluation feedback.</p> <p>An Increase in school attendance for those pupils being supported by other service areas.</p> <p>Review of actions plans take place routinely during schools' meetings.</p> <p>Parents are receiving the same messages and approaches from schools.</p>

<p>Create an attendance toolkit for schools including templates of letters, action plans, guidance on intervention levels and sharing of data.</p>	<p>Create consistency across schools in their approaches and communication with parents and carers.</p>	<p>Schools are adopting and using the model policy.</p> <p>Feedback shows an increase on satisfaction with the support schools and parents/carers are receiving.</p>
<p>Create a model attendance policy for schools including changes from the working together document.</p>	<p>Bracknell Forest schools are delivering consistent messages within their attendance policy.</p>	
<p>Introduce feedback mechanisms for both schools and parents/carers to understand their experience of the support and advise they have received.</p>	<p>An accessible offer of support is made available for schools and parents/carers that meets their needs that is constantly review and improved based on the feedback received.</p>	

**We recognise the need to support for the most vulnerable**

<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b>What outcomes are we seeking?</b>	<b>How will we know we are making a difference?</b>
<p>We will work in partnership with our schools to ensure we are providing support for our economic disadvantaged cohort to recognise and overcome barriers to attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding transport issues</li> </ul>	<p>All CYP have the same access to education regardless of their background or home circumstances.</p> <p>All CYP get the support they need at the right time.</p>	<p>An increase in understanding of what transport support is available and how schools can access this for their CYP and families.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting those who are late/hungry/cold etc.</li> <li>• Making use of pupil premium</li> </ul> <p>Engage with voluntary, community and faith sector partners to share best practice and collaborate where needed.</p> <p>Engage with our wider community to promote the importance of school attendance.</p> <p>We will ensure that where there are concerns around school attendance and families are open to Early Help discussions happen to understand the barriers to attending school and support is available.</p> <p>Children's Social Care will incorporate school attendance within the child's social care plan which is monitored and reviewed at Child in Need and Core Group Meetings. This is a multi-agency meeting which would include education.</p> <p>Children's Social Care management and Virtual school work together to ensure that school attendance is prioritised, and that support needed is identified through</p>	<p>Everyone is taking responsibility for school attendance.</p>	<p>Pupil premium is being utilised in the most effective way to support these families.</p> <p>Community partners are involved with supporting these families.</p> <p>Multi-agency approach is being taken to support CYP, including external partners.</p> <p>Support offered from community partners is being shared with families.</p> <p>Communities are sharing messages around attendance.</p> <p>An Increase in school attendance for those pupils being supported by other service areas.</p>
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<p>CLA reviews in conjunction with virtual school and Chairs of the CLA reviews</p> <p>Our Youth Hub at Braccan Walk will be used as a welcoming, child-friendly venue to deliver tuition to children with SEND - also giving young people the opportunity to meet the youth team based there and access support/services.</p> <p>Our Youth Justice Team will offer intervention where there are direct links between offending behaviour and school and poor attendance or where young person is at risk of permanent exclusion.</p>		
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**We are responsive in meeting the needs of our local community**

<b>What are we going to do?</b>	<b>What outcomes are we seeking?</b>	<b>How will we know we are making a difference?</b>
<p>Support schools and parent/carers around attendance for CYP with mental health issues by identifying themes across Bracknell Forest based on data and on feedback from partners including</p>	<p>CYP have access to support at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>Schools are using toolkits and resources relating to emotional based school avoidance (EBSA).</p> <p>More CYP affected by EBSA are able to attend school.</p>

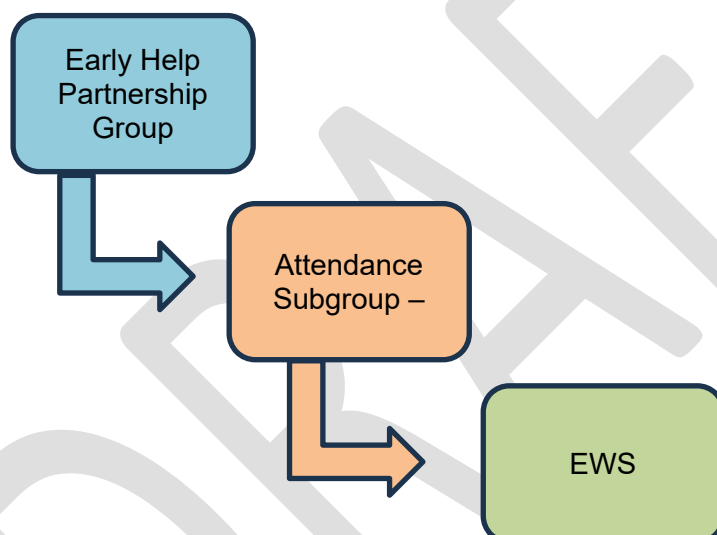
<p>schools, and leading campaigns on these.</p> <p>Support schools and parent/carers around attendance for those with mental health issues by identifying themes across Bracknell Forest based on data and on feedback from partners including schools, and leading campaigns on these.</p> <p>Provide a forum to focus on children and young people who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).</p>	<p>Better understanding for schools on how to support with various issues.</p> <p>All partners working together to make this group the top priority for support.</p>	<p>Increase in parent/carers attending our EBSA coffee morning.</p> <p>Schools attending sessions to improve their awareness in key themes.</p> <p>Increased requests for CYP to be discussed at our attendance forum.</p>
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## Governance

To ensure that we are making progress on the priorities we have listed we need to ensure that we have a good framework of governance so that everyone can celebrate progress but also be held accountable too.

The Education Welfare Service sits within Early Help in Bracknell Forest Council. The 'Early Help Partnership Group', which is made up of a range of partner agencies, which has partnership oversight of all early help activity, this group will be responsible for providing the strategic oversight of the strategy. We will establish an 'Operational Delivery Group', that will consist of a range of partner agencies and schools, to ensure that the aims of the strategy are translated into practice. This group will be responsible for the day-to-day operational implementation of the strategy.



**Performance Measures, how will we further know that this strategy is making a difference?**

Priority
We are in this together; ensure clear roles and responsibilities for all partners
We are consistent with shared approach and training
We recognise the need to support for the most vulnerable
We are responsive in meeting the needs of our local community
Evidence
Attendance Data Report
Early Help Audit Activity Reports
Schools & Parent/Carer Feedback

Children, Young People & Families Feedback

**Overall Measures**

- a. Increase in the numbers of children, young people and families supported through a multi-agency early help plan.
- b. Increase in schools accessing information, advice and guidance by attending network meeting and school meetings.
- c. Improved school attendance across all cohorts, including disadvantaged groups.
- d. Increase in numbers of schools and families who are satisfied with the support they receive.

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