

DRAFT update

March 26

Supporting Attendance: An assessment and