

The School Attendance Strategy 2023-25 The City of London



1. Context

'Improving school attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It 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 - September 2022 due to become statutory guidance from September 2023. The Department for Education (DfE)

2. The City of London

The City of London School Attendance Strategy presents our vision with an emphasis that 'Improving attendance is everyone's business'.

This strategy outlines the key outcomes we expect to deliver in 2023-25. The outcomes in the School Attendance Strategy contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2018–2023 by aligning to these four outcomes:

Outcome 1: People are safe and feel safe

Outcome 2: People enjoy good health and wellbeing

Outcome 3: People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential

Outcome 4: Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

The Children and Young People’s Plan 2022–25 (CYPP) sets the strategic priorities for the City of London Corporation to ensure that children and young people who live or study in the Square Mile, or access our services live the best life that they can. The outcomes of the City of London School Attendance Strategy also contribute to the delivery of the City of London Children and Young People’s Plan 2022-25 by aligning to these four focus areas:

- Support children, young people, and their families to make sure they are prepared for school
- Insist that children and young people are at the heart of everything we do
- Support children and young people to thrive and contribute to society in a positive way
- Ensure children and young people are and feel safe

3. Strategic context

National

The Department for Education (DfE) published new guidance in May 2022 for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. Working together to improve school attendance comes into effect from September 2022 and becomes statutory on or before September 2023.

The purpose of the City of London School Attendance Strategy is to ensure that The Aldgate School (the one maintained school in the City) alongside the City of London independent schools work together with partners to maintain high levels of school attendance and work collectively to improve school attendance for all children educated in the City and for our City resident children attending schools outside of the City.

Local

This strategy has been developed to focus on the requirements set out in The Department for Education (DfE) guidance ‘Working together to improve school attendance’ published in May 2022 for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities.

The City of London is expected to track local attendance data to devise a strategic overview for school attendance. We have worked with all of our key partners to develop this strategy. All Schools based in the City local area have engaged with us in developing this strategy. This is a collaborative approach to managing school attendance.

The City of London has established a School Attendance Support Team within the Education & Early Years’ service which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools (regardless of type):

- Communication and advice: regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.

- Targeting Support Meetings. These are termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.
- Multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.
- Legal intervention, to take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through their Virtual School.

4. City of London School Attendance Support Team is comprised of the Universal Lead for Education services, the Education Welfare Manager and the School Admissions and Attendance Manager. This team will work with all schools in the City local area including the Independent Schools.

The School Attendance Support Team has four core functions. The core functions to be provided to all schools are:

- Communication and advice: Good communication and sharing of effective practice are essential to good multi-agency working. The team must provide guidance on how schools, the School Attendance Support Team and other partners should work together to provide intensive voluntary and/or formal support for individual pupils and families. This should include clarity around what support schools should already have offered and the point at which the local authority will become involved in individual cases and how the local authority and school will share responsibility in line with the summary of responsibilities table.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice, and with whom Targeting Support Meetings will be held.
- Maintain relationships with school leaders and offer opportunities for all schools
 - (regardless of type) to regularly come together to share effective attendance practice.
- Show leadership and work together with all schools to tackle common issues across the geographical area.

5. Legal intervention

The City of London will actively work with schools to address any attendance issue and where necessary support schools in having challenging conversations with families. When required, the City of London will issue penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where absence from school is unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in

term time). The City of London will initiate prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.

6. Priorities

The City of London School Attendance Strategy 2023-25 has five priorities. These are:

Priority 1: Develop systems and processes to collect and monitor data; to manage and report on performance of school attendance for all city based schools in the local area.

- To ensure that the local authority and all service areas recognise that good attendance is everyone's business and the responsibility of us all. Educational neglect through poor attendance is detrimental to children and a significant safeguarding concern.
 - To ensure consistency in data collection methods, reporting and data sharing across all City of London schools
 - To identify issues that highlight barriers to good / excellent attendance for pupils and their families.
 - To ensure that attendance is monitored robustly, poor attendance is addressed promptly and interventions / support actioned in a timely manner

Priority 2: Establish a City of London School Attendance Support Team

- To ensure that dedicated expertise is allocated to oversee the timely and effective implementation of the new government / LA strategy
- To ensure that four core functions are provided to schools, pupils and their families. These are: Communication and advice, Targeting Support Meetings, Multi-disciplinary support for families and Legal intervention
- Ensure early intervention to establish good patterns of attendance for pupils and pupil cohorts throughout their education

Priority 3: Establish a City of London multi-agency governance framework approach to monitor performance outcomes for school attendance

- To ensure that all agencies required to be involved in the delivery of this strategy are actively engaged, involved and take accountability for their actions

Priority 4: Establish governance to ensure there is an emphasis on vulnerable children and children missing education that focuses on their school attendance, progress and attainment.

- To maintain an overview of all known vulnerable children who continue to experience issues with school attendance and engaging with education, particularly those with SEND and on SEN Support.
- To provide an added level of safeguarding for our most vulnerable children

Priority 5: To ensure there are sufficient good quality options for alternative provision for all children that need this type of provision.

- For all children and young people living in the City of London to have access to high quality alternative provision

7. Implementation and delivery

Governance

The governance for implementation of this strategy is with the Education Safeguarding Forum, a multi-agency board chaired by the Assistant Director, People.

Reports will also be submitted to the City of London Safeguarding Sub-Committee and the Children and Young People's Board and the SEND Programme Board.

Partners and Stakeholders

Delivery of this strategy will require a multi-agency approach, consisting of partners from the following organisations:

- City of London Schools
- City of London Education and Early Years Service
- City of London Children's Social Care and Early Help Service
- City of London Virtual School
- City of London Commissioning and Contracts Team
- City of London Strategy and Performance Team
- City and Hackney Children's Safeguarding Partnership
- City of London Policy
- City of London Health Providers

Our challenges

- The majority of our young people attend school and access services outside of the local authority boundary
- Children and Young people living in Portsoken Ward and in the East of the City of London have high levels of deprivation and need
- Health services for City of London residents are fragmented in different locations and across local authority boundaries
- The majority of our Looked After Children are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
- The small size of our resident population presents a challenge to our strategic and commissioning planning
- The Covid-19 pandemic has increased demand for child and adolescent mental health and speech and language services, as well as impacting on children's personal, social and emotional development.

Children in The City of London

- 1977 children and young people aged 0-25 live in the City of London (2021 census)
- 23 children with an Educational Health and Care Plan (April 2023)
- 19 Children in Need (March 2023)
- 9 Children Looked After (March 2023)
- 59 Care Leavers (March 2023)
- 69% of Annual Health Checks and 78% of Dental checks were up to date within our Looked After Children Cohort (March 2023)

- The percentage of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is significantly lower than the England average
- 81% of children are placed in secondary schools that are their first preference choice (March 2023)
- 96% of children are placed in primary schools that are their first preference choice (April 2023)

Average year group

If all City children attend one school, what would the average year group of children look like?

- 52% would be male
- 48% would be female
- 57% would be BAME
- 22% would receive Free School Meals
- 60% would speak a first language other than English

How will this be delivered?

The strategy will be delivered in the form of an action plan, which is being developed to plan and monitor the delivery of this priorities in the strategy.