



STOCKPORT ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

A partnership approach to improving school attendance



FOREWORD

Chris McLoughlin OBE

Executive Director People and Neighbourhoods and Director of Children's Services

As leaders we recognise the importance of attending school every day. This is essential for children and young people to thrive, feel a sense of belonging, and help realise their best possible outcomes. We also recognise attending school will be harder for some than for others. It is for this reason that through this strategy we will build on the partnership arrangements across education, health and care, to create the right conditions to enrich the lived experiences of children, young people and their families.

We are delighted to present the Stockport Attendance Strategy which is part of a suite of strategies to deliver on Stockport's Children and Young People's plan. It outlines our joint commitment across the Stockport Family Partnership to early intervention and help in supporting all children, young people and their families to thrive in the communities they live, learn and play. This strategy builds on our existing attendance offer, and as we refresh the strategy, we celebrate the work that has already been done in Stockport and will continue to take forward our restorative approach and principles in all that we do.

Cllr Wendy Meikle

Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education

The strategy is fully in line with the joint aspirations and approach to the delivery of One Stockport: One Future and the Borough Plan and Stockport's Children and Young Peoples Plan. At its core is the spirit of collaboration, inclusion, equality and community. We know that we will have the biggest impact on improving lives when we work together across public services, businesses and communities. Every child is unique. Stockport Council's commitment is to provide flexible services that respect individual wishes and meet individual needs. The approach will empower families and enhance outcomes. Our combined workforce plays a pivotal role; therefore, we are dedicated to developing a skilled workforce that strives for excellence through continuous learning, professional development, and a passion for making a difference.

1. INTRODUCTION

This attendance strategy is for children, young people aged 0-19 (25 with SEND) and their families. It sets out the strategic priorities for the next 2 years to support all children and young people to attend school well.

This Attendance Strategy is a celebration of our ambition that children and young people in Stockport will grow up happy, healthy, with confidence, surrounded by love, care and kindness. It is underpinned with the knowledge that being in school has multiple benefits for children and young people's learning wellbeing and overall development.

Attending school every day will be harder than for others, and when not attending a school or setting their sense of belonging may be disrupted. Belonging is an essential part of psychological functioning. Schools and settings offer a unique opportunity to maintain and improve the sense of belonging for children and young people. It is for this reason we have placed high importance on belonging throughout this strategy.

The Children's Commissioner report 'Missing Children, Missing Grades' placed school attendance as a national priority, it reported that over 120,000 children each year are missing at least half of their time in school. The impact of the COVID-19 and national lockdown on school attendance levels both nationally and locally are clear to see. In 2023/24 Stockport's overall attendance rates remained lower than the pre-pandemic years (<1.6% for primary age children and <4.1% for secondary age children). We know that for some children and young people with one of more vulnerability factors, including, for example mental health and/or neurodiverse needs, their return to school has not been without challenge post pandemic. To address and overcome these challenges we must work together across all agencies to seek solution and improve children and young people's experiences.

We want to thank and acknowledge all the families and young people who shared their views to inform this strategy. We recognise some of you have had difficult experiences that may have been hard to share. We hope you see your views reflected in our approach and that we have honoured your experiences.

Over the next 2 years we are committed to improving children's attendance at school. We will be accountable to each other for doing this. Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring that all children will have good attendance whatever barriers they face.

We believe that by improving attendance we will.....

- **Help** children and young people to achieve better outcomes at school
- **Enrich** the lived experiences of children, young people and their families
- **Help** overcome mental and wellbeing challenges faced by children, young people, and their families.
- **Improve** life chances and future employability
- **Reduce** risk of escalated needs such as exploitation, abuse, and anti-social behaviour

2.CONTEXT

Our Attendance Strategy provides a strategic framework for the delivery of One Stockport: One Future through the lens of children, young people and families (see appendix 1).

The roles and responsibilities of schools, parents and local authorities are clearly defined with statutory guidance and advice as follows:

Statutory guidance & advice

- [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)
- [Improving School Attendance : support for schools and local authorities](#)
- [School behaviour and attendance : parent responsibility measures](#)
- [Children missing education](#)
- [Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Alternative provision](#)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school](#)
- [School exclusion](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children- GOV.UK](#)
- [Missing Children, Missing Grade- Children's Commissioner Report](#)

Local guidance and policy framework

- [Guidance for professionals to know when advice, help and urgent response is needed](#)
- [Team around the School- Stockport Council](#)
- [Special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) local offer- Stockport Council](#)
- [Keeping children safe- Stockport Council](#)
- [Local child safeguarding practice reviews](#)

In Stockport, the Local Authority's statutory responsibilities for school attendance and tracking pupil movement are overseen by the Education Welfare Service within Stockport Family. The service holds responsibility for the support, advice and guidance to professionals in relating to school attendance and s19 duties of the Education Act 1996.

School attendance has been a priority for Children's Services leadership and this strategy has been developed with representatives from across Children's Services teams including Children's Social Care, the Virtual School Team, School Effectiveness (representing schools voice), SEND and Inclusion, Family Help, Health services, school staff, Youth Justice Service, young people and parents.

3. THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN AND THE ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

The Attendance Strategy is one of a suite of documents that contributes to the delivery of the Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027. The Children and Young People Plan identifies seven Big Ambitions, this strategy and the work of all services working with pre-school and school age children will play a critical role in the successful delivery of these ambitions.

