

APPENDIX 4: Parental Engagement Strategy

Engaging parents, families and the community in school attendance

1. School needs a readily available and up-to-date attendance policy that sets out in full a commitment to good attendance and to partnership with parents; having a parent-friendly version meets best practice guidelines and will support improvement.
2. School can use home-school agreements that parents can sign. The agreement can include:
 - a. an explanation of the attendance policy, and clear messages to parents about how the school wishes to work with them where attendance is a concern.
 - b. the legal penalties that may be used when other attempts to improve have failed.
 - c. the support available to children and families who have patterns of poor attendance
3. A whole school approach includes parents and the community. A whole school approach is vital to reduce persistent absence and maintain good attendance. A whole school approach to family engagement in attendance means:
 - a. ***Use the data:*** attendance data is analysed, and the patterns are identified and shared with the school staff, who can explain the patterns to parents so that everyone understands the current issues;
 - b. ***Understand children and families:*** characteristics of cohorts who are persistently absent are understood and this information is used to deliver a targeted offer to families to improve outcomes for those cohorts of children;
 - c. ***Communication plan:*** key messages about attendance issues, policy and practice are shared with all staff every day, who can then share these messages with families and the community. This is best supported by a clear communication plan using a variety of channels - text messages, parents' evenings, poster campaigns, Facebook pages, (see 30 below) - so every member of staff knows how and when to communicate key issues;
 - d. ***Structured approach:*** a whole school structure for reducing persistent absence is in place with a clear action plan that applied to everyone in school setting out how and when school plans to engage parents;
 - e. ***Review:*** monitor and evaluate the activities in the attendance improvement plan e.g. through staff training activity, recording attendance codes, parental engagement events, and parent surveys.
4. Celebrate good attendance and reward those children who achieve well or show improvement:
 - a. Stickers, certificates, letters home, prize draws or a mention in the newsletter all create a buzz about attendance and positive comments will bring it to the attention of the whole school community.
 - b. Maintain communication about progress and achievement with children, families and staff throughout the year.
 - c. Share successful practice and how good results were achieved with other schools and partners, so that children can benefit across settings.

- d. High expectations will support improvement, but we know from evidence of many schools with good attendance, that with a robust and thorough approach, school, children and families will reap the benefits.

Families who need more support to maintain good attendance

5. Some parents need a more support with getting children to school on time every day. A range of barriers may be faced by children and their families that prevent good attendance.
6. How schools follow these principles will vary in practice, however the outcomes should always be the same:
 - a. Staff notice where children are not making expected progress towards good outcomes
 - b. Children and families are identified for and receive support in school when it is needed
 - c. Requests for Protection are made to the MASH at the right time if there are concerns that a child is suffering or at risk of significant harm
7. For more information on working with children and families follow [this link to the Waltham Forests Guide to Thresholds](#)