

**MOMENTS  
MATTER,**

**ATTENDANCE  
COUNTS.**

# Attendance communications toolkit for schools

March 2024 update



Department  
for Education



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**Updated!**

# Toolkit for supporting attendance comms

Improving school attendance is everyone's business and, to tackle the challenge we face, we need to work together.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide schools with off-the-shelf products they can use to remind parents and carers of the importance of school attendance.

The campaign strapline is “***moments matter, attendance counts***”. Messaging for the communications have been developed from research into parental attitudes, as well as two local authority pilots at the end of 2023.

This research found that some parents place less value on regular school attendance post-pandemic. We know you are working hard every day to change these attitudes; these materials are to support you with this. **Schools report that these resources have been helpful to integrate into their existing newsletters, email signatures and communications with parents.** These are just a few of the ways you might use them to amplify the message.

Campaign messages aim to primarily reach those parents and carers whose children are taking preventable odd days of absence – or “avoidable absence” – rather than children who face greater barriers to attendance, such as those with long term medical needs or special educational needs and disabilities.

**For families facing complex barriers, schools are reminded to refer to [guidance](#) and have sensitive conversations with parents and work with them to put support in place for their individual needs.**

## Our campaign aims to:

- Continue to support schools and local authorities in navigating attendance challenges.
- Amplify the notion that every day of school is important, reminding families **moments matter, attendance counts**.
- Reassure parents that the NHS and the [Chief Medical Officer](#) say it is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses, including general cold symptoms like a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat.
- Encourage you to participate in the campaign to help us amplify messages to families and schools.

# What's happening

The campaign **seeks to influence parents and carers'** views on the importance of school attendance.

To promote the importance of school attendance and the value of a school day, the national communications campaign will include:

- Promoted social media advertising
- Media partnerships
- Radio advertising
- Expert-led activity
- Out of home advertising
- Promoted online video – YouTube

## When?

Campaign activity began in January and finishes at the end of March 2024. This toolkit and the resources it links to will remain live after the campaign ends and you are encouraged to continue to make use of the materials provided.

The campaign reflects feedback from schools and local authorities. It forms one part of our wider strategy to increase attendance, which also includes [clearer expectations for schools and local authorities built around a 'support first' approach](#).

# 7 ways you can support the campaign & attendance comms

- 1. Help create a national warm welcome to school for families throughout the spring** by sharing the attendance campaign resources (**on slide 6**) on your social media channels, newsletters and website. You can tailor these to your school.
- 2. Make the Spring term a fresh start for children and young people struggling to attend school** by taking a “support first” approach and sustaining efforts to engage families where absence is severe or persistent. We have produced range of [webinars](#) and [case studies](#) with tips and best practice to address attendance barriers.
- 3. Refer to the [communicating with families to support attendance toolkit](#) when communicating with families about attendance**, to maximise your impact. The campaign will also encourage parents and carers struggling with their child’s attendance to reach out to their school as the first step of support.
- 4. Set [clear expectations](#) for parents and carers about what they need to do to support good attendance** (e.g., phoning when their child is ill and having a back-up plan if their child misses school transport). Be clear on what they can expect from you in return (e.g., phoning parents and carers to discuss a child’s attendance where there are challenges and getting them into school for a meeting if there are concerns).
- 5. Remind parents and carers** of the NHS [Is my child too ill for school](#) guidance and the [Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty’s letter on mild illness and school attendance](#) that says a prolonged period of absence is likely to heighten a child’s anxiety about attending school in the future.
- 6. Help reduce the spread of infection in your school** - remind staff and pupils of the importance of regular and effective handwashing and ensure spaces are well-ventilated. You can use your CO<sub>2</sub> monitors to [manage good ventilation](#). Tell parents and carers about the steps you are taking to reduce infection spread to offer reassurance.
- 7. [Sign up to share your daily attendance data](#)** with DfE if your school has not already done so and use the data to identify and respond to trends early.