Ambition 1 All the services that work with children and families work together to ensure families get the help they need when they need it, and children and young people are safe and supported by their family networks

Ambition 2 Working together with families and communities, all children have the best start in life and are ready for school at the end of reception;

Ambition 3 All children and young people can access and engage in education and achieve the best they can;

Ambition 4
Children and families with SEND receive the best possible support at the right time to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved;

Ambition 5 All children, young people and families have access to a clear and inclusive early help offer;

Ambition 6 All children and young people enjoy good emotional health and wellbeing and can access co-ordinated robust and timely support based on need;

Ambition 7 Children in care and care leavers have stable and loving homes and are equipped with the skills needed to live a fulfilling, successful and rewarding life.

Neighbourhood and Prevention Programme All the services that work with children and families work together to ensure families get the help they need when they need it and children and young people are safe and supported by their family networks

Startwell Strategy Working together with families and communities, all children have the best start in life and are ready for school at the end of reception.

SEND Strategy All children and young people can access and engage in education and achieve the best they can

Early Help Strategy All children and young people and families have access to a clear and inclusive early help offer.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy All children and young people enjoy good emotional health and wellbeing and can access co-ordinated robust and timely support based on need.

Joint Commissioning Strategy Partners across education, health and care work with children, young people, and their families to plan, design, and deliver support which maximises our collective resource.

One Stockport Family Hubs are part of One Stockport Live Well, which is bringing together help and support to make it easier for residents to access for themselves, their family, or people they care for.

4. METHODOLOGY



This strategy has been developed by the School Attendance strategic group, a subgroup of the Early Help Board. All members of this group are committed to Stockport's Working in Partnership Charter, placing people at the heart of all that we do. We have listened to the voices and children, young people, and their families to inform this strategy alongside paying full regard to the statutory guidance, Department for Education's Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

Consultation Activity

The Head of Service for Family Help is the chair of the School Attendance subgroup. During January 2025 they engaged with leaders across the council whose departments hold school attendance as a priority area. These conversations have informed this strategy.

Hearing children and families' voices and understanding their lived experience was important to us to inform this strategy. We invited children, young people and their families to complete a short survey and received 85 responses. Consultation groups were held including a group of parents whose children attend The Pendlebury Centre, parents and professionals in attendance at the PACTS annual event, and teachers in attendance at the annual Youth Summit.

What we heard....

- **41%** of those asked told us that they had not been informed about the law relating to school attendance (survey).
- **Physical illness, SEND needs and Mental Health** were identified as the top 3 reasons for not being able to attend school by parent / carers and young people.
- **56%** of parent / carers and young people said that they had not been involved in discussions about their attendance (survey).
- A number of respondents shared the need for **whole school approaches** and training to understand SEND needs including receptionists, domestic and catering staff.
- **Multi agency support** is critical and feels especially important when a significant event occurs such as permanent exclusion, moving to a new school or returning to a mainstream setting.
- The need for **reasonable adjustments** is an essential element to support a child's attendance at school and positive reintegration. Examples were cited which would suggest schools could reconsider their policy in respect of access to toilets as part of their reasonable adjustments.

- Some parents find that classwork being sent home when a child is unable to attend promotes a continued sense of **connection**. Schools could consider this perspective as they review their approach in managing attendance and supporting children and young people to return.
- Use of **language** is critical to maintain and repair relationships. For example, 'transition meeting' could be called 'welcome meeting'.
- Across the range of consultation activity the importance of **trauma informed** practice is important for families. Families tell us that where there have been the greatest struggles with attendance an apparent lack of understanding about the lived experience of the child, young person and their family have been present.
- Families would welcome **celebration and praise** for any improvement in attendance.
- Families asked for a personalised approach for formal communications around attendance to promote a sense of **working together**.

Headline's from the survey.....

Parent carer and young people's positive experiences in helping to improve school attendance

- The role of the Education Psychology helps to formulate the plan the needed to meet a child's individual need when in school
- Having an open dialogue between parent and school staff
- Early help team and their role in advocating on behalf of the child / family
- Maintaining contact when not in school – video messages from school staff helped keep the child connected to school life
- Rewards for when attending – postcard, prizes and recognising that the small improvements not just the overall attendance rates
- Having the right plan of support in place
- The pastoral team within school is critical to support and maintain good levels of attendance

