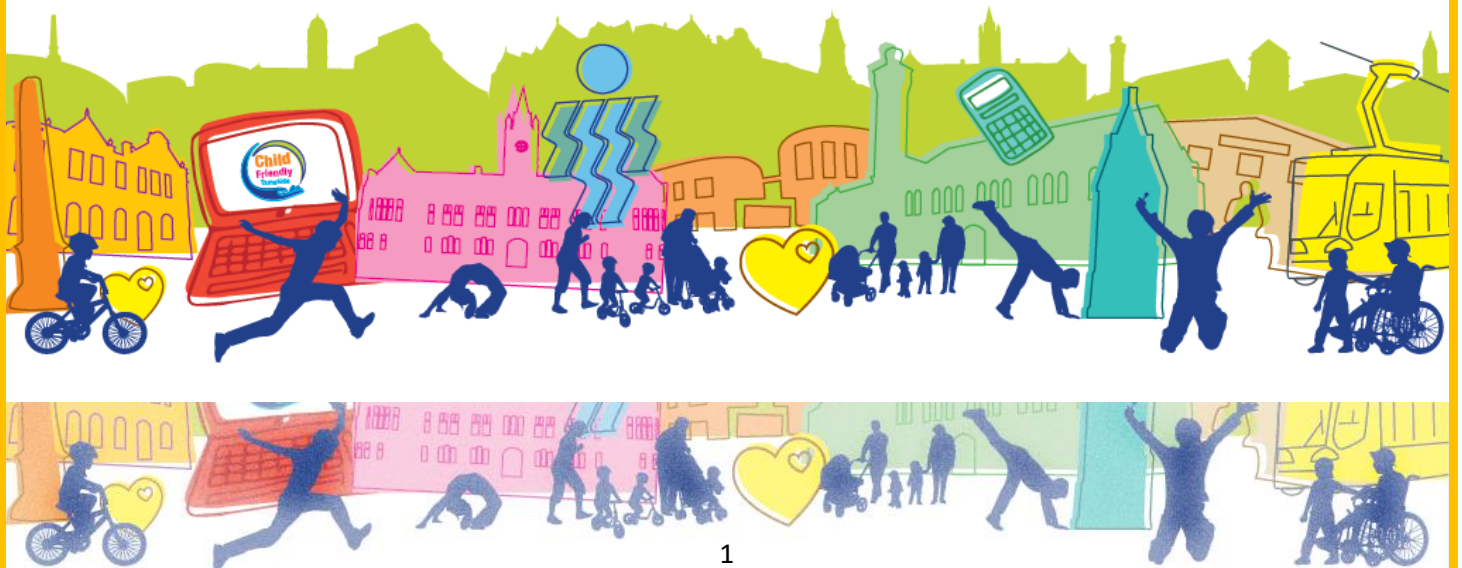


# TAMESIDE ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

A GRADUATED, PARTNERSHIP APPROACH  
TO IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

2023 - 2026



## FOREWORD

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We would like to take this opportunity to recognise the tremendous efforts made by our children, families, schools and council teams to ensure pupils attend school regularly. We are aware of the daily work that goes on with all our families to achieve the best outcomes for every pupil in the Borough by all partners. Our partnership work means that some of our most vulnerable children get the best opportunities to achieve the best outcomes for lifelong learning. We have had many challenges over the last few years but none more so, than the Covid pandemic.


We know that school is the best place for our children and the lifelong benefits 100% attendance brings to them; we want to continue to work in partnership with all agencies to ensure our families and our schools with the right support they need to keep daily attendance at school a priority for all. Every parent and carer has a legal duty to send their child to school and there is a range of powers that local authorities and schools have to enforce attendance where there is no valid reason for the absence.

The aim of this strategy is to build on our existing partnership arrangements, to work together from the earliest opportunities to help parents/carers meet this legal duty, secure in the knowledge that their child is understood and well supported. When there are specific problems with attendance, the local authority and schools will work closely to support families and children. We will take a carefully managed approach and seek to understand, encourage and support children and young people to attend school every day.

CLlr Leanne Feeley  
Executive Cabinet  
Member

Ali Stathers-Tracey  
Executive Director

Jane Sowerby  
Director of Education



**We truly believe that  
by working together,  
we can do better for  
our children and our  
young people and  
we look forward to  
seeing all that they  
can achieve.**

## INTRODUCTION

### Why is regular attendance in learning important?

Evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key to ensuring positive outcomes for children and young people. Missing lessons leaves students vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning and diminishing their self-confidence.

Good attendance habits must start from the earliest stages of education. We know that children who regularly miss school in reception classes will most likely go on to have poor attendance at secondary school. Research by Universities UK indicates that children with poor attendance are five times less likely to achieve five strong passes at GCSE, preventing them from going on to Higher Education or into employment.

