

Local Area Attendance Strategy



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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Strategic Alignment with West Berkshire Council Priorities

The vision and approach outlined in the school attendance strategy directly support the Council's overarching goals of creating a fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all, building thriving communities, and delivering services we are proud of.

By focusing on early intervention, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families, the attendance strategy contributes to the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people, particularly those facing disadvantage or additional needs.

The strategy also complements the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024–2029, which emphasises early identification, person-centred planning, and collaborative working across education, health, and care. The attendance strategy's focus on empowering families, supporting emotional wellbeing, and reducing barriers to engagement reflects the same principles found in the SEND strategy.

Together, these strategies form a cohesive framework for improving attendance, inclusion, and wellbeing across West Berkshire. They demonstrate a shared commitment to ensuring that every child is seen, heard, and supported—not just to attend school, but to thrive within it.

Executive Summary

This strategy sets out West Berkshire's shared commitment to improving school attendance. It outlines our vision, key challenges, and strategic priorities, and provides a clear roadmap for action. Guided by the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework, the strategy focuses on early intervention, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families and professionals. Success will be measured through key performance indicators including attendance rates, persistent absence, and engagement with support services.

Summary for Families and Community Partners

Every child in West Berkshire deserves to be in school every day, learning, making friends, and feeling safe. This strategy is about working together—schools, health services, social care, and families—to make sure children get the support they need. We're focusing on spotting problems early, listening to children and parents, helping with worries and routines, and making school work for everyone. We'll keep checking how things are going and make changes based on what families tell us.

Local Area Attendance Strategy

Our Vision: Every Day Counts, Every Child Matters

In West Berkshire, our vision is simple but powerful:

To ensure every child is supported to attend school regularly through a collaborative, inclusive, and child-centred approach—one that reflects their lived experiences, removes barriers, and promotes wellbeing.

This vision is at the heart of our strategy to improve school attendance. It recognises that behind every absence is a story—and behind every story is a child who deserves to be seen, heard, and supported. We know that persistent absence is often a symptom of deeper challenges, whether it's unmet needs, mental health concerns, or family pressures. That's why we're committed to working together—across schools, health services, social care, and communities—to create environments where children feel safe, valued, and ready to learn.

Our approach is guided by the Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework and shaped by what we hear from children, families, and professionals in our local area. It's not just about getting children through the school gates—it's about making sure they thrive once they're there.

Together, we're building a culture where attendance is everyone's business—and every day in school is a step toward a brighter future.

Every Day Counts: A Shared Commitment to School Attendance in West Berkshire

In West Berkshire, we believe that every child deserves the best start in life—and that starts with being in school, every day. School attendance is more than a legal requirement; it's a gateway to learning, friendships, wellbeing, and future opportunities. That's why improving attendance is a shared priority across education, health, and social care.

This strategy sets out how we will work together to reduce persistent and severe absence, guided by the Department for Education's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA) framework*. It reflects our local commitment to early help, inclusive education, and strong partnerships with families.

Empowering Families, Professionals, and Communities

This strategy is designed to empower everyone involved in a child's education—from families and carers to teachers, health professionals, and social workers. By promoting open communication, inclusive practices, and shared responsibility across the Local Authority, we aim to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and ensure that every child feels supported to attend school regularly. Empowerment means giving families the tools to advocate for their children, equipping professionals with the training and resources they need, and creating systems that listen, adapt, and respond to lived experiences.

Local Picture: West Berkshire and Our Neighbours

The attendance data across West Berkshire and its statistical neighbours for the academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25 reveals consistent patterns that reinforce the need for a collaborative and proactive attendance strategy. West Berkshire maintains a strong attendance rate of 94.82% in 2024/25, slightly above the national average of 94%, and comparable to neighbouring areas such as Hampshire (94.9%) and Bracknell (94.65%). However, persistent absence remains a concern across all areas, with West Berkshire at 12.65%, closely aligned with Reading (12.3%), Bracknell (12.4%), and Buckinghamshire (12.2%). These figures suggest that while overall attendance is relatively stable, a significant proportion of pupils are missing substantial amounts of school.

Unauthorised absence rates have also seen a slight increase across the board, with West Berkshire rising from 1.05% to 1.2%, mirroring national and regional trends. This may reflect growing challenges related to disengagement, unmet needs, or family pressures. The data highlights the importance of early identification, emotional support, and inclusive education pathways—core pillars of the strategy—to address the underlying causes of absence and ensure every child is supported to attend and thrive. West Berkshire’s performance is encouraging—but we’re not complacent. We’re committed to raising aspirations, removing barriers, and ensuring every child is supported to attend, thrive, and succeed.

This strategy aims to:

- Embed a culture of high attendance across all schools, settings and services.
- Embed curiosity around attendance
- Strengthen early identification and intervention pathways.
- Ensure inclusive, flexible education that meets diverse needs.
- Empower families and communities to be active partners in attendance.
- Hold all stakeholders accountable through clear roles, responsibilities, and performance indicators.

Data insights:

Area	2023/24 Attendance Rate (%)	2024/25 Attendance Rate (%)	2023/24 Persistent Absence Rate (%)	2024/25 Persistent Absence Rate (%)	2023/24 Unauthorised Absence Rate (%)	2024/25 Unauthorised Absence Rate (%)
West Berkshire	95.12	94.82	12.1	12.65	1.05	1.2
Bracknell	94.85	94.65	12	12.4	1.15	1.25
Oxfordshire	94.9	94.7	11.8	12	1.1	1.2
Hampshire	95	94.9	11.7	12.1	1.05	1.15
Buckinghamshire	94.88	94.68	11.9	12.2	1.1	1.2
National Average	94.3	94	12.5	13.1	1.2	1.3

Our Priorities and Pledges

Improving school attendance in West Berkshire is a shared mission. We are committed to working together—across education, health, social care, and communities—to ensure every child is supported to attend school regularly and thrive. Our approach is shaped by local lived experiences and guided by the national *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTTISA)* framework.

What We’re Focusing On:

Priority Area	What It Means
Early Identification and Intervention <i>Spot problems early</i>	We monitor attendance closely so we can act quickly when a child starts missing school. Early help means better outcomes.
Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Support <i>Help with worries and feelings</i>	We know emotional wellbeing affects attendance. We’re making sure children have trusted adults and safe spaces to talk and feel supported.
Inclusive and Flexible Education Pathways <i>Make school work for everyone</i>	Every child learns differently. We’re promoting flexible, inclusive approaches so school feels right for every learner.
Strengthening Family and Community Partnerships <i>Work with families</i>	Families are key partners. We’re building strong relationships and working together to support children’s attendance and engagement.

How We'll Make It Happen

Collaboration and Communication

- Strong multi-agency working across schools & settings, social care, health, and local services to ensure a joined-up approach.
- Clear, consistent communication between adults and professionals using, shared platforms, and regular multi-agency meetings.
- Early joint planning when concerns arise, ensuring the right support is in place at the right time.
- Open, honest, and timely communication with families and parents to build trust, share concerns early, and work together on solutions.

Child-Centred and Family-Focused Approaches

- Listening to children and ensuring they have trusted adults.
- Creating personalised plans that reflect each child's needs.
- Supporting foster and kinship carers to promote education.

Early Intervention and Prevention

- Using data and school meetings to identify concerns early.
- Promoting curiosity and compassion in understanding barriers.
- Strengthening access to Early Help and preventative services.

Practical and Emotional Support

- Helping families with morning routines, uniforms, and transport.
- Providing emotional support and trauma-informed care.
- Addressing mental health and family dynamics that affect attendance.

Training and Empowerment

- Delivering training on EHCPs, therapeutic thinking, and inclusive language.
- Empowering parents and carers to advocate for their children.
- Building confidence across the workforce to support attendance.

Accountability and Follow-Through

- Clear ownership of actions and regular follow-up.
- Reviewing EHCPs and ensuring plans are implemented.
- Holding professionals accountable for delivering support.

Inclusive and Flexible Education

- Promoting inclusive practices for children with SEMH and neurodivergence.
- Encouraging flexible approaches to meet individual needs.
- Supporting reintegration after exclusions and reducing school-based anxiety.

