

Working Together to Improve School Attendance. DfE Guidance

- Published Feb 2024 – Applies and Statutory from Sept '24

Governor Updates – 3rd July 2024

Alasdair Whitelaw

Pupil Inclusion and Support Manager



achieving
for **children**

Aims

To look at the statutory requirements relating to Attendance for all schools.

To look at the Attendance governance role, and recommendations / best practice in terms of carrying it out.

Background And Updates

Overview of updates

- Sharing of registers with DfE = Statutory
- FPN increase (comms sent out).
- New Absence Codes
- New [Toolkit for School](#)
- Rob Tarn (CEO of Northern Education Trust) = National Attendance Ambassador

Core Offer

Communication and Advice

- Named point of contact
- Answering queries from school staff – **Coding RTTs EHE**
- Attendance Network Meetings

Attendance Support Meeting

- Termly meetings with EWO and Attendance Lead on SLT
- Strategic focus (data/trends - google data form)
- Individual action plans - **discussing school action plans for persistent and severely absent pupils**

Multi-disciplinary support for families

- Signposting and facilitating access to support services **Early Help/SEND/Social Care/PEAR/ERSA/IAS/SEMH/EHE/CME/Medical Needs etc**
- Advising Attendance Lead / Lead professional on action plan.

Legal Intervention (**Education Select Committee updates.**)

- Issuing FPNs
- Parenting Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders
- Parenting Orders
- Attendance Prosecution

[Education Welfare Service
2023/24 | Leadership Update
and Schools Bulletin
\(leadershipupdate-
rbwm.co.uk\)](#)

Traded Offer

(37 schools) **various Hours and prices. Runs academic year**

Case holding at Severe absence.

- Contacting families and understanding the barriers to attendance.
- Setting up and leading attendance meetings with families
- Developing in school reasonable adjustments and initial attendance action plans
- Completion of referrals to other services, including early help assessments
- Building communication and Relationships between stakeholders.

Training

Processes

Policy and Audits

[Education Welfare Service
2023/24 | Leadership Update
and Schools Bulletin
\(leadershipupdate-
rbwm.co.uk\)](#)

Main Responsibilities for Schools

All Pupils

- Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- *Regularly monitor data to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.*
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

Attendance Lead on SLT;

- ✓ Have overall responsibility for Attendance
- ✓ Attend the Attendance Support Meeting whether traded or core offers.
- ✓ Ensure comms on Attendance is effective.

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent 100% - 90%

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each pupil identified and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance *and act as lead practitioner if attendance is the only issue and/or the local threshold for formal early help is not met.*
- If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. *If a case meets the local threshold for formal early help/family support, this includes conducting the early help assessment and acting* as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Persistently absent pupils (90%)

- Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners, ~~for example Early Help~~
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Severely absent pupils (50%)

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. ~~Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.~~
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.
- Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals
- Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Support for pupils with a social worker

- *Know who the pupils who have, or who have had, a social worker are.*
- *Understand how the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that they are experiencing, or have experienced, can have an impact on attendance – whilst maintaining a culture of high aspiration for the cohort.*
- *Provide additional academic support and make reasonable adjustments to help them, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended there can be lasting impact on the children's educational outcomes.*
- *Work in partnership with the local authority at a strategic and individual level, sharing data on attendance including, at an individual level, informing the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.*
- ~~*Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.*~~

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Looked after and previously looked after children

- *Have high expectations for the cohort – with expert support and leadership provided by the designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children*
- *Work in partnership with the Local Authority Virtual School Head to develop and deliver high quality Personal Education Plans for looked-after children that support good attendance.*
- *Work directly with parents to develop good home-school links that support good attendance. For previously looked after pupils this could include discussion on use of the Pupil Premium Plus funding managed by the school.*

Main Responsibilities for Schools

Monitoring

- The school's Senior Attendance Lead will ensure all school based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.
- The governing board or academy trust will hold the headteacher or executive leadership to account for their delegated responsibilities and for compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements. They will review progress and provide challenge when required. The board will help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most and ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Ofsted will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance as part of the behaviour and attitudes judgement. This includes, where attendance is not at, or consistently above what could reasonably be expected, that schools have a strong understanding on the cause of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of these causes to improve attendance in all pupils.
- Ultimately in cases where a school has not met expectations or statutory duties the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.
- ~~Ofsted considers schools' efforts to improve or sustain high attendance as part of inspections. Multi-academy trusts regularly review attendance data and support schools.~~

Main Responsibilities for Academy Trustees and Governing Bodies

All pupils

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed.
- Ensure school staff receive training on attendance

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Persistently absent pupils

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Main Responsibilities for Academy Trustees and Governing Bodies

Severely absent pupils

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Support for pupils with a social worker

- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

Looked after children and previously looked after children.

