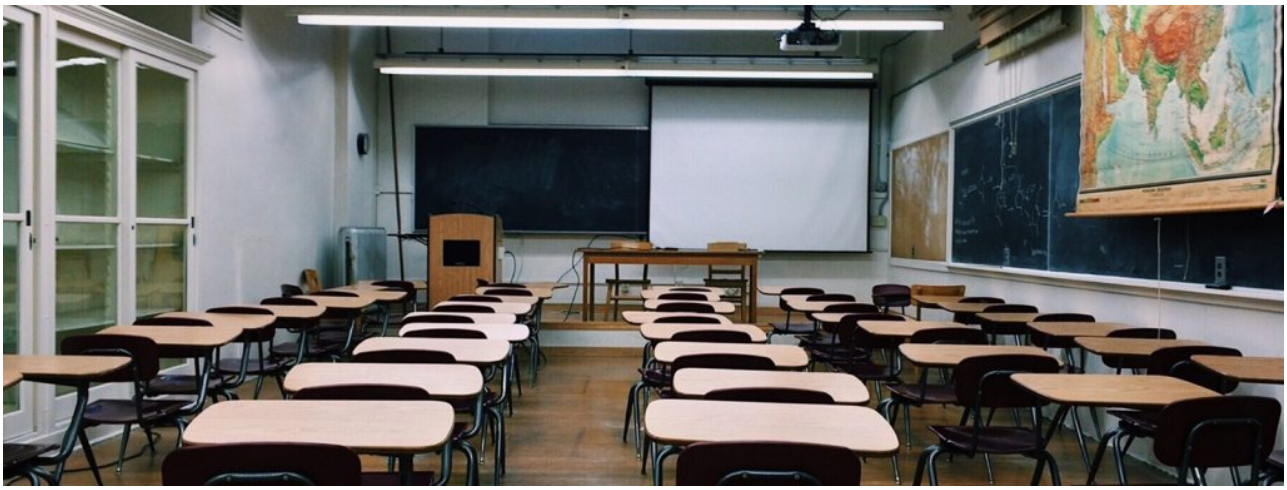
New regulations for schools in next stage of attendance drive

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Every state school in England will now share their daily attendance registers across the education sector – including with the department for education, councils, and trusts in the next stage of the government's drive to reduce pupil absence in school.

The sharing of daily school registers will form a new world-leading attendance data set that will help schools spot and support children displaying worrying trends of persistent absence or those in danger of becoming missing in education.

Schools, trusts and councils will be able to access this data via an interactive secure data dashboard maintained by the department for education. This will allow them easy use of the data to not only spot pupils in need of support but also to understand how their attendance position compares locally and nationally so they can look at where they might need to drive improvements.

These reforms are the next phase in the government's plan to improve attendance following the pandemic which has seen a worldwide rise in absence and persistent absence driven by broken habits of attendance, and new and exacerbated barriers like mental ill health.

The government's plan to improve attendance has included expanding

the attendance hubs programme to 32 hubs across the country, which share best practice to schools supporting more than one million pupils, plus piloting attendance mentors, who work directly with pupils to tackle their barriers to attendance alongside a national awareness campaign aimed at helping parents. Our plan is already working, with 380,000 fewer pupils persistently off school over the course of last year.

Parent fines for unauthorised absences will also be brought under a national framework to help tackle inconsistencies in their use. A fine to parents must be considered if a child misses 5 days of school for unauthorised absence. Alongside this, costs for fines will go up from £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days and from £120 to £160 if paid in 28 days which will ensure all parents are aware of when they might face a fine to ensure all councils are issuing fines appropriately.

Today the Department for Education has also announced Rob Tarn, CEO of Northern Education Trust and the founder of England's first attendance hub, as the new national attendance ambassador. Rob will work with schools and school leaders to champion attendance, share effective practice, and support the ongoing development of the attendance hubs programme nationally.

Education Secretary Gillian Keegan said:

Our fantastic schools and teachers unlock children's imagination, potential and social skills which is why improving attendance is my number one priority.

Today we are taking that next step to further boost attendance and I want to thank those who are working with us including teachers and heads.

Education standards have risen sharply across the country, with Ofsted ratings up from 68% to nearly 90% since 2010 – and pupils' performance is ranked as some of the best globally – so it has never been more valuable to be in school.

Key guidance setting out how schools and local authorities must take a 'support-first' approach to help pupils and their families to tackle barriers to attendance will be made statutory from August 2024. The working together to improve school attendance guidance sets expectations including regular meetings between schools and local authorities to agree plans for the most at-risk absent children.

It particularly emphasises the importance of support for pupils with SEND and

mental ill health who often need more individual consideration due to wider barriers. It asks schools, local authorities and wider services to work together to support these pupils, encouraging early intervention and close working with families to address their individual needs.

Rob Tarn, CEO of Northern Education Trust said:

Attendance is one biggest challenges facing the school system today, so I'm pleased that the Department has announced this package of important measures including making the attendance guidance statutory.

I am also delighted to have been named as the Department for Education's attendance ambassador. I look forward to working with attendance hub schools around the country to share effective practice and support school leaders to improve attendance locally and nationally.

Today's announcement is the next step in the government's national drive to improve attendance and tackle persistent absence, launched in January.

This sits alongside the national communications campaign raising awareness of the importance of attendance, which is running until Easter. Under the strapline 'Moments Matter, Attendance Counts' it outlines the importance of attendance for attainment, wellbeing, and development as well as signposting to advice for further support for parents and carers.

Steve Wilkinson, President of the Association of Education Welfare Management who run attendance support in local councils said:

We welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the DfE to share the vast expertise of our members with improving attendance in schools and other educational provisions.

Putting these measures on a statutory footing helps reinforce the importance of school attendance and the need to ensure families receive the support they need, when they need it, working together to ensure any barriers to attendance for children are removed.

This government is making long-term decisions to ensure all pupils have world class education. Improving attendance builds on that work which has delivered 89% of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, up from just 68% in 2010.

School standards are rising across the board and England has catapulted up the international rankings for academic attainment through our multimillion-pound maths and English hubs programme and phonics screening check. Thanks to reforms introduced since 2010 England is now one of the top performing countries in the world for maths, reading and science, and the government will continue to build on this progress by delivering crucial reforms including by creating the Advanced British Standard.

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