

The DfE **Governance Guides** for both maintained and academy schools state that governing boards should:

- recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- regularly review attendance data – including discussing and challenging trends
- help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- be assured that school leaders are undertaking their responsibilities on [children missing education](#) as outlined in the guidance

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) has more information on the expectations of governing bodies.

Boards **must** be aware of the advice on children who are absent from school and children missing education in [keeping children safe in education](#).

All schools and Boards should ensure that their pupils with physical or mental health needs receive a suitable and good education.

This question bank is designed to support Boards to better understand their school's current position concerning attendance, identify any key priorities, and evaluate the impact of any work to improve attendance for all children and for identified groups of children.

The questions are arranged under general headings to support Boards having oversight of a range of aspects connected to this work.

1. Strategic leadership and culture of attendance:

- How does the governing board actively promote good attendance as part of the school's ethos, values and strategic priorities?
- How does the attendance policy align with the latest DfE statutory guidance, and when was it last reviewed by governors?
- How does the Head ensure consistent messaging to pupils, parents/ carers and staff about the importance of full-time attendance?
- How does the school balance a culture of support and high expectations, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs?

2. Data oversight, trends and governor challenge

- What are our current **overall, persistent absence (10%+)**, and **severe absence (50%+)** rates, and how do these compare to last year, and to local authority and national figures?

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- Which pupil groups are most affected (e.g. SEND, FSM, pupils with a social worker), and what evidence shows that school action is having an impact?
- What evidence shows that early identification of attendance concerns is working?
- What has the school stopped, changed, or strengthened in response to attendance data? What impact has this had?

3. Early help, support and prevention

- How does the school identify and respond to attendance concerns **before** pupils become persistently absent?
- What support is offered to families to understand and remove barriers to attendance? Is this impactful?
- How is pupil voice captured when understanding the reasons for absence? What is this telling us?
- How does the school ensure attendance support is proportionate, personalised, and reviewed regularly?

4. Persistent absence- impact of school processes

- How many pupils are persistently absent, and how has this changed over time?
- What evidence shows that the school's attendance strategies are reducing persistent absence?
- How do we avoid pupils "drifting" from persistent to severe absence?
- What has the school stopped, changed, or strengthened in response to attendance data?

5. Severe absence- safeguarding and entitlement to education

- How many pupils are classified as severely absent, and what are the main barriers for these pupils?
- How does the school ensure safeguarding considerations are addressed for pupils missing significant education?
- How are external agencies involved, and how is responsibility clearly shared?
- What evidence exists that school actions are improving outcomes, even where attendance remains low?

6. Vulnerable pupils and SEND

How does attendance monitoring link to SEND, behaviour, safeguarding, and mental health systems?

- When part-time timetables or alternative provision are used, and how do governors gain assurance that these are lawful, time-limited, regularly reviewed and impactful?
- How does the school ensure attendance expectations remain ambitious for pupils with SEND?

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7. Legal duties, thresholds and escalation

- How does the school determine when support alone is no longer sufficient?
- How are “notices to improve”, penalty notices, or legal interventions used appropriately and consistently?
- What assurance do governors have that statutory processes are followed fairly and transparently? What assurance is there that the attendance codes are applied consistently and that attendance is monitored within the school on a regular basis?
- How does the school work with the local authority to ensure escalation supports improved attendance rather than compliance alone?

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8. Roles, training and accountability

- How are roles and responsibilities for attendance clearly defined across staff and governors?
- What training have staff and governors received on attendance expectations and latest guidance?
- Which governor holds oversight for attendance, and how do they report back to the board?
- How does the board assure itself that attendance monitoring is sustainable and not overly dependent on one individual?

9. Impact and continuous improvement

- Which attendance strategies are demonstrably improving outcomes, and which are less effective?
- How does attendance evaluation inform the school improvement plan?
- What does the school do differently now compared to last year, based on evidence?
- How does the governing board know that attendance processes are improving pupils' access to learning?

Reference documents:

[Maintained schools: governance guide - GOV.UK](#)

[Academy trusts: governance guide - GOV.UK](#)

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK](#)

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK](#)

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