

BRIEFING	TO:	Rotherham Schools' Forum
	DATE:	6 th June 2024
	LEAD OFFICER:	Kirsty Woodhead Service Manager, Early Help
	TITLE:	Attendance and Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024
1. Background		
1.1	The Rotherham School Attendance Matters Pathway (SAMP) was developed and launched in 2019, as a consistent pathway for addressing poor school attendance. The SAMP is a welfare-based approach to attendance underpinned by the Early Help Assessment as a tool to understand the barriers to a child attending school and coordinating a multi-agency plan of support to address them and bring about an improvement to school attendance. The pathway also provides a consistent approach to legal enforcement action where all other strategies have been tried and exhausted.	
1.2	On the 6 th May 2022 the DfE published 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance', guidance to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, and includes roles and responsibilities. This guidance introduced a core set of expectations for schools, MATs and local authorities and was refocussed away from overreliance solely on punitive approaches to an approach of providing whole family support before enforcement. This guidance was informed by now longstanding models delivered by Local Authorities that were designed to focus on attendance (amongst other things) via the Supporting Families Framework.	
1.3	A further update to Working Together to Improve School Attendance published in February 2024 sets out expectations for schools, MATs and local authorities which will become statutory from the 19 th August 2024.	
2. Key Issues		
2.1	<p>Attendance Data</p> <p>In Rotherham, persistent absence (PA) in 2022/23 stands at 23.2% with severe PA at 2.9%. This is slightly higher than the National figure which stands at 21.2% for PA and 2% for severe PA.</p> <p>Secondary PA in Rotherham (28.5%) is considerably higher than Primary PA (17.6%) with the severe PA for Secondary 3.8% and Primary 0.7%.</p> <p>National attendance rate for 2022/23 is 92.5% (Primary 94%, Secondary 90.7%). Rotherham attendance is 92% (Primary 93.3%, Secondary 90.3%).</p>	
2.2	<p>Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)</p> <p>WTTISA outlines statutory expectations for Schools, MAT's and Local Authorities in respect of attendance. WTTISA (2024) adds some additional expectations of Local Authorities to that of WTTISA (2022) in relation to working with cross-border pupils and also introduced the new National Framework for Penalty Notices for absence which</p>	

<p>2.3</p>	<p>further embeds the Government’s ‘support first’ approach whilst strengthening the deterrent for parents where pupils are absent without good reason.</p> <p>Next steps Building on the success of the SAMP, the Rotherham School Attendance Matters Pathway and Strategic Plan which will be launched later this academic year, will articulate the shared commitment to fostering a Boroughwide culture of good school attendance embedded within our families, our communities and the variety of organisations who work with and support them.</p> <p>Once launched, the plan will provide a vehicle to drive forward relational based practice to improve attendance, provide a co-ordinated local response to the updated Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024) which becomes statutory from August 2024, and support consistency of practice across the Borough.</p> <p>An Associate Head has been identified to work with the Local Authority with a focus on attendance, providing increased opportunity to work with schools and MAT’s to identify and share good practice in improving children’s attendance and supporting their inclusion with education.</p> <p>The School Attendance Matters Pathway and associated documents will be updated, along with the Code of Conduct to ensure it is compliant with the nw statutory expectations.</p>
<p>3. Key Actions and Timelines</p>	
<p>3.1</p>	<p>May 2024 - August 2024 Early Help School Attendance Matters Pathway and Strategic Plan to be finalised ready for launch in September.</p> <p>Code of Conduct to be updated to align with the National Framework for Penalty Notices.</p> <p>School Attendance Matters Pathway to be updated to align with statutory expectations outlined in WTTISA (2024).</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>September 2024 Attendance Delivery Group to be established to enable effective multi-agency delivery of the strategic plan.</p>
<p>4. Recommendations</p>	
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Rotherham Schools Forum to note the content of this briefing.</p>