Roles and Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Roles and Responsibilities
School Leaders	- Establish a clear and consistent vision for good attendance - Foster a whole-school culture that prioritises attendance - Appoint a senior leader to oversee attendance strategy and interventions - Monitor attendance data and evaluate the impact of actions taken
Teachers and Staff	- Record attendance accurately and promptly - Build positive relationships with pupils and families - Identify early signs of attendance concerns - Support attendance interventions and maintain proactive communication with families
Attendance Champion	- Lead the development and delivery of the school's attendance strategy - Ensure staff are trained and consistent in their approach - Promote best practice and innovative approaches - Liaise with external partners and report to school leadership
Governing Bodies	- Hold school leaders to account for attendance outcomes - Ensure attendance policies are in place and implemented effectively - Review attendance data and challenge areas of concern
Local Authorities	- Monitor attendance across all schools - Provide guidance and support to families and schools - Use legal powers where appropriate to address non-attendance - Coordinate multi-agency responses for persistent and severe absence
Parents and Carers	- Ensure children attend school regularly and on time - Support children to be prepared to learn - Work in partnership with schools to support attendance - Communicate reasons for absence promptly and accurately
Pupils	- Attend school consistently and punctually, in alignment with their agreed timetable and educational provision. - Remain on site for the full school day, unless alternative arrangements have been formally agreed with the school or local authority. - Present appropriately for learning. - Follow the school policies and behavioural expectations
Multi-Agency Partners	- Collaborate with schools, settings and the local authority to remove barriers to attendance - Share relevant information and coordinate support - Engage in Early Help and Team Around the Family (TAF) processes where appropriate

Strategic Themes and Action Plan

As this strategy applies across the entire Local Authority, it is essential to emphasise that while specific lead roles are identified, implementation is a collective responsibility. All partners and stakeholders—across education, health, social care, police and voluntary sectors—are accountable for embedding and delivering the strategy consistently throughout West Berkshire. A unified and collaborative approach is critical to achieving meaningful outcomes for children and families.

Theme	Key Actions	Lead Roles
1. Collaboration and Communication	- Strengthen multi-agency working across schools, social care, health, and local services - Maintain clear, consistent communication between professionals using shared platforms and regular meetings - Initiate early joint planning when concerns arise to ensure timely support - Communicate openly and honestly with families to build trust and co-develop solutions	Schools, Education and Social Care, Health Services, Parent Carer Forums (PCF)
2. Child-Centred and Family-Focused Approaches	- Ensure every child has access to trusted adults - Listen to and act on the voices of children and families in all planning - Create personalised support plans that reflect individual needs - Support foster and kinship carers to promote education and wellbeing	Schools, Social Workers, Early Help & Family Hubs
3. Early Intervention and Prevention	- Use attendance data and school meetings to identify concerns early - Promote curiosity and compassion in understanding barriers to attendance - Strengthen access to Early Help and preventative services	Schools (Lead Practitioner), Education Services, CAAS, Public Health
4. Practical and Emotional Support	- Support families with morning routines, uniforms, and transport - Provide emotional support through trauma-informed approaches - Address mental health and family dynamics that impact school engagement	Children & Family Services, Schools, Health Services

Theme	Key Actions	Lead Roles
5. Inclusive and Flexible Education	- Promote inclusive and therapeutic practices, especially for children with SEMH and neurodivergence - Offer flexible education pathways and alternative provision where needed - Support reintegration after exclusions and reduce school-based anxiety	Schools, SEN Teams, Virtual School, Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
6. Training and Empowerment	- Deliver training on EHCPs, therapeutic thinking, and inclusive communication - Empower parents and carers to advocate for their children - Build confidence across the workforce to support attendance effectively	TTST, SENDIASS, PCFs, Education Attendance Team, Schools, Foster/Kinship Carers/Early Years
7. Accountability and Follow-Through	- Assign clear ownership of actions and ensure regular follow-up - Monitor EHCP reviews and ensure plans are implemented - Hold professionals accountable for delivering agreed support	All Professionals
8. Advocacy and Systemic Change	- Promote attendance as a shared priority across sectors - Share best practice and learning across the partnership - Engage councillors and public health leaders in shaping strategy	Councillors, Public Health, Senior Leaders

Monitoring & Review

- **Monthly multi-agency reviews** of attendance data and action plans.
- **Quarterly feedback** from families and young people.
- **Annual evaluation** of strategy impact and updates based on lived experience.

References

- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)
- [Council Strategy 2025-2027](#)
- [SEND Strategy \(Draft\)](#)
- [EBSA Guidance](#)

Governance

Governance Summary

Effective governance is essential to ensure the successful implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of the Local Area Attendance Strategy. Oversight will be provided through a structured governance framework that promotes accountability, transparency, and collaboration across all stakeholders.

1. Strategic Oversight

- The strategy will be overseen by a Multi-Agency Attendance Board, chaired by a senior representative from the Local Authority.
- This board will meet quarterly to review progress, evaluate impact, and steer strategic direction.
- Membership will include representatives from education, health, social care, youth justice, and parent carer forums.

2. Attendance Working Group

- A dedicated Attendance Working Group (AWG) will be established to drive operational delivery of the strategy.
- The AWG will meet monthly and report to the Multi-Agency Attendance Board.
- Core responsibilities include:
 - Coordinating implementation of strategic actions.
 - Reviewing attendance data and identifying trends.
 - Sharing best practices and case studies.
 - Escalating systemic issues or barriers to the strategic board.
 - Ensuring lived experience and family voice are embedded in all planning.

Membership of the AWG will include:

- School attendance leads
- Education Attendance Team
- Early Years Service
- Early Help and Social Care representatives
- SENDIASS and Parent Carer Forum members
- Virtual School and Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
- Public Health and Youth Services

3. Monitoring and Review

- Monthly data dashboards will be produced and reviewed by the AWG.
- Quarterly feedback will be gathered from families and young people.
- An annual impact report will be published, including recommendations for strategy updates.

4. Measuring Our Impact: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To track progress and ensure accountability, we will monitor the following KPIs across the partnership:

- **Overall attendance rate** across schools (target: $\geq 95\%$)
- **Persistent absence rate** (target: $\leq 10\%$)
- **Reduction in unauthorised absence** (target: $\leq 1\%$)
- **Number of Early Help referrals** linked to attendance concerns
- **Percentage of children with personalised attendance support plans**
- **Engagement levels in training for professionals and carers**
- **Feedback from families and young people** on support received
- **Timeliness of multi-agency meetings** following attendance concerns

These indicators will be reviewed regularly and shared across the partnership to inform decision-making, celebrate progress, and identify areas for improvement.

Services and Contributors to the Attendance Strategy and thanks to:

1. Primary & Secondary Schools
2. Parent Carer Forums (PCF)
3. SENDIASS
4. Youth Justice Service Team (YJST)
5. Thames Valley Police
6. Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT)
7. SEN Assessment Team
8. Early Help & Family Hubs
9. Education Attendance Team
10. School Improvement Team
11. Virtual School
12. Family Safeguarding Team
13. Early Response Hub
14. Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)
15. Contact, Advice & Assessment Services (CAAS)
16. Public Health Team
17. Local Councillors
18. Foster and Kinship Carer Support Services
19. Exclusions and Reintegration Services
20. Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Services (QAAS)
21. Children in Need (CIN) Pilot Team
22. Social Workers and Family Resource Teams

West Berkshire School Attendance Strategy: Family & Community Summary

Summary

Every child deserves the best start in life—and that starts with being in school every day. This summary explains how West Berkshire is working together with families, schools, health services, and social care to help children attend school regularly and thrive.

Why Attendance Matters

When children miss school, they miss out on learning, friendships, and support. Sometimes absence is linked to deeper challenges like mental health, family pressures, or special educational needs. We want to work with families to understand these challenges and find solutions together.

Our Vision

To support every child to attend school regularly through a collaborative, inclusive, and child-centred approach—one that reflects their lived experiences, removes barriers, and promotes wellbeing.

How we will make this happen

Here are the main ways we're working to improve attendance:

Working Together

Schools, health services, and social care are joining forces to support families early.

Listening to Children and Families

We support children to have trusted adults and that their voices shape support plans.

Spotting Problems Early

We will use data and regular meetings to notice attendance issues before they get worse.

Practical Help

We will offer the right support at the right time.

Training and Support

We train staff and empower parents to advocate for their children.

Clear Responsibilities

Everyone involved knows their role and follows up on agreed actions.

Flexible Education

We promote inclusive practices and help children return to school after exclusions or anxiety.

How You Can Get Involved

Families are key partners in this strategy. If you have concerns about attendance or need support, please speak to your child's school or contact the local authority's attendance team. We're here to listen and help.