# Attendance campaign resources to use

We have updated the social media graphics to feature new animated creative assets on illness and shared connections at school. They are [downloadable](#) here and include:

- Images you can print out, including a new printable poster (see examples below)
- Social media graphics you can post – including four videos
- A ‘Moments Matter, Attendance Counts’ logo you can add to your e-mail signature

You can also share our promoted online videos, such as [this](#) one from Dr Radha Modgil

We encourage you to share the latest graphics on your social media channels. Suggested post:

*“From the first day of term to the last, the small moments in a school day make a real difference to your child.  
#AttendanceCounts”*



# Campaign colour palette

When using the campaign resources, use our colours for maximum impact.

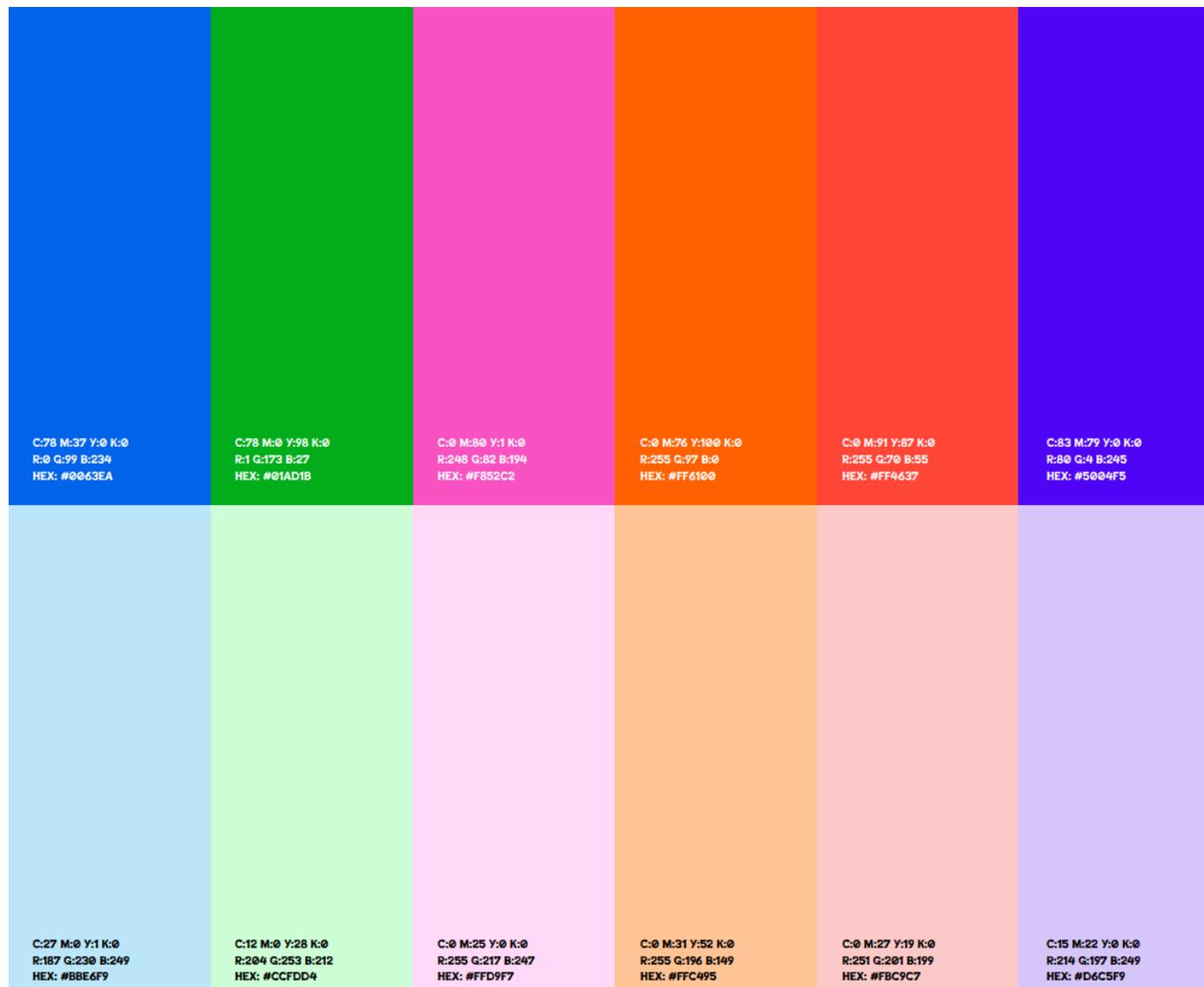
## Our colours

Our bright colour palette seeks to create a visual language that amplifies the excitement and positivity associated with school life.