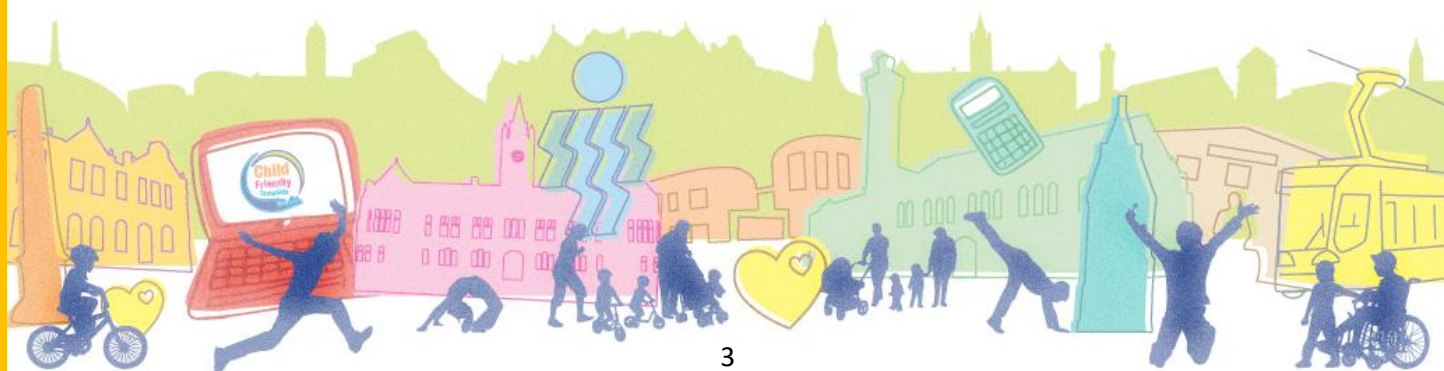
We also know that poor attendance at school can lead to poor emotional health and wellbeing. Children and young people who miss school on a regular basis can become socially isolated; they can lack confidence and have low self-esteem. Children can feel like they do not fit in with their peers and this can lead to loneliness. We also know that young people who regularly miss school are at greater risk of anti-social behaviour and are more likely to become the victims of crime.

These are not the life outcomes and experiences we want for our children. School is not just about academic success and attainment; it is about learning about the world, about relationships and about ourselves. It is about trying new things, making new friends, and finding our place in the world. To miss school is to miss the many, many experiences that shape the choices we make, the opportunities we have and the quality of life that we lead.

Tameside has traditionally had low rates of pupil absence, with the most recent published data showing an absence rate of 4.2% compared to 4.6% nationally. Persistent absence is also lower than nationally, with 6.5% of students in Tameside primary schools classed as persistent absentees, (the national average was 8.8%) and 13.5% of students in Tameside secondary schools (the national average was 14.8%).

Whilst levels of absence in the borough are generally good we know that some of our most vulnerable children with social workers and children with special educational needs are more likely to be absent from school and we recognise that this is having a detrimental impact on their progress and attainment.

It is true that many children, families and schools in Tameside have great attendance and we need to do more to celebrate that. We know that there are examples of great practice happening every day in our schools. We know that we have some strong partnership arrangements in place that we can strengthen to really make a difference together.



## What are our key issues?

Children, families, schools and council services have worked hard over recent years to improve attendance in Tameside schools. Whilst there are many examples of children and young people attending on a daily basis and achieving well, too many students remain persistently absent from our schools. This means that they are missing lessons, enrichment activities and opportunities to build meaningful relationships with their peers and school staff.

In Tameside, too many young people leave secondary school without the qualifications they need to go on to further education or employment, for some of these students this is a result of a long legacy of poor attendance at school.

The COVID-19 pandemic created huge disruption for children, families, and educators. Attendance at school became more challenging for all. The disruption to learning created by the closure of schools and settings and the creation of remote learning packages is unprecedented. It is important that we work together to overcome the challenges created by the pandemic and make sure all our children are supported to return to school and catch up on learning.

We know that for some children and young people, the return to school following the pandemic and lockdown has been an anxious time and it is important that we all work together to understand that and make sure the right support is in place.

Our Attendance Strategy covers the next three years from 2023 to 2026 and will direct our work in improving attendance in schools, colleges, early years provision and other learning opportunities over this time. One of our guiding principles in developing this strategy has been to build on our existing partnership working with schools, academies, colleges, early years providers, partners and stakeholders. This will ensure our local approach is not only in line with current government guidance and legislation, but that it recognises the needs of our community, post pandemic, and seeks to empower and support them. This will inspire confidence to attend school rather than exercising statutory powers to enforce it.

## What do we know already?

There are many reasons why a child or young person may be missing school. It is important that professionals working with families take the time to understand those reasons and work in a solution focused way to overcome barriers to regular attendance.

It is also important that when considering poor attendance, a holistic approach is taken. This should consider the emotional, social, economic, and academic reasons why a child or young person may be missing school and how, through the support of the school and/or other agencies, barriers to regular attendance may be reduced or removed.

We know that many schools and agencies do this work very effectively, however, our analysis tells us that there is more that we can do to make sure that this approach is consistently applied across the borough.

We believe that when teams and services come together in a person-centred way, we are likely to use our resources more effectively and instigate long lasting change in behaviours and life experiences.



