Attendance Training for All Staff

Graduated Response Model

Whole School / Trust Training Pack

Comprehensive training package including slide deck, presenter notes, and training outline to empower every member of staff in supporting pupil attendance through evidence-based graduated response strategies.



Why Attendance Matters: Life Chances at Stake

Academic Impact

Every 1% drop in attendance equates to approximately ¼ GCSE grade lost. This compounds over time, significantly affecting pupils' educational outcomes and future opportunities.

Life Outcomes

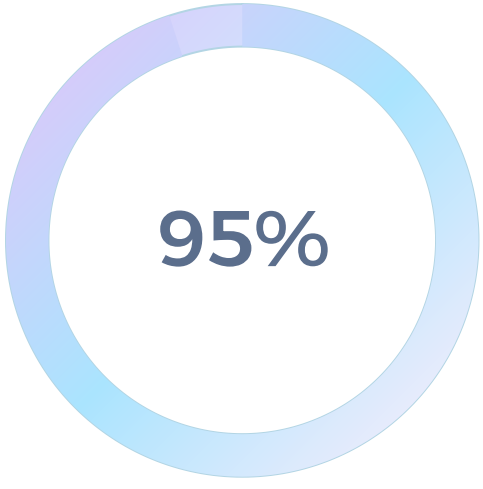
Children with poor attendance are statistically more likely to struggle with post-16 education, employment prospects, and lifetime earnings potential.

Safeguarding Link

Attendance is fundamentally a safeguarding issue. Every absence represents a welfare check opportunity and early intervention point.

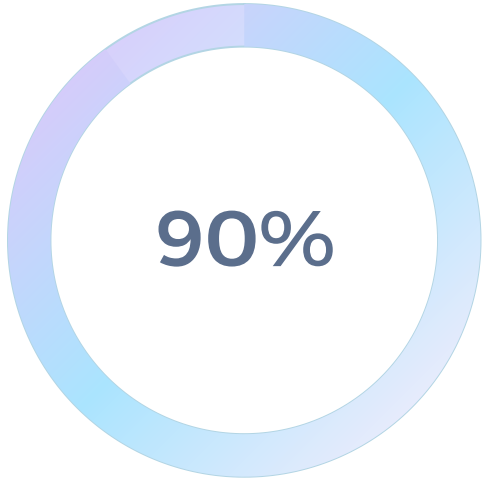
Attendance isn't merely an administrative function—it's about securing life chances for every child. The Department for Education's attendance bandings provide clear thresholds: 95%+ (good), 90-95% (at risk), 85-90% (serious risk), and below 85% (severe persistent absence). With persistent absence rates remaining concerningly high nationally, our collective response becomes critical in determining whether pupils thrive or struggle throughout their educational journey and beyond.

Understanding DfE Attendance Bandings



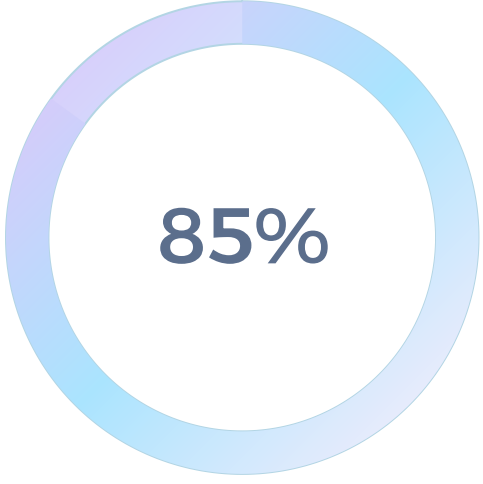
Good Attendance

Target threshold for all pupils - equivalent to missing no more than 10 school days per academic year



At Risk Threshold

Early intervention point - pupils missing 19+ days annually require targeted support



Serious Risk

Intensive support required - equivalent to missing 29+ school days with significant impact on learning



Severe Persistent Absence

Crisis intervention needed - pupils missing 38+ days face substantial educational disadvantage

These bandings aren't arbitrary figures—they represent research-backed thresholds where educational outcomes begin to deteriorate significantly. Understanding these benchmarks enables all staff to recognise when pupils transition from requiring universal support to needing targeted intervention. The cumulative effect of absence across key stages creates substantial learning gaps that become increasingly difficult to bridge without systematic, early intervention.

Our Current Attendance Picture

Key Data Points to Review

- Overall school/trust attendance percentage compared to national averages
- Persistent absence rates by year group and vulnerable cohorts
- Patterns in absence types (authorised vs unauthorised)
- Seasonal trends and specific day-of-week patterns
- Impact of targeted interventions on attendance improvement
- Comparison data from previous academic years

Action Point: Insert your specific school/trust attendance dashboard data here. Focus particularly on persistent absence rates and identify which year groups or demographic cohorts require immediate attention.



Understanding Our Baseline

This data isn't about apportioning blame—it's about identifying where our support efforts can have maximum impact. Look for patterns that reveal systemic issues rather than individual failings.

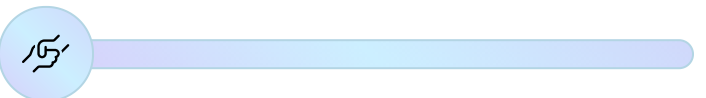
Effective attendance improvement begins with honest assessment of our current position. Analyse your attendance data through multiple lenses: whole-school trends, year group variations, demographic patterns, and seasonal fluctuations. This comprehensive view enables targeted resource allocation and helps identify whether absence patterns suggest underlying issues such as transport difficulties, family circumstances, or curriculum engagement challenges that require specific interventions.

The Graduated Response Model



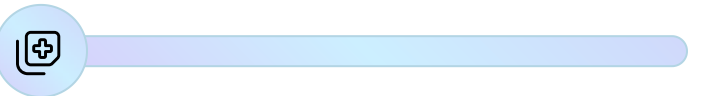
Tier 1: Universal Culture & Teaching

What we provide for every pupil: engaging curriculum, strong teaching, positive relationships, consistent routines, visible attendance celebrations, and a culture of belonging. This foundation prevents attendance issues arising.



Tier 2: Targeted Early Help

Activated when attendance drops below 95%: supportive conversations with pupils and families, pastoral mentoring, attendance clinics, identifying and addressing barriers, and providing practical support solutions.



Tier 3: Intensive Multi-Agency Support

For persistent concerns: individual attendance plans, multi-agency meetings involving external services, Education Welfare Officer referrals, and only when support is exhausted, consideration of legal interventions.

This graduated approach ensures we don't jump precipitously to formal sanctions whilst maintaining clear escalation pathways. The model recognises that most attendance issues respond to early, supportive intervention when relationships are strong and trust exists between school and families. Legal measures become necessary only when extensive support has been offered but not engaged with, ensuring proportionate responses that prioritise child welfare above punitive measures.

Everyone's Role in Attendance Success

Teachers

You observe the first signs—a pupil consistently absent on Mondays or missing specific lessons. Your role involves curious, non-judgmental conversations to understand underlying causes. Document patterns and communicate concerns promptly to pastoral teams.

Tutors & Pastoral Staff

Hold regular attendance conversations during tutor time. Monitor weekly patterns and escalate concerns appropriately. Build relationships that enable pupils to share attendance barriers and develop individualised support strategies.

Administrative Staff

Accurate coding and first-day contact calls are crucial. Your professional, supportive approach sets the tone for family engagement. Maintain precise records that support targeted interventions and legal requirements when necessary.

Senior Leaders

Maintain strategic oversight through data analysis and policy implementation. Ensure resources support graduated response approaches. Hold accountability conversations whilst supporting staff professional development in attendance management.

Governors

Challenge and support school leaders through strategic questioning. Understand attendance data trends and their implications. Ensure attendance policies align with safeguarding responsibilities and legal requirements.

Attendance improvement succeeds only through coordinated whole-school effort. Each role contributes unique perspectives and interventions that, when properly coordinated, create comprehensive support systems for pupils and families.

Mastering Effective Attendance Conversations

Curious Pupil Conversations

> "I've noticed you've missed several Mondays recently. Is something making it particularly difficult to come in on those days? I'd like to understand how we might help."

Key Principles:

- Approach with genuine curiosity, not accusation
- Listen more than you speak
- Avoid immediate solutions—understand first
- Offer small, achievable adjustments
- Follow up consistently

Supportive Parent Calls

> "Good morning, I'm calling because we've noticed [pupil's] attendance has dipped slightly. We want to work with you to provide support before this becomes a bigger concern. What's happening at the moment that might be affecting school attendance?"

Essential Elements:

- Lead with partnership, not criticism
- Acknowledge family expertise about their child
- Explore practical barriers systematically
- Offer specific support options
- Agree clear next steps with timescales

Practice Activity: Work in pairs to role-play these conversation scenarios. Focus on tone, body language, and building rapport whilst gathering essential information about attendance barriers.

Effective conversations transform attendance statistics from numbers into individual stories requiring personalised responses. These discussions require skilful navigation between empathy and accountability, creating safe spaces for families to share difficulties whilst maintaining clear expectations about attendance importance.

Harnessing Data for Targeted Intervention

Weekly Monitoring

Teachers check class registers weekly for emerging patterns. Pastoral teams run detailed reports and share findings at weekly meetings to identify pupils requiring immediate support.

Pattern Recognition

Look beyond overall percentages to identify specific trends: day-of-week patterns, lesson-specific absence, seasonal variations, and correlation with particular subjects or teachers.

Strategic Escalation

Leaders monitor intervention effectiveness and escalate quickly when Tier 2 actions aren't producing improvement. Data drives decision-making rather than assumptions.

Key MIS Dashboard Features to Utilise

- **Attendance Bandings:** Automatic flagging of pupils dropping between DfE threshold categories
- **Persistent Absence Tracking:** Real-time monitoring of pupils approaching or exceeding 10% absence threshold
- **Pattern Analysis:** Identification of specific day, lesson, or teacher-related absence patterns
- **Intervention Tracking:** Monitoring effectiveness of specific support strategies through before/after comparisons
- **Cohort Comparisons:** Analysis of attendance by demographic groups, year groups, and vulnerable populations
- **Parental Communication Logs:** Tracking frequency and outcomes of attendance-related family contact

Data transforms attendance management from reactive crisis response to proactive early intervention. Regular analysis reveals systemic patterns requiring policy adjustments and individual trends necessitating personalised support. Effective use of management information systems enables precise targeting of resources where they'll have maximum impact on pupil outcomes.

Building a Culture of Belonging and Attendance

Daily Welcome Rituals

Warm greetings at school gates and classroom doors communicate that every pupil's presence matters. These micro-interactions build relationships and signal belonging.

Visible Attendance Celebration

Display boards, assemblies, and reward systems that recognise attendance improvements, not just high achievers. Celebrate effort and progress, making attendance aspirational.

Equitable Rewards

Ensure attendance rewards feel achievable for pupils facing genuine barriers. Consider improvement-based recognition alongside absolute percentage targets.

Safeguarding Foundation

Every absence becomes a welfare check. Staff trained to recognise attendance patterns that might indicate safeguarding concerns require immediate attention.

Creating Irresistible Learning Environments

Pupils attend consistently when school offers experiences they can't access elsewhere. This requires:

- **Engaging Curriculum:** Lessons that connect to pupils' interests, ambitions, and real-world applications
- **Positive Relationships:** Adults who know pupils well, understand their individual needs, and advocate for their success
- **Inclusive Practices:** Teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles and address potential barriers to participation
- **Meaningful Recognition:** Systems that value effort, progress, and contribution beyond traditional academic achievement
- **Student Voice:** Opportunities for pupils to influence their learning experience and feel genuine agency in school decisions

Attendance improves sustainably when pupils experience school as a place where they belong, contribute meaningfully, and feel genuinely welcomed. This cultural foundation prevents attendance issues arising and supports recovery when difficulties emerge. Remember: attendance is fundamentally a safeguarding responsibility—every absence represents an opportunity to check on pupil welfare and offer appropriate support.

Practical Action Planning Framework

01

Immediate Response (Same Day)

When attendance drops below 95%, initiate first-day calling procedures. Log absence reasons accurately and flag any safeguarding concerns immediately to designated staff members.

02

Weekly Review Process

Analyse patterns emerging over 3-5 days. Identify specific barriers through pupil conversation. Involve parents/carers in collaborative problem-solving discussion within first week of concern.

03

Fortnightly Assessment

If attendance hasn't improved, escalate to pastoral leadership. Develop targeted intervention plan addressing identified barriers. Consider external agency involvement if complex family needs identified.

04

Monthly Strategic Review

Evaluate intervention effectiveness through data analysis. Adjust strategies based on outcomes. Consider referral to Education Welfare Officer if school-based interventions prove insufficient despite consistent implementation.

Individual Reflection Questions

For Teaching Staff

- Which pupils in my classes have attendance below 95%?
- What conversation will I have with them this week?
- How will I document and share my observations?
- What adjustments might remove barriers to their attendance?

For Leadership Teams

- How effectively are we tracking intervention outcomes?
- Which staff need additional training in attendance conversations?
- Are our systems enabling rapid identification and response?
- How can we better support staff in this work?

Effective action planning transforms good intentions into measurable outcomes. Each step requires clear accountability, realistic timescales, and systematic evaluation of impact. Remember that sustainable attendance improvement results from consistent, relationship-based approaches rather than sporadic interventions.

Understanding Legal Framework and Responsibilities

1 Education Act 1996

Establishes parental duty to ensure regular school attendance. Schools must maintain accurate registers and follow up absence appropriately. Creates foundation for all attendance legal proceedings.

2 Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2022)

DfE statutory guidance mandating graduated response approaches. Requires schools to provide support before considering legal action. Emphasises early intervention and partnership working.

3 Children Act 1989 & 2004

Places safeguarding duties on schools. Attendance concerns may indicate child welfare issues requiring immediate attention and multi-agency collaboration under safeguarding procedures.

4 Data Protection Act 2018

Governs how attendance data is collected, stored, and shared. Ensures appropriate confidentiality whilst enabling necessary information sharing for child welfare purposes.

Legal Intervention Thresholds

Legal measures should only be considered when:

- **Comprehensive Support Offered:** School has provided appropriate Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions with documented outcomes
- **Parental Engagement Declined:** Families have been offered multiple opportunities to engage with support but haven't participated meaningfully
- **Persistent Unauthorised Absence:** Absence continues without acceptable reasons despite school efforts to address barriers
- **Safeguarding Assessed:** Consideration given to whether legal action serves the child's best interests or might create additional family stress

Remember: The goal of any legal intervention is to secure regular attendance and support family stability, not to punish. Legal measures should complement, not replace, ongoing support efforts.

Understanding legal frameworks ensures proportionate responses that protect both pupil welfare and institutional accountability. These frameworks provide structure for graduated response whilst maintaining flexibility to address individual circumstances appropriately. Legal knowledge empowers staff to make informed decisions about escalation whilst prioritising child-centred approaches throughout all interventions.