For assets, we use a monochromatic colour scheme using a bright primary colour with a complimentary softer tone.

Our campaign colours adhere to AA accessibility standards. Only use the matching light and dark colours combinations. Do not mix and match colours.

Our fonts are Poster Cut Neue and Century Gothic Pro. We use Poster Cut Neue in Uppercase for our headlines and Century Gothic Pro Bold Sentence case for our body copy. The font Grandstander can be used as an alternative headline free google font.



# Attendance: the top facts to know & share

## The link between attendance and attainment is clear:

- In 2018/19, **just 40% of persistently absent (PA) children in KS2 achieved expected KS2 standards**, compared with 84% of pupils who regularly attended school.
- **36% of PA children in KS4 got 9 to 4 in their English and maths GCSEs**, compared with 84% of regular attenders.<sup>1</sup>

## And it's never too late to benefit from good attendance:

- **More than half (54%) of pupils who were PA in Year 10 and then rarely absent in Year 11, passed at least 5 GCSEs**, compared to 36% of pupils who were persistently absent in both years.<sup>2</sup>

## But attendance is important for more than just attainment:

- Regular school attendance can facilitate **positive peer relationships**, which is a **protective factor for mental health and wellbeing**.<sup>3</sup>

## Attendance in the first week of school in September sets up attendance throughout the year (and it's time to start preparing for back to school now):

- Evidence from a Children's Commissioner report showed that children who miss one of the first few days of the new term for unauthorised reasons are much more likely to miss long periods of their schooling than their peers who attended those first few days. These children had a predicted overall absence of almost 45%, or 31 days across the term.<sup>4</sup>
- In the 2022/23 academic year, of those who had at least one day of absence in the first week of term, 55.5% went on to be persistently absent.<sup>5</sup>

1: [The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4, Academic year 2018/19 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov-uk)

2: [Missing Children, Missing Grades | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/missing-children-missing-grades/)

3: [Mental Health and Attendance at School \(Chapter 1\) - Mental Health and Attendance at School \(cambridge.org\)](https://www.cambridge.org/core/mental-health-and-attendance-at-school)

4: [Let's get ready for September | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/lets-get-ready-for-september/)

5: [Pupil attendance in schools, Week 8 2024 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics/service/gov-uk)

# Preparing for Back to School in September now: 6 top tips for schools

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It is essential that schools start 'back to school' preparation early – particularly for those transitioning from one school to another. Based off best practice from the attendance hubs and other schools with high attendance, we have developed some **top tips** for schools to begin preparing now to support pupils to have the strongest start possible in September.

- 1. Identify pupils and cohorts who need support now:** Analyse last year's attendance data to pinpoint students needing extra help or encouragement before the new school year begins. Implement personalised plans, like [Wheeler Lane Technology College](#), to boost attendance.
- 2. Manage year to year transitions proactively:**
  - **Reception Starters:** Collaborate with early years providers and parents to ensure children are prepared for school. By understanding the needs of the children joining your school, you can support the children to make the best start to their school life.
  - **Year 6 to 7:** Careful planning is key when pupils transition from primary to secondary school. Develop targeted support, particularly for vulnerable students, such as those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) or free school meals (FSM) eligibility, to ease the primary to secondary transition. For example, [John Taylor Multi Academy Trust](#), have implemented a programme specifically designed to manage attendance during this critical transition.
  - **Year 7 to 8:** Evaluate and continue successful Year 7 support strategies to keep up good attendance patterns as young people progress throughout secondary school. [On average](#), absence increases as young people go through secondary school – with a big jump from Year 7 to Year 8.
  - **Other Transitions:** Every year group move is a significant transition for children and young people. Anticipating challenges and providing proactive support for all year group transitions can help address potential attendance issues early.