We know that there are many positive examples of good practice in learning providers, teams and organisations in relation to the management of attendance. However, this work is often not joined up enough to really make a difference for children and families.

We also know that we need to look strategically at the range of services available to schools to support attendance, to ensure that they are fit for the post pandemic world and to look for new and innovative ways to work with children and families differently.

We also know that sometimes attendance is impacted because of the capacity of others to provide the right level of care and support to children and young people; sometimes this relates to complex health needs or challenging social or family circumstances. It is important that teams working with families acknowledge this and work in a solution focused way to minimise absence from school.

### **Working in partnership**

Securing good attendance is everybody's business. If we are to achieve our ambitious goals, we all need to work together.

A range of stakeholders and agencies work closely to address school attendance issues. In addition, protocols with other local authority services and the health services help to identify any children or young people who do not have a school place and refer them on to appropriate services. A wide range of children's and young people's services also identify school attendance issues and work collaboratively to actively resolve them.

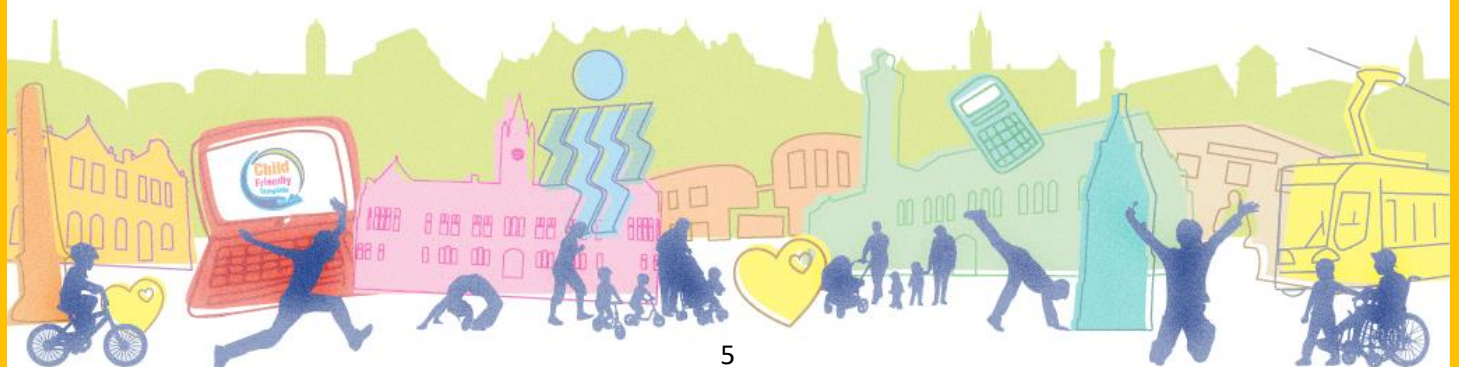
Lead professionals working with the family may identify key partners as some of the following. Their involvement will depend on the needs of the child and family.

Our partners and stakeholders work together to be attendance curious about our children and young people in a range of settings.

### **What are we going to do?**

Our schools and young people tell us that in order to improve attendance for all students we need to develop:

- A clear and well communicated graduated response built on early intervention so that children and families get the help they need when they need it, regardless of which setting they attend.
- A multi-agency approach so that children and families get help from the right person or service at the right time and that attendance isn't just seen as an issue for schools.



## How are we going to do this?

- ✓ Implement the Department for Education's *Working together to improve school attendance* guidance in Tameside
- ✓ Support schools, colleges and early years providers to develop policies and practices to bring a consistent approach to promoting good attendance
- ✓ Work with children, families, schools and partners to find new ways to celebrate great attendance.
- ✓ Develop and share good practice resources with our schools, learning providers and partners to ensure that all practitioners have a range of resources to promote good attendance and intervene quickly when attendance is a cause for concern.
- ✓ Ensure our SEND practices consider where poor attendance is an issue for our young people and the reasons for it are considered at multi agency meetings, individual reviews and SEND assessments.
- ✓ Ensure our children and young people with a social worker are effectively supported to access learning
- ✓ Offer a programme of training so that there is a common appreciation of what we mean by good attendance and how best to secure it.
- ✓ Develop a Tameside wide communications campaign that helps raise awareness of good attendance and why it is important.
- ✓ Continue to provide a range of support for children and young people struggling to attend school due to their mental health issues.
- ✓ Revise our safeguarding practices so we understand the risks associated with poor attendance and the escalation processes available when a child or young person is considered to be at risk.
- ✓ Encourage all professionals to be attendance curious and ask our children and young people and their families and carers about their attendance school
- ✓ Ensure our partners are aware of the effects of attendance on educational neglect
- ✓ Monitor the implementation of this strategy by continuing the work multi agency attendance strategy partnership and reporting to the Education Attainment and Improvement Board
- ✓ Monitor the impact of this strategy through key performance indicators that are overseen by the Improvement Board
- ✓ Ensure governance systems and processes are in place to manage key local issues such as the attendance of vulnerable students and that where appropriate, alternative delivery models are secured to meet the needs of children, families and schools.