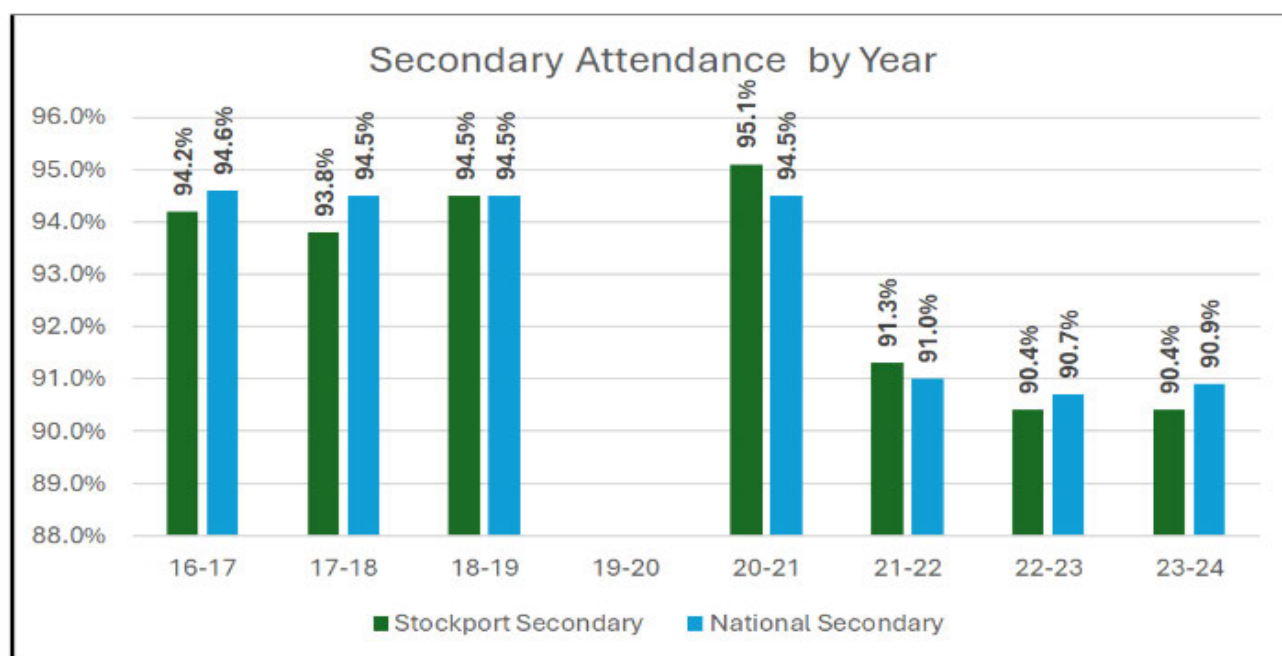
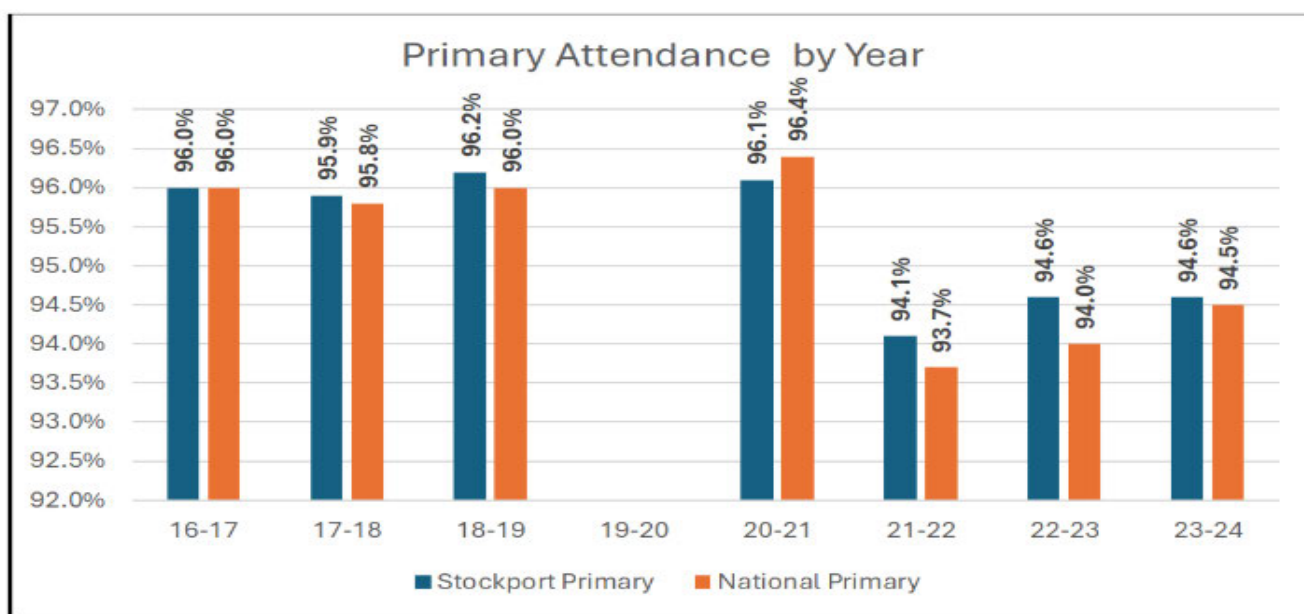
Parent, carer and young people's views on barriers to attendance.....

- Lack of a co-ordinated plan of support
- Relief / sub teachers
- Recognition that for some children adjustment / s may be needed

- Lack of access to the toilets
- Unreliable school bus / transport -if a child is already struggling a late bus may be the reason turns around and goes home
- Unaddressed bullying

5. DATA INSIGHTS

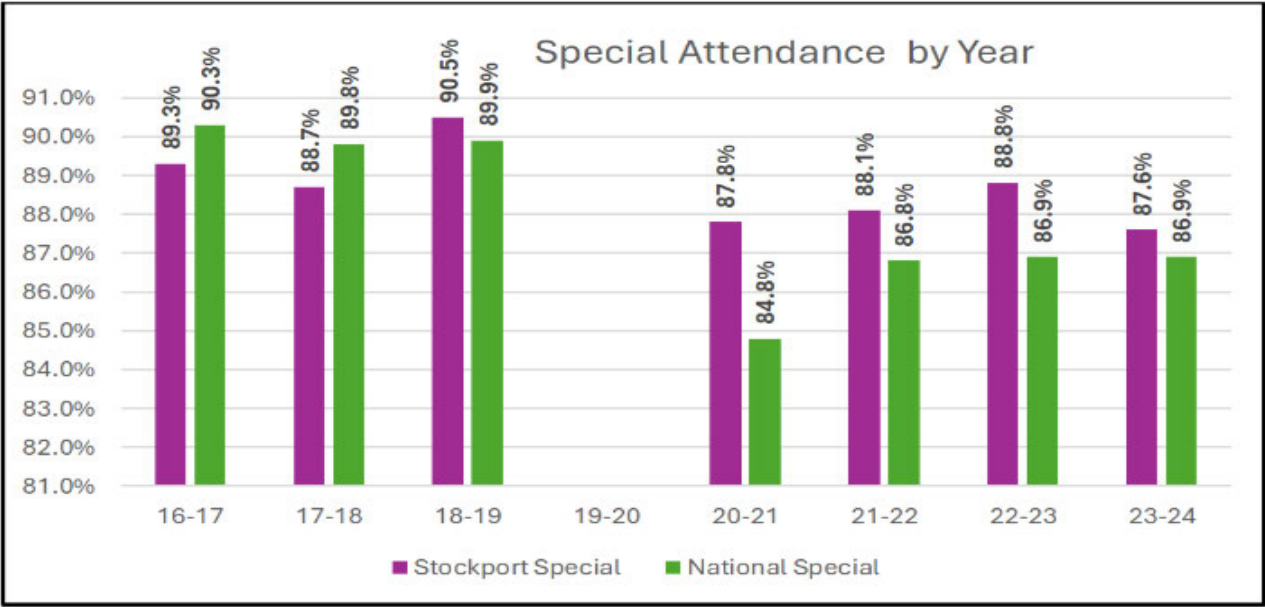
For many years the local authority, schools and wider partners have worked hard to secure good school attendance rates for school age children. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is stark to see both at a national and local level. The must make a collective effort to improve attendance if we are to achieve pre-pandemic attendance rates.



(Data source DfE attendance data)

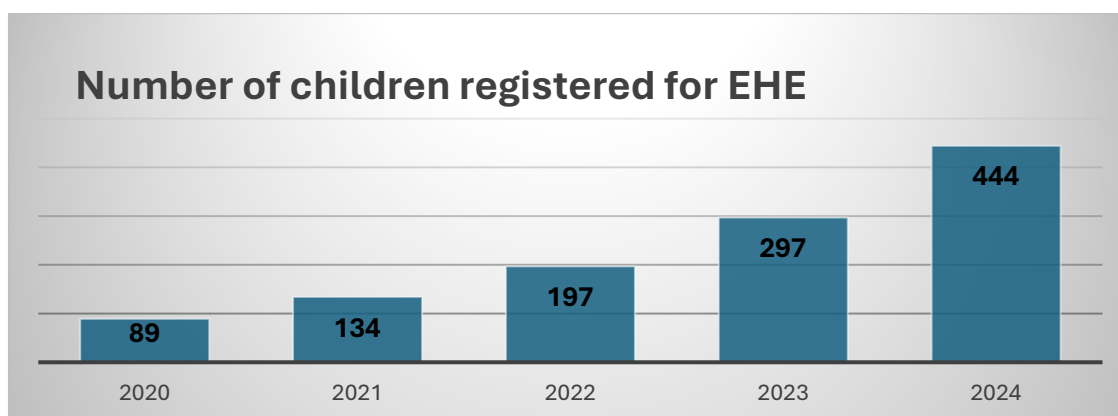
Pre and post pandemic our primary age school children have in the main benefitted from greater overall attendance rates than the national average. However, we do not always see this translate into their secondary school years where rates of persistent absence increase, and overall attendance rates sit slightly below the national average. We also know that attendance for children in Key Stage 3 and specifically in Y7 is improving more strongly and more swiftly (1.3% increase in 2024/5 Autumn Term). This means the work we are doing is working. We must continue and strengthen these efforts.

For children and young people who attend a specialist provision data shows that overall attendance rates are markedly higher than the national average, but the gap between specialist and mainstream is greater than we are content with and continued effort to bridge the inequality is required.



(Data source DfE attendance data)

Over recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of children who are electively home educated in Stockport. The increasing trend started during the Covid 19 pandemic and mirrored national trends. However, the spike during the pandemic has continued and we have observed a 50% increase year on year totalling a 398% increase since 2020. This is a critical data set especially in readiness for the implementation of the Department for Educations 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive' and the call to legislate that where any school age child who is subject to safeguarding enquiries or on a child protection plan, their parent will need local authority consent to home educate.



(Data source : synergy)

The tables below show the rates of persistent absence by cohort. It tells us that persistent absenteeism is more prevalent in boys than girls in primary school and that this trend does not translate in secondary school years where persistent absenteeism is more prevalent in girls. Children with social workers, eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs are more likely to be absent at a persistent rate placing greater probability of underachieving. We must ensure that the interventions available that support and promote good attendance are aligned in a targeted way to those that need it most.

