School Readiness

School Attendance Impact Story

Enable, Share, & Collaborate

North West Children's Safeguarding Partnership

CONTEXT

Reception attendance in Oldham was below local and national averages—2% lower than the primary average and 2.5% below national in 2023–24. Persistent nursery absence predicts poor reception attendance: 506 children (15.6%) attended nursery less than 90% (average 81.9%). These early gaps lead to long-term learning deficits and increased catch-up needs throughout all stages of education.

OBJECTIVES

- **Enable** attendance through early removal of barriers
- **Share** best practice to promote school readiness
- **Collaborate** with agencies to align family support

INTERVENTION

The intervention focused on data-driven targeting by identifying children with less than 90% nursery attendance. In August, outbound calls were made to families to encourage attendance and address barriers. A supportive approach was adopted, using scripts and crib sheets to ensure conversations were helpful rather than punitive. Families were signposted to resources for uniform, admissions, and Family Hubs for wider support, and follow-up actions included providing uniform vouchers and resolving admissions issues before the start of term.

OUTCOMES

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Of 506 targeted children, 434 (85.8%) improved attendance, rising from 81.9% in nursery to 88.9% in reception (+7% vs. +2.7% for the full cohort). Overall reception attendance increased 0.6% year-on-year, ahead of national trends, and 78.7% improved more than the cohort average. Families also reported reduced anxiety and better school readiness.

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Challenges included contact barriers, with 32% of families unreachable and some incorrect numbers, and 152 children remaining persistently absent in reception. SEND and admissions issues required extra follow-up and cross-team coordination. The key lesson: early engagement works but needs multi-channel communication and sustained follow-up.

OPPORTUNITIES & FUTURE PLANNING

Future plans include expanding engagement through home visits and digital outreach for hard-to-reach families, integrating Family Hub support earlier, and using predictive analytics to identify at-risk families sooner. This model can be scaled to other transition points such as Year 6–7.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Implementation involves using nursery attendance data to flag children below 90%, training staff with supportive scripts, and contacting families in August before term starts. Clear pathways for uniform, admissions, and family support are mapped, while call outcomes and attendance changes are tracked and shared with schools. Unresolved issues are addressed promptly, with ongoing communication during the first term.

> ***I didn't realise how important attendance was in reception. The team explained everything clearly and helped with admissions when we had a problem. It took away a lot of stress.***



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OLDHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP