Welcome to the fourth edition of the regular Designated Teacher input which provides updates, reminders and tips for navigating Personal Education Plans, using pupil premium effectively and supporting you to raise the attainment and well being of your Looked After and Previously Looked After pupils.

Please circulate to any staff who are involved in completing review meetings.

This update is about the importance of attendance.

Good attendance is a crucial factor in children achieving their potential. Increasing attendance and reducing persistent absence is a high priority for the county council.

An attendance rate of 95% is generally considered good; this allows for children to miss 9.5 days across the school year. Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.

There is evidence that looked after children are more likely to be excluded from school but less likely to be absent from school. Looked after children are five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children. 11.8% of Looked After Children had had at least one fixed period exclusion in 2017 figures—see here.

In Oxfordshire Welfare Call collects attendance data for all Looked After Children. The Virtual School monitors attendance and exclusions of all Oxfordshire pupils on a daily basis. We compile action plans for pupils with persistent absence.

Missing out

Pupils absent from school or missing parts of the school day miss out on so much more than important learning. They miss social relationship opportunities, messages about clubs and trips, assemblies, chances to watch peers act/sing/do sport, treats like golden time, important feedback, break time play.

Missing out erodes the sense of belonging.
Instability is an issue for many looked after children.

Attendance can be impacted by frequent moves of school. It is very hard to settle into a new school if you have experienced many moves.

1 in 10 have 2+ home moves.

11% have changed school

45,000 children had at least 1 change of social worker.

10% had instability in home, school and social worker.

(Figures from Childrens Commissioner Report)

Effective transition with additional support, sharing of pupil information, careful choice of groupings, safe havens and a key person in school can help pupils settle in and attend a new school or new year group.

For in year transfers - be welcoming and provide support from day 1, rather than waiting for issues. Call previous school and VS caseworker and find out strengths and areas needing support so staff are well informed.

**HOLIDAYS**

There are thirteen weeks in the year when children have school holiday. Learning loss over the school holidays can be a significant factor in underachievement. No holidays can be taken in term time.

If carers make a holiday request to schools, the DT should inform the social worker and explain to the carer that an application to the Corporate Parenting Manager at Social care needs to be made. The Head of the Virtual School will discuss each case with the Corporate Parenting Manager and a decision will be communicated.

Policy and guidance can be found [here](#).

**Ideas for supporting good attendance:**

- Develop a good relationship with carers.
- Call home to check reason why a pupil is absent.
- Provide a key worker who can build a relationship and pre-empt any issues.
- Nurture space in school for regular 1-1 input can help.
- Give a child responsibility in school-such as looking after a pet, helping with registers, being a monitor.
- Nip any peer conflict in the bud early.
- Be aware of any triggers for concerns-such as exams/trips, talk through and problem solve before event.
- Assess any barriers to learnings and provide support/change groupings before anxieties build.
- Consider home visits early if absence is a concern.
- Follow up safeguarding concerns immediately and consider using a lesson check in system for high profile pupils.
- Use visual tools to show good attendance - calendars, marble jars, certificates.
- ‘Check ins’/ ‘meet and greet’ first thing in the morning with a trusted adult can ease transition to the school day.
- Get Social Worker on board straight away if you are concerned about absence.
- Call Virtual School caseworkers for advice and ideas.
- If persistent absence applies - use a parent contract (guidance [here](#)) for supporting attendance to log the process in cases and invite Social Worker and Virtual School to support.