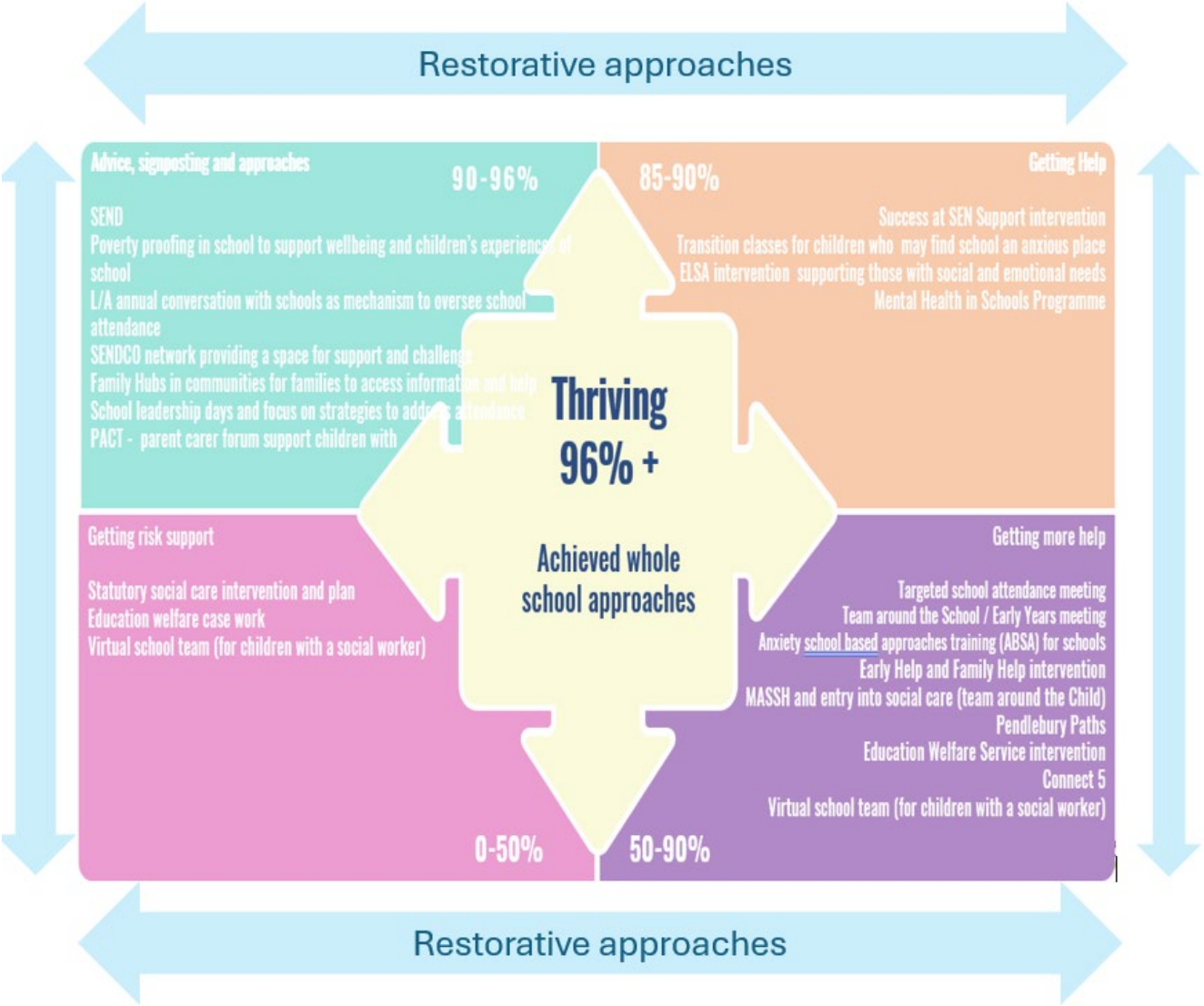
Primary Schools	Overall		EHC		SEN K		CiC		CP/CIN		FSM		Male		Female	
Persistent Absence	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total and (%)	2888	12.4%	240	28.5%	748	21.0%	29	15.8%	170	37.0%	1156	28.5%	1553	13.1%	1335	11.6%
80% to 89.99%	2173	9.3%	142	16.9%	503	14.1%	16	8.7%	86	18.7%	790	19.5%	1,165	9.8%	1,008	8.8%
70% to 79.99%	425	1.8%	44	5.2%	130	3.6%	6	3.3%	40	8.7%	227	5.6%	219	1.8%	206	1.8%
60% to 69.99%	121	0.5%	23	2.7%	41	1.1%	2	1.1%	16	3.5%	53	1.3%	64	0.5%	57	0.5%
50% to 59.99%	63	0.3%	14	1.7%	32	0.9%	3	1.6%	10	2.2%	34	0.8%	41	0.3%	22	0.2%
50% or less absence	106	0.5%	17	1.9%	42	1.1%	2	1.0%	18	3.0%	52	1.2%	64	0.6%	42	0.3%

Secondary Schools	Overall		EHC		SEN K		CiC		CP/CIN		FSM		Male		Female	
Persistent Absence	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total and (%)	2669	20.4%	200	40.6%	710	35.9%	57	39.9%	146	65.5%	1125	41.6%	1257	19.1%	1412	21.6%
80% to 89.99%	1451	11.1%	69	14.0%	275	13.9%	15	10.5%	29	13.0%	505	18.7%	700	10.6%	751	11.5%
70% to 79.99%	420	3.2%	22	4.5%	128	6.5%	6	4.2%	16	7.2%	217	8.0%	190	2.9%	230	3.5%
60% to 69.99%	199	1.5%	18	3.7%	62	3.1%	6.0	4.2%	17	7.6%	97	3.6%	98	1.5%	101	1.5%
50% to 59.99%	128	1.0%	10	2.0%	50	2.5%	8.0	5.6%	15	6.7%	72	2.7%	62	0.9%	66	1.0%
50% or less absence	471	3.6%	81	16.4%	195	9.9%	22	15.4%	69	30.9%	234	8.6%	207	3.1%	264	4.0%

Our focus for the next two years is to ensure that our multiagency arrangements to support children to access and attend education are effective and have a positive impact. We will work together to ensure that the children who need support, receive it and that their attendance improves. Improved attendance provides the best opportunity for vulnerable learners to make progress and bridge the gaps we see in their achievements when compared to non-vulnerable learners.

**Data source from Stockport's data warehouse without the data of 4 primary schools and 3 secondary schools)*

The summary below shows that there are a variety of services, interventions and purposeful activity already happening across the borough and in our schools and settings with an overarching aim to support children to access their education with positivity and good impact.



6. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Improving school attendance 'cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners (*Working Together to Improve School Attendance, August 2024*)

This strategy is written on a strong foundation of effective partnership arrangements and integrated delivery models across services for children and families that exist within Stockport. Through this strategy we will build on this partnership arrangement and focus on ensuring that all agencies who come into contact with children, young people and their families know what good attendance looks like, know what their role is in improving attendance and what to do to access the right help that is needed.

We all have a role to play in delivering on the ambitions of the strategy including the following professionals and agencies who are key partners working with families in Stockport:

- School staff including senior leads within schools, pastoral team, attendance leads, teachers, SENCOs
- Stockport Family – Children's Social Care
- Stockport Family – Family Help
- 0-19 health professionals (Health Visitors and School Nurses)
- Early Years Providers
- Stockport Family – Education Welfare Service
- Stockport Family – School Effectiveness and Inclusion Leads
- Stockport Family – Educational Psychology Service
- Stockport Family - Neurodevelopmental Team
- Stockport Family – Virtual School Team
- Stockport Family – Youth Justice Service
- Stockport Family – MOSAIC (drug and alcohol services)
- Stockport Family – Parenting Team
- Stockport Family – Strategic Participation Lead
- Primary and Secondary Jigsaw
- Signpost Young Carers
- Probation Services
- Stockport Homes and housing providers
- Greater Manchester Police

- Pennine Care - Community Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Pennine Care – Mental Health in Schools Programme
- GP's
- PACT and SENDIASS
- Coram Voice
- Family Hubs
- Sector 3

The involvement of many of these services and agencies will depend on a families' individual needs. However, regardless of level of involvement, we will be bound together through collective commitment that attendance matters to **ALL** children and young people and the role it plays in promoting a sense of belonging.

This strategy asks that all organisations with children and families work within the following practice principles:

Believe good attendance can be achieved for all children and young people and use language that reinforces this belief

Equity* matters to understand what is happening for the child / young person, family and wider network

Listen to understand the experiences of children and families

Oppportunity is given to all pupils to achieve good school attendance through support

Necessary action is taken to support and promote attendance and prevent educational neglect

Grow a workforce that knows what good attendance is, what role they play in improving attendance and where families can get help

Inform and involve parent/ carers and young people early in the life of the problem

Never give up on maintaining a child's connection to its school and community

Give praise and encouragement

** the quality of being fair and just, especially in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities*

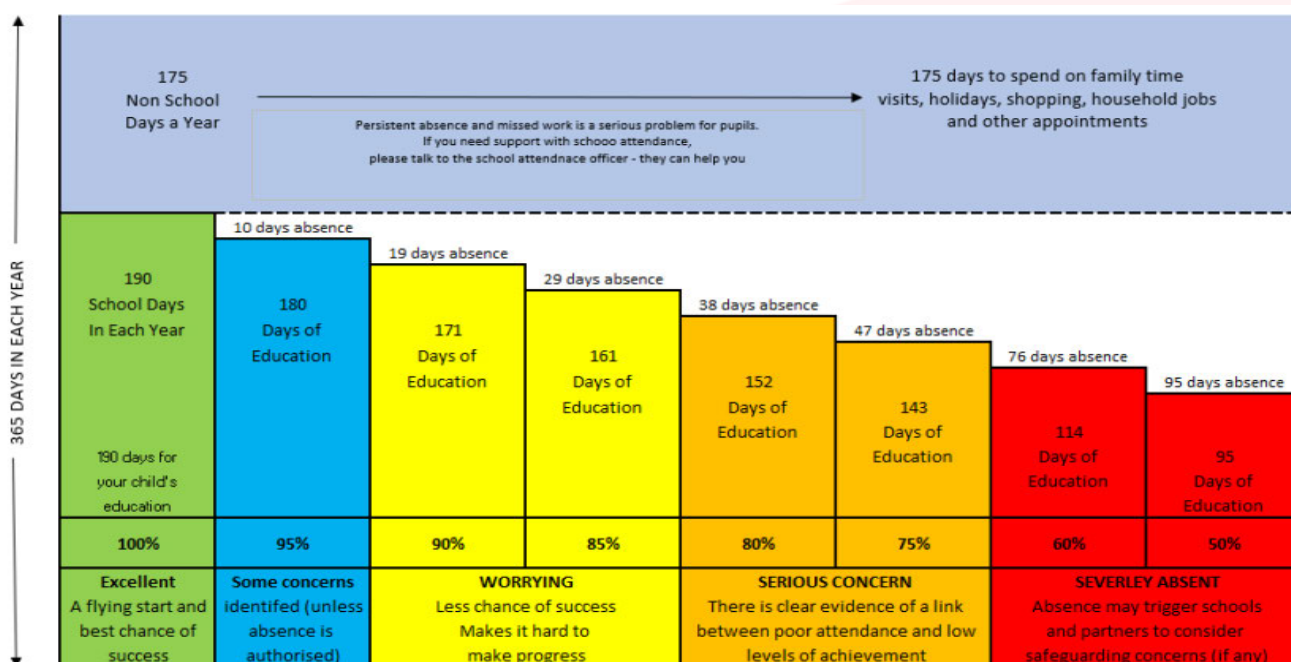


7. ATTENDANCE AND EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

Article 28 of the United Convention Rights of the Child says that ‘children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are: regardless of race, gender, or disability; if they’re in detention, or if they are a refugee’

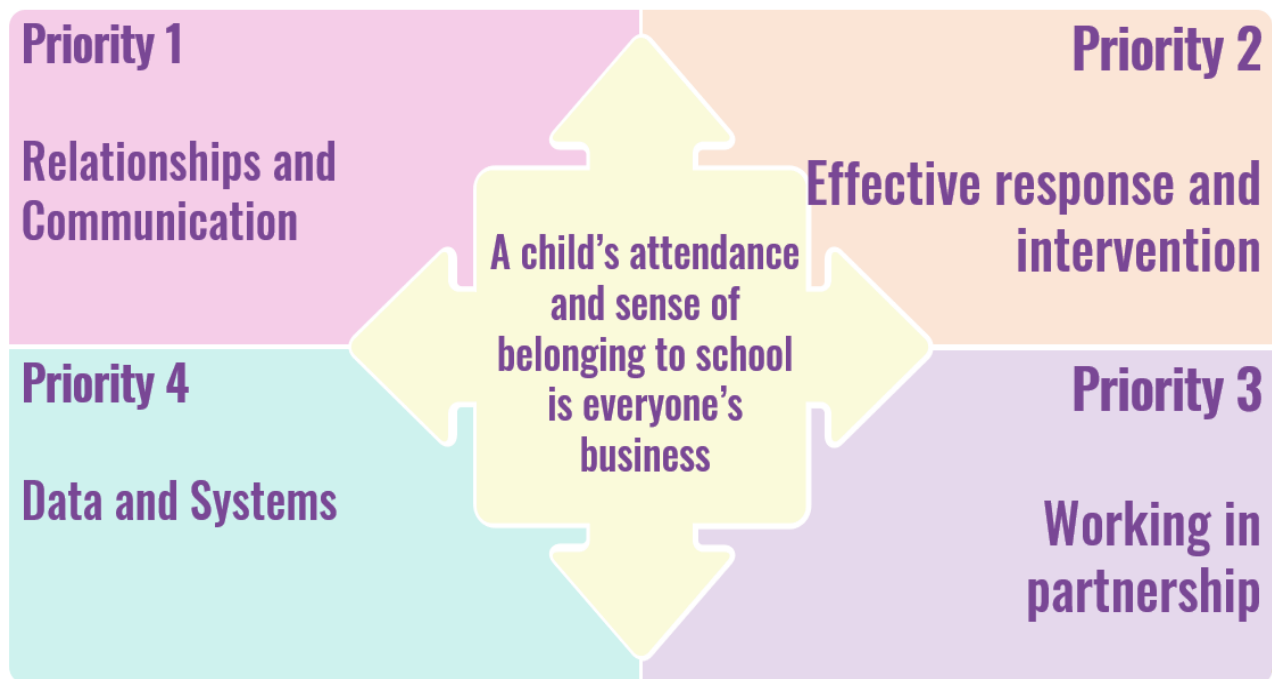
The Department for Education (DfE) Statutory Guidance ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ (2024) recognises the impact poor school attendance has on a child’s education, development, and lifelong opportunities. The guidance, states, ‘if all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g., an education, health, and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect.’

Working on the basis that severe absence from school is a serious concern we must ensure that agencies work together and in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) to promote the welfare of the child / young person and follow local safeguarding procedures- [Guidance to professionals when needs emerge \(level of need document\)](#)



8. ATTENDANCE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2025-2027

The key priorities of this Strategy are described in this section and can be summarised as:



If this strategy is working, we would expect to see;

- Improved overall rates of attendance.
- Improved user experience when school attendance concerns are present.
 - A more even spread of data levels across ALL cohorts of children.
 - Reduction in number of electively home educated children
 - Improved rates of attainment and progress in vulnerable group
- Reduced number of children and young people requiring alternative provision due to needs arising from missed education
 - Increased number of children re-integrated into mainstream provision

Priority 1

Relationships and Communication

What will success look like?

When attendance worries emerge, it will trigger the involvement of the right services and professionals. When this happens the child and their parent / carers' experience of these interactions will be positive and everyone will understand and focus on the plan to help improve attendance for the child and family.

What we will focus on now

- We will work with schools to understand the modes of communication with children, young people and parents/carers when worries about school attendance emerge ensuring all that we do preserves a child and family's sense of belonging to their school / setting.
- Work in partnership with schools to give clear messages about school attendance to parents through a variety of methods including week of action / campaigns.
- Connect wider services (as detailed in section 6) , including the voluntary and community sector through our Family Hub programme of delivery.

Priority 2

Effective response and intervention

What will success look like?

Clearly defined pathways for schools, families and services so everyone knows what to do and they can expect to happen when school attendance needs emerge.

What we will focus on now

- We will review directory of services working with children and families to include and be clear on individual agency responsibilities in seeking to understand the root cause of absence.
- We will introduce a quality assurance framework for targeted school attendance meetings.
- There will be a multi-agency response offer (team around the child) for all children who are excluded from school
- We will review the terms of reference for Team around the School and Team around the Early Years to ensure it delivers to those who are struggling to attend.
- We will review and refresh our response to electively home educated children in line with social care reforms.

Priority 3

Working in partnership

What will success look like?

Everyone who works with children, young people and their families understand the role they to play in supporting a child or young person to attend school.

Children, young people, and their parent or carer will a hear a consistent message that their attendance matters to all professionals and agencies they come into contact with, and it matters equally.

Children, young people and families will be supported by a workforce that have the knowledge and skills to respond effectively when concerns about school attendance arise.

What we will focus on now

- We will review the training needs of the workforce and ensure everyone understands the link between school attendance and safeguarding.
- We will develop a graduated response to school attendance to be applied across the partnership ensuring that those who are most vulnerable receive the right help when they need it.
- We will develop a consultation framework for agencies across the partnership to have access to access to advice and guidance from the education welfare service and the virtual school team.
- We will develop a 7 minute briefing for all agencies relating to the law around school attendance and our statutory responsibilities.

Priority 4

Data and Systems

What will success look like?

We will use all the data available to the Local Authority to effectively assess, measure, and evaluate the impact of services and our collective concerted effort to improved school attendance. Information recorded on systems will be of high quality and provide insight into the journey of the child or young person's experiences.

What we will focus on now

- Support schools to understand to own their data, analyse it accurately, identify trends and compare it with the national picture, have a clear picture of the reasons for absence, understand their attendance profile, and have in place actions for improvement and a clear school strategy.
- Ensure that data is being used to ensure that the right cohort of children / young people are being discussed at relevant forums such as targeted school attendance meetings, team around the school / early years meetings, legal consultations.
- Data and action plans will be scrutinised by Stockport's strategic school attendance strategic group (a subgroup of the Early Help Board).
- Individual children's school attendance level will be considered at key decision-making junctures, for example, MASSH referrals, Team around the family / child meetings, step up or down from services, child protection conference and core group meetings, EHCP reviews, SEN support plans.



Appendix 1

Stockport is an ambitious place undergoing a spectacular transformation. A place to work and play, with green space and lots of culture on our doorstep, with excellent connections to Greater Manchester, London and the Peak District. It is a place where residents, businesses and communities work together to make good things happen and get people the support they need.

But Stockport is not immune from the big challenges of our times. The challenges facing us are big. They will take time. That is why One Stockport: One Future looks ahead to 2040. We want to ensure that Stockport is a place that is resilient to whatever changes and opportunities will come in the future.

One Stockport: One Future is the next phase of our borough plan. It sets out how we will work together to tackle the challenges we face, so Stockport can be the best place to live happy and healthy lives, a place where anything is possible, a place that everyone, right across the Borough can be proud of. It is embedded into our Council Plan and will be delivered through our organisational and partnership strategies.

DELIVERING 5 BIG THINGS TOGETHER

To achieve our shared vision to 'make Stockport the best place to live happy and healthy lives', we must have a relentless focus on the biggest challenges facing our borough:-

- **Fair and inclusive – making Stockport a great, diverse place to live, where everyone can thrive**
- **Climate Action Now – creating a 'green print' for Stockport so it is a climate friendly place to live, work, play and invest.**

No one thing or organisation can address these challenges alone. One Stockport: One Future is a collective call to action to work together to deliver the '5 big things' we believe will transform our borough over the next 15 years to help us achieve our shared vision.

The role of the Attendance Strategy in delivering:

The 5 big things are crucial to creating the right conditions so that all children and families can thrive.

They can only be achieved if we all work together. Our Attendance Strategy provides a strategic framework for the delivery of One Stockport: One Future through the lens of children, young people and families.

The Attendance Strategy has a particular focus on our ambition to be 'the best place to grow up' but also contributes to the delivery of the other big things.

1

Good Jobs and Homes



2

The Best Place to Grow Up



3

Best Health and Care



4

Thriving Neighbourhoods



5

Clean, Green Transport