Multi-Agency Working and External Partnerships

School

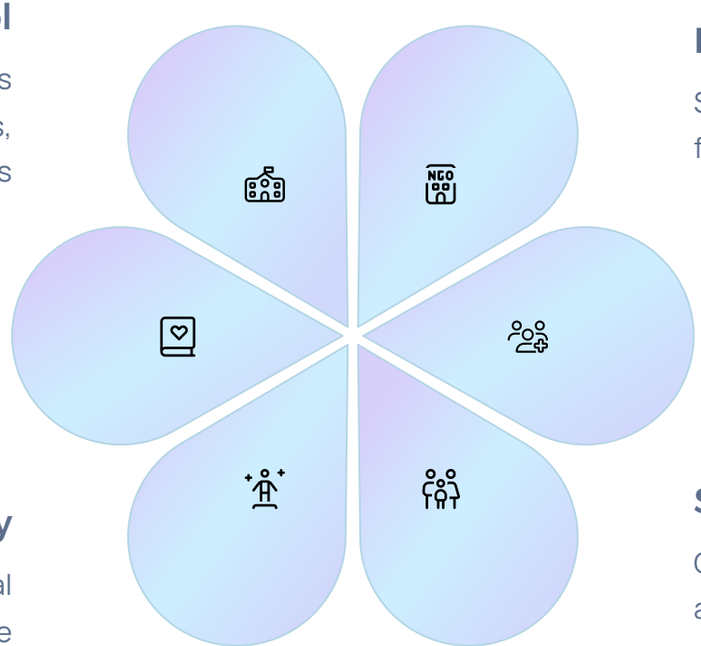
Provides educational environment, identifies concerns, implements initial interventions, coordinates with families

Voluntary Sector

Specialist support services, mentoring programmes, family therapy, practical assistance

Local Authority

Transport provision, housing support, additional needs assessment, policy guidance



Education Welfare

Statutory powers, legal proceedings, intensive family support, liaison between agencies

Health Services

Medical assessments, mental health support, CAMHS referrals, health-related absence validation

Social Services

Child protection, family support, accommodation issues, complex welfare needs assessment

Effective Information Sharing Protocols

Multi-agency working succeeds when information sharing follows clear protocols:

- **Consent and Legal Basis:** Understand when parental consent is required and when safeguarding duties override this requirement
- **Relevant and Proportionate:** Share only information necessary for the receiving agency to provide appropriate support
- **Secure Methods:** Use encrypted email systems, secure phone lines, and confidential meeting spaces for sensitive discussions
- **Documentation Standards:** Maintain accurate records of what information was shared, with whom, and for what purpose
- **Regular Review:** Ensure ongoing information sharing remains necessary and proportionate as circumstances change

Successful multi-agency approaches recognise that attendance issues often reflect complex family circumstances requiring coordinated professional responses. Each agency contributes specialist expertise whilst maintaining focus on the child's educational and welfare needs. Effective coordination prevents families receiving conflicting advice and ensures support efforts complement rather than duplicate each other's work.

Supporting Vulnerable Groups and Individual Needs

Special Educational Needs

Pupils with SEND may face additional attendance barriers including medical appointments, sensory overload, or anxiety about academic demands. Reasonable adjustments might include flexible timetables, sensory breaks, or modified environments. Collaborate with SENCO to ensure support plans address attendance specifically.

Young Carers

Pupils caring for family members often experience attendance challenges due to competing responsibilities. Support strategies include flexible arrival times, homework adjustments, emotional support, and liaison with adult social services where appropriate. Recognise caring responsibilities whilst maintaining educational expectations.

Mental Health Needs

Anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions significantly impact school attendance. Implement graduated return plans, safe spaces, trusted adult relationships, and clear links to mental health services. Consider how academic pressure might exacerbate attendance difficulties.

Housing Instability

Pupils experiencing homelessness or frequent moves face practical attendance barriers. Prioritise stability through consistent relationships, flexible uniform policies, and collaboration with housing services. Maintain educational continuity despite accommodation changes.

Culturally Responsive Approaches

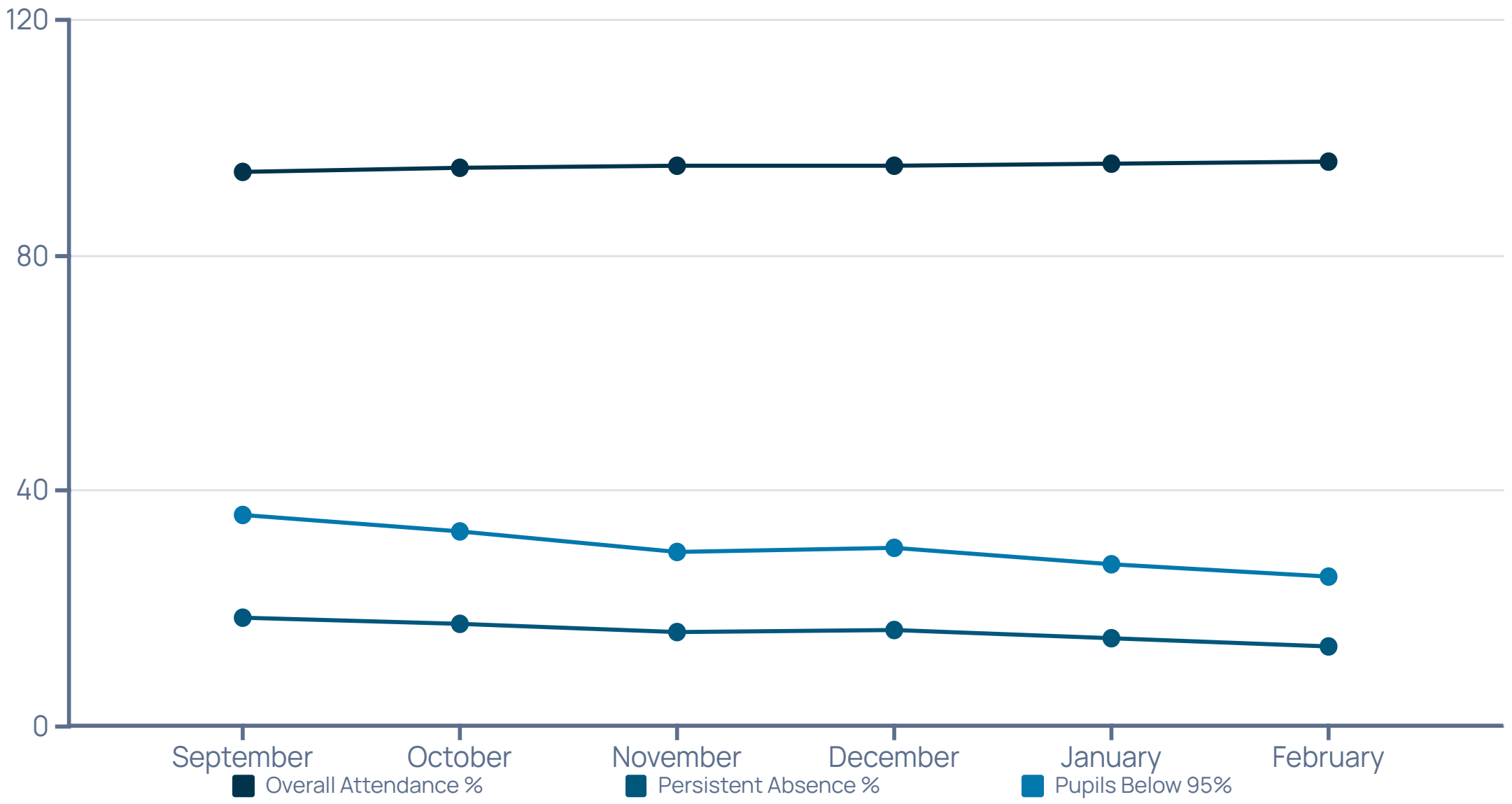
Different cultural backgrounds may influence attendance patterns and family responses to school intervention. Effective support requires:

- **Cultural Competence:** Understanding how different communities view education, authority, and family responsibilities
- **Language Accessibility:** Providing interpretation services and translated materials for non-English speaking families
- **Religious Considerations:** Recognising legitimate religious observances whilst maintaining attendance expectations
- **Community Engagement:** Working with community leaders and organisations to build trust and understanding
- **Flexible Communication:** Using culturally appropriate communication methods and timing



Supporting vulnerable pupils requires individualised approaches that address specific barriers whilst maintaining high expectations for all. This means understanding how disability, mental health, family circumstances, and cultural factors intersect to create attendance challenges. Effective support combines practical adjustments with emotional support and clear communication about educational importance, ensuring every pupil can access their right to education regardless of additional needs or circumstances.

Monitoring Impact and Continuous Improvement



This example trajectory demonstrates how systematic graduated response implementation can yield measurable improvements in attendance outcomes over an academic year.

75%

Intervention Success Rate

Percentage of pupils showing attendance improvement within 4 weeks of Tier 2 support implementation

48hrs

Average Response Time

Time between attendance dropping below 95% and initial supportive contact with family

12

Staff Training Hours

Investment in professional development for attendance conversation skills and data analysis

3.2%

Persistent Absence Reduction

Decrease in pupils with attendance below 90% following implementation of graduated response model

Quality Assurance Framework

Continuous improvement requires systematic evaluation across multiple domains:

- **Quantitative Metrics:** Overall attendance rates, persistent absence figures, intervention success rates, and demographic breakdowns
- **Qualitative Feedback:** Pupil voice surveys, parent satisfaction interviews, and staff reflection sessions on intervention effectiveness
- **Process Evaluation:** Reviewing response timescales, communication quality, and multi-agency coordination effectiveness
- **Comparative Analysis:** Benchmarking against similar schools, national averages, and previous year performance
- **Case Study Reviews:** Deep analysis of individual success stories and challenging cases to refine approaches

Effective monitoring transforms attendance work from intuition-based responses to evidence-driven continuous improvement. Regular evaluation enables rapid identification of successful strategies for scaling up and less effective approaches requiring modification, ensuring resources focus on interventions that demonstrably improve outcomes for pupils and families.

Key Messages: Transform Attendance Through Collective Action

Universal Culture

+ Early Curiosity + Targeted Support + Accurate Systems + Whole-School Accountability

Attendance is Everyone's Business

From classroom teachers to governors, every role contributes to creating conditions where pupils want to attend and families feel supported to ensure regular attendance.

Relationships Before Sanctions

Graduated response prioritises support and understanding over punishment, recognising that most attendance issues respond to early, compassionate intervention.

Data Drives Action

Regular monitoring enables proactive support rather than crisis response, ensuring resources focus where they'll have maximum impact on pupil outcomes.

Your Next Steps

This Week

- Identify pupils in your classes below 95% attendance
- Plan one curious conversation with a pupil showing patterns
- Review your understanding of referral pathways

This Month

- Participate in departmental attendance reviews
- Practice supportive conversation techniques
- Contribute to whole-school culture initiatives

This Term

- Track impact of your interventions through data
- Share successful strategies with colleagues
- Engage with professional development opportunities

Ongoing Commitment

- Maintain high expectations with high support
- Contribute to continuous improvement processes
- Advocate for attendance as safeguarding priority

> *"When schools implement graduated response with fidelity—combining universal belonging with early intervention and targeted support—fewer pupils fall into persistent absence. This transforms individual life chances whilst building stronger school communities where every pupil thrives."*

Remember: attendance isn't about numbers on a register—it's about ensuring every child accesses their fundamental right to education. Through collective commitment to graduated response principles, we create school environments where attendance happens naturally because pupils and families experience genuine care, support, and belonging. Your role in this mission is both vital and valued.