# Preparing for Back to School in September now: 6 top tips for schools

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- 3. Reach out to parents and carers in the Summer term** to assure them that your school prioritises support for attendance and takes a ‘support first’ approach. Utilise our [family communication toolkit](#) for personalised messages, fostering an open dialogue. If families anticipate attendance challenges, your assistance—such as with reviewing [individual health care plans](#) or putting [reasonable adjustments](#) in place—will be invaluable. [Wheeler Lane Technology College](#) has created a ‘pastoral toolkit’ that outlines the support available to families facing particular challenges, and also takes a proactive response to school uniform challenges.
- 4. To further support families, you can sign-post to additional support available** to help families overcome attendance barriers, including:
  - Mental health resources, including the [mental health attendance guidance](#) and [Education Hub](#) post
  - Attendance advice for parents, including [guidance for parents on school attendance](#)
- 5. Keep attendance high until the end of year by motivating pupils and parents/carers:** Keeping students excited and engaged is key to promoting school attendance. For example, [Willows Primary Academy \(part of the DELTA Academies Trust\)](#) motivates students with attendance cards. Pupils earn stamps for attendance and punctuality, which translate into entries for a weekly prize draw. Keeping parents in the loop with **regular updates on their child’s attendance data** can also help parents understand the importance of regular attendance and recognise the cumulative impact of taking a day or two off at a time. For example, [Icknield Infant and Nursery School](#) shares individual pupil attendance data during parents’ evening, allowing parents and carers to see the aggregate impact of sporadic absences.
- 6. Maintain school readiness and clear expectations over the summer holidays:** Staying in contact with parents/carers during the holidays can be a supportive way to ensure students are ready for school from day one.
  - For example, St Giles School, maintain contact with parents and carers through the holidays and have a unique ‘ENERGISE’ week at the beginning of the new school year where they nurture school readiness and a mindset geared towards learning.
  - The [Holiday Activity and Food](#) programme is another great way to keep children engaged over the summer and can have a significant impact on attendance in the new school year. [For example](#), two siblings, both recipients of FSM, saw improvements: one reduced unauthorised absence by 23.2%, while the other improved attendance by 28.7%.

# Coming up next term...

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As [announced](#) on February 29 2024, we have introduced:

- Updated [working together to improve school attendance guidance](#), setting out how schools and local authorities (LAs) must take a 'support first' approach to help pupils and their families to tackle barriers to attendance, which will be made statutory from August 2024. The guidance particularly emphasises the importance of support for pupils with SEND and mental ill health who often need more individual consideration due to wider barriers.
- A new National Framework for Penalty Notices sets a single national threshold to improve consistency and embed a 'support first' approach by ensuring penalty notices are only considered where support is not engaged with, not working or not appropriate.
- Regulations to mandate attendance data-sharing by all state-funded schools, giving schools and LAs access to near-live high-quality data to inform target support early. 89% schools are already sharing their data with us. You can sign up to share your daily school attendance data [here](#).
- Regulations to modernise school attendance and admission registers, to improve consistency and accuracy of register recordings.

**To support schools and LAs to embed these changes**, the Department for Education will be running a series of training sessions and webinars from April 2024. Details of these will be shared with settings via the Sector Email – which you can sign up to receive [here](#)!

Additionally, over the course of the summer term we will be releasing more data tools and resources designed to support schools to tackle absence.

# Further resources

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## Guidance

- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Is my child too ill for school?- NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools- GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Letter to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## Resources

- [How to improve your child's school attendance and where to get support - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://blog.gov.uk)
- [Access your school attendance data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Mental health resources for children, students, parents, carers and school/college staff- The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://blog.gov.uk)

## Best practice

- [Improving attendance: good practice for schools and multi-academy trusts - Case study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Attendance - Teaching \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://blog.gov.uk)
- [Attendance hubs-GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [What are reasonable adjustments and how do they help disabled pupils at school? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://blog.gov.uk)