- Designate a member of staff to have responsibility for the promotion of the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after pupils.
- Monitor and review attendance of the cohort and consider how school policies, including behaviour policies, are sensitive to their needs and support good attendance.

Main Responsibilities for Academy Trustees and Governing Bodies

Monitoring

- DfE Regions Group considers multi academy trusts' efforts on attendance as part of decision making.
- Ofsted considers governing bodies' efforts as part of inspections.

Attendance Reporting at Governor's Meeting

Best Practice

Raised at every Gov meeting – HT report.

Data/Graphs showing;

- Attendance Rate/Absence Rate
- Persistent Absence Percentage
- Severely Absence rate Percentage

Break down

- Pupil Premium
- SEND (EHCP and SEN Register)
- Looked After (and PLAC)
- Social Care (CP / CIN)
- Demographics

Comparative data with;

- Statistical Neighbours
- Across Trust
- Across LA
 - ✓ Available DfE / VYED

Questions to Ask

- Nursery
- 6th form
- Yr 11 study leave
- Attendance = Everyone's Business
- Strategies and Communications

Main Responsibilities for Parents

All pupils

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.

Persistently absent pupils

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Main Responsibilities for Parents

Severely absent pupils

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Not applicable

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

Support for pupils with a social worker

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

Main Responsibilities for Parents

Looked after and previously looked after children

- Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance – including the development of the Personal Education Plans.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

Monitoring

- Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance.

(If parents feel the school and/or local authority have not delivered what they are expected to they should discuss the case with the school and/or local authorities attendance support team.)

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

School Attendance Support Team (Education Welfare Service) will be available free of charge to all schools (inc. independent, Special and Alternative provision) from September '23.

All Pupils

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent

- Hold a *regular conversation* ~~termly conversation~~ with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance.
- If the issue persists, and there are multiple needs consider whether the threshold for early help is met and facilitate access where it is. ~~facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate.~~ *Regardless*, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner *where threshold is met and* all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the local authority, continue to work with the school and partners.

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Persistently absent pupils (90%)

- Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:
- Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.
- Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Severely absent pupils (50%)

- Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and:
- All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision.
- Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers

- Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance

- Work closely with relevant services and partners, for example special educational needs, educational psychologists, and mental health services, to ensure joined up support for families.
- Ensure suitable education, such as alternative provision, is arranged for children of compulsory school age who because of health reasons would not otherwise receive a suitable education.

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Support for pupils with a social worker

- Ensure that all Children's Social Care practitioners, understand the importance of good attendance for pupil's educational progress, for their welfare and their wider development – and understand their role in improving it.
- ~~Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker in their area.~~

Through the work of the Role of Virtual School Head Teacher they should:

- Undertake systemic monitoring and data sharing of the attendance of children with a social worker in their area: developing and implementing targeted cohort level interventions to improve attendance.
- Provide advice, challenge and training to schools on how to promote and secure good attendance for children with a social worker.
- Develop whole system approaches, with social care, to support the attendance of children in need.

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Looked after and previously looked after children

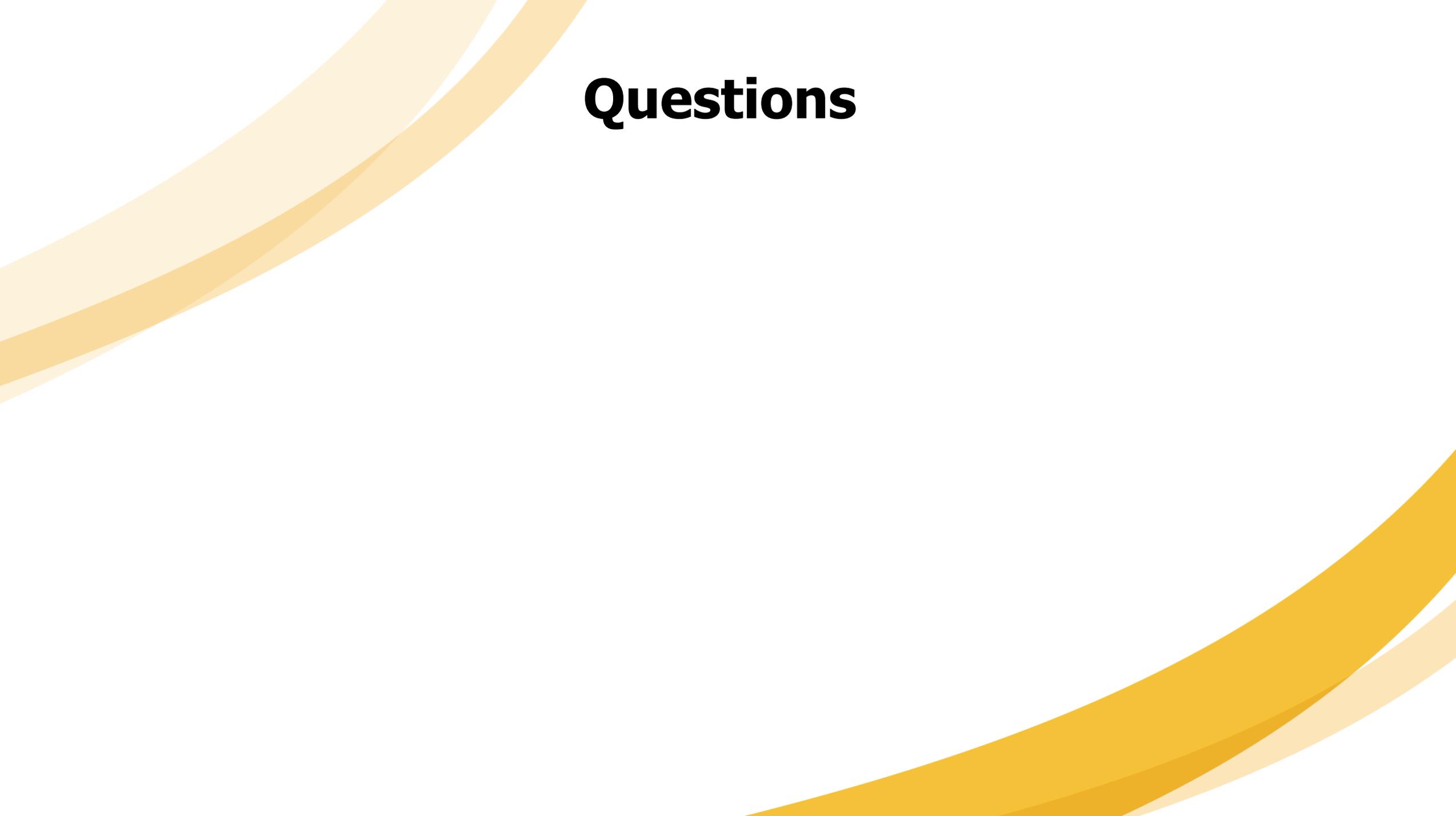
- Promote the educational achievement of looked-after and previously looked after children – doing everything possible to minimise disruption to education when a pupil enters care.
- (LA that looks after the child:) Appoint an expert Virtual School Head (VSH) - will;
- Monitor, report on and evaluate the education outcomes of this cohort, including their attendance, as if they attended a single school – wherever they live or are educated.
 - Ensure schools know when they have a pupil looked after by the authority on their role and that information is shared with the school on issues that may impact on their attendance.
 - Ensure that all looked-after pupils have high quality, up to date, effective Personal Education Plans developed in partnership with schools, social workers and carers – including, where necessary, clear interventions and use of pupil premium plus funding to support good attendance
 - Provide expert advice and information on the education of previously looked-after pupils to schools and parents – including their attendance.
 - ~~• Put in place personal education plans for looked after children.~~
 - ~~• Secure regular attendance of looked after children as their corporate parent and provide advice and guidance about the importance of attendance to those services supporting pupils previously looked after.~~

Main Responsibilities for Local Authority

Monitoring

- DfE Regions Group monitors local authority efforts as part of regular interaction.
- Ofsted may consider the local area partnership's approach to improve attendance of young people with SEND and part of the SEND Area Inspection, and the local authority's approach to improving attendance for children with a social worker through inspecting local authority children's services.
- Ultimately, in cases where a local authority has not met expectations or statutory duties the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Secretary of State can consider a complaint.

Questions

The background features several overlapping, curved bands of color. On the left side, there are two bands in shades of light yellow and pale orange. On the right side, there are two bands in shades of golden yellow and bright orange. The bands curve from the top towards the bottom, creating a dynamic, flowing effect.