

Strengthening Attendance

A Relationship-Centric Strategy for Woodchurch Road Academy



Introduction:

This attendance strategy is grounded in recent research, with a particular focus on the ideas of education expert Marc Rowland. Emphasising the importance of relationships and early intervention, this strategy aims to foster a positive school culture that supports consistent attendance without relying on extrinsic rewards.

1. Building Positive Relationships:

- **Student-Teacher Relationships:** Develop strong connections between teachers and students. Regularly check in with pupils, showing genuine interest in their well-being and academic progress.
- **Family-School Partnerships:** Establish open lines of communication with parents and caregivers. Foster a collaborative relationship to address any attendance issues early and provide necessary support.

2. Early Identification and Support:

- **Data Analysis:** Utilise attendance data to identify patterns and trends. Early identification of potential attendance issues allows for timely intervention and support.
- **Multidisciplinary Teams:** Establish multidisciplinary teams within the school to address attendance concerns collaboratively. Include teachers, SEN coordinators, and support staff to provide a holistic approach to early intervention. This will include a graduated response as outlined within the Wirral Policy for Attendance.

3. Personalised Support Plans:

- **Individualised Assessments:** Conduct individual assessments to identify the root causes of attendance issues. This may involve understanding personal, familial, or academic challenges that students may be facing.
- **Collaborative Goal Setting:** Work with students and their families to set realistic attendance goals. This collaborative approach ensures that the goals are meaningful and achievable, fostering a sense of ownership.

4. Implementing a Whole-School Approach:

- **Staff Training:** Provide professional development for school staff on the importance of relationship-building and early intervention, including their responsibilities of promoting good attendance & the identification of factors that may affect a pupils attendance.

- **Inclusive Policies:** Develop school policies that promote inclusivity and understanding. Consider factors such as cultural differences, health issues, or socioeconomic challenges that may impact attendance.

5. Regular Communication and Feedback:

- **Transparent Communication:** Keep parents informed about the significance of regular attendance and the school's commitment to early intervention. Maintain transparent communication channels to address concerns promptly.
- **Daily Phone Calls:** Implement a system of daily phone calls to parents or guardians for students with persistent attendance issues. This daily communication helps to build rapport, understand any emerging challenges, and provide timely support.

6. Systems of Monitoring Closely:

- **Daily Attendance Tracking:** Monitor attendance closely on a daily basis. Implement a robust system for tracking and recording attendance, enabling the timely identification of any concerns.
- **Early Help Interventions:** Link closely with early help services to provide targeted support for families facing attendance challenges. Collaborate with external agencies to address underlying issues and ensure a coordinated approach to support.

7. Community Engagement:

- **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with community organisations to provide additional support services. This can include resources for families facing challenges related to attendance, such as transportation assistance or counselling services.
- **Celebrating Attendance Success:** Organise community events to celebrate improved attendance. Highlight the positive impact of regular attendance on the individual student and the broader community.

By adopting this relationship-centric attendance strategy, Woodchurch Road Academy can create a supportive environment that addresses attendance issues proactively, utilising systems of daily monitoring and close communication to provide early help and support, aligning with contemporary research findings and Marc Rowland's emphasis on relationship-building and early intervention.

Sources of evidence

- https://attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Teaching-Attendance2.0-Summary_final.pdf
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/extrinsic-motivation-it-might-be-even-worse-you-thought> • <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Behaviour%20Change%20-%20School%20attendance%2C%20exclusion%20and%20persistent%20absence%20%282017%29.pdf> • <https://www.tes.com/magazine/teaching-learning/general/what-research-tells-us-about-fixing-attendance>
- <https://leadinglearner.me/2017/07/02/absences-matter-and-you-can-help/>
- <https://marcrowland.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/hampshire-report8.pdf>
- <https://marcrowland.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/closing-the-disadvantage-gap-2.pdf>

Role of the Headteacher:

1. Leadership and Vision:

- Set the vision and expectations for the importance of attendance within the school. Communicate this with all stake holders including staff, LGB and Central Trust
- Demonstrate a commitment to creating a positive and inclusive school culture that values regular attendance.

2. Policy Development:

- Develop and implement school policies related to attendance, ensuring they align with national guidelines and regulations.
- Communicate policies to staff, students, and parents, emphasizing their significance in supporting student success.

3. Supporting Staff:

- Provide leadership and support to the attendance officer and other staff involved in attendance monitoring.
- Encourage a collaborative approach among teaching and support staff to promote a positive attendance culture.

4. Resource Allocation:

- Allocate resources to support attendance initiatives, including training for staff, technology for tracking, and additional support for students facing attendance challenges.

5. Communication with Parents:

- Engage with parents and caregivers to emphasise the importance of regular attendance.
- Provide a clear and consistent message about the school's commitment to supporting students in their education journey.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Regularly review attendance data to identify trends and areas for improvement.
- Collaborate with the attendance lead to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and adjust strategies as needed.

7. Celebrating Success:

- Acknowledge and celebrate improvements in attendance.
- Recognise students, families, and staff who contribute to creating a positive attendance culture.

Both the Headteacher and the Attendance Lead play essential roles in creating a positive and supportive attendance culture within the school. While the Headteacher provides leadership, vision, and resources, the Attendance Lead is responsible for the day-to-day implementation, data analysis, communication, and collaboration with various stakeholders. Their joint efforts contribute to a holistic approach to attendance management at Woodchurch Road Academy.

Role of the Attendance Lead/Officer

In the context of Woodchurch Road Academy's attendance strategy, the attendance officer assumes a pivotal role, aligning closely with the outlined initiatives while taking into account specific considerations for PPG (Pupil Premium Grant) recipients, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN (Special Educational Needs) children. The officer's responsibilities are not only integral to attendance management but also directly tie into safeguarding efforts, necessitating collaboration with the SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator) and safeguarding team.

1. Welcoming Children and Families on the Gate:

- Extend a warm welcome to children and families at the gate, emphasising inclusivity.
- Establish positive interactions, recognising the unique needs of PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children.

2. Clarifying Late Arrivals with Parents:

- Engage with parents at the gate, especially for PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children arriving late after 8.50.
- Clearly communicate the school's punctuality policy, considering the specific challenges these students may face.

3. Holding Accountable Discussions with Families:

Conduct accountable discussions with families, placing additional focus on PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children. Collaborate with families to address attendance concerns, recognising the potential impact on these specific student groups.

4. Making Contact via Phone Calls:

Initiate regular phone calls with every family, paying special attention to those with PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children. Use phone calls to build positive relationships and gather insights into the unique circumstances of these students and being relentless is their approach

5. Tracking, Reporting, and Evaluating:

Utilise attendance data to track and identify trends, with a specific focus on PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children. Report attendance trends and individual cases regularly, highlighting the unique considerations for these student groups.

6. Complete Overview Report to the Head Weekly:

Provide a weekly overview report to the head, emphasising the attendance status of PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children. Ensure transparency regarding the challenges and improvements related to these specific student cohorts.

7. Complete Full Report Every 6 Weeks:

Compile a comprehensive report every six weeks, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions for all students, including PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN.

Include recommendations for ongoing strategies, considering the nuanced needs of these student groups.

8. Safeguarding and Collaboration with SENDCO and Safeguarding Team:

Fully evaluate the attendance of PPG, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and SEN children, recognising the intersectionality of attendance issues with their unique circumstances. Collaborate closely with the SENDCO and safeguarding team, ensuring a holistic approach to attendance that aligns with safeguarding priorities.

The Role of The Teacher

In the context of the attendance strategy at Woodchurch Road Academy, teachers play a crucial role in fostering positive relationships, supporting early intervention, and creating a conducive learning environment.

1. Building Positive Relationships:

- Teachers are responsible for developing strong connections with students.
- Regular check-ins with pupils demonstrate genuine interest in their well-being and academic progress.
- Creating a positive and supportive classroom environment enhances these relationships.
- Family-School Partnerships:

2. Teachers contribute to open lines of communication with parents and caregivers.

- Collaborative relationships with families help address attendance issues early and provide necessary support.
- Teachers can communicate the importance of attendance during parent-teacher conferences and other interactions.

Early Identification and Support:

- Teachers contribute to attendance data by accurately recording and reporting student attendance.
- Awareness of attendance patterns in their classes allows for early identification of potential issues.
- Collaborating with the attendance lead to share insights and concerns is essential.

Multidisciplinary Teams:

- Teachers are integral members of multidisciplinary teams within the school.
- Collaboration with SEN coordinators and support staff ensures a holistic approach to early intervention.
- Active participation in meetings and discussions about attendance concerns is crucial.

Individualised Assessments:

- Teachers contribute to the identification of the root causes of attendance issues through observations and communication.
- Understanding personal, familial, or academic challenges helps tailor support plans.

Collaborative Goal Setting:

- Teachers work collaboratively with students and their families to set realistic attendance goals.
- Involving students in the goal-setting process fosters a sense of ownership and commitment.
- Implementing a Whole-School Approach:

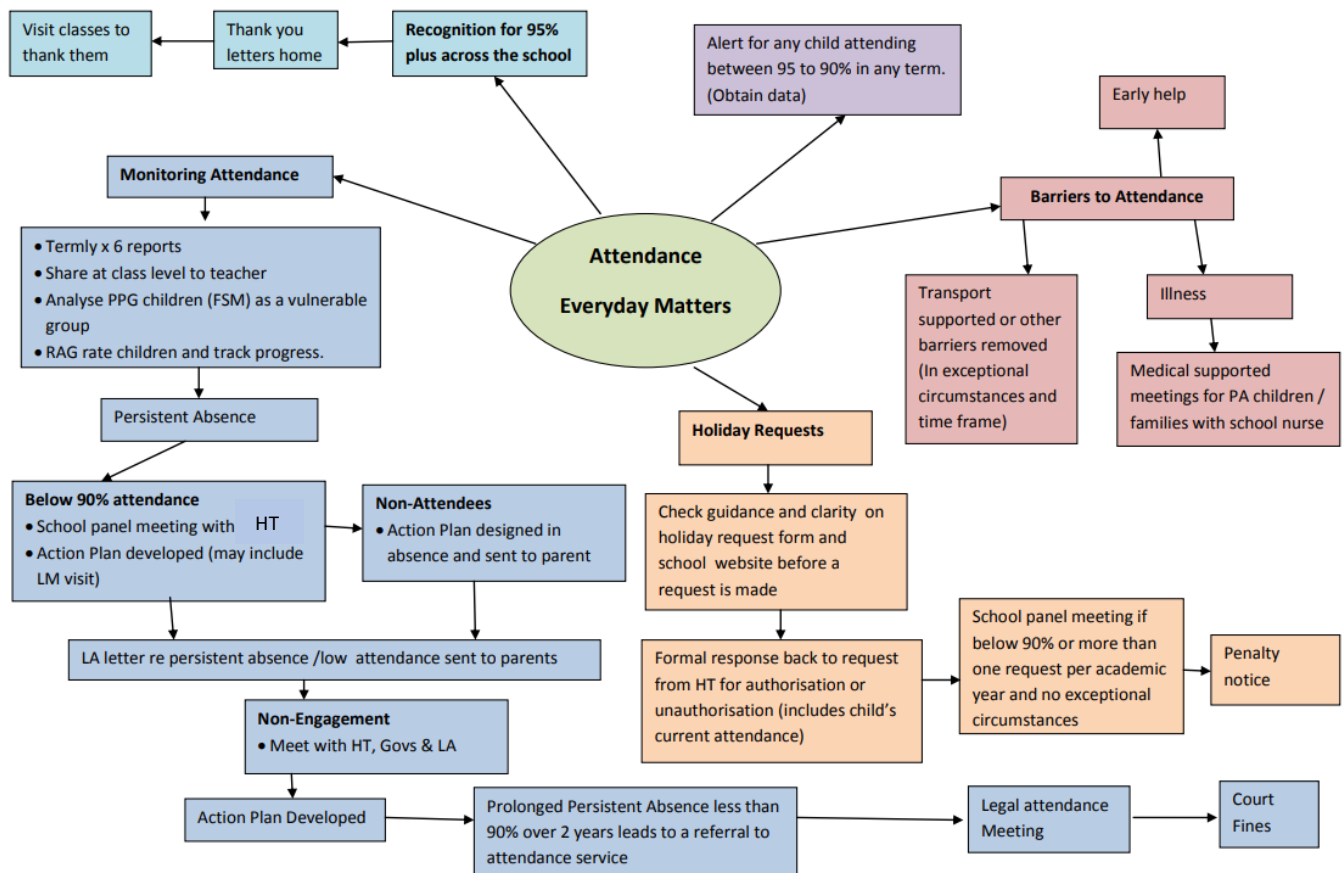
Staff Training:

- Teachers undergo professional development to understand the importance of relationship-building and early intervention.
- They are trained to recognise factors that may affect attendance and promote a positive attendance culture in their classrooms.

Inclusive Policies:

- Teachers contribute to the development and implementation of inclusive policies within their classrooms.

- Awareness of cultural differences, health issues, or socioeconomic challenges helps create an inclusive learning environment.



Attendance Matters!

- Research evidence suggests that extrinsic rewards to improve attendance have little impact, and may have the opposite of the desired effect: reward = relax!
- Relational approaches tend to be more effective: 'spread them out!'
- Understanding the factor-categories that drive of poor attendance is key (physical health, mental health, systemic / attitudinal and school behaviour related).
- Giving parents accurate information about how their child is attending compared to their peers can impact on behaviours.
- Creating a shared agency for attendance, in parents friendly language is important.
- Adaptability to ensure families feel valued / welcomed is vital: 'I've learnt that I need to be a chameleon... so to ensure that I'm making families feel comfortable. That is my job' (head)
- Children thriving in the classroom and experiencing success in learning matters. Level the playing field.
- Improved attendance is a whole school responsibility.
- Teacher – pupil interactions are the glue that makes attendance stick. '
 - How can the wider curriculum / enrichment help?
 - Informal conversations with *all* family's matter.
 - Every interaction is an intervention.

Empowering Potential, Embracing Diversity: Learning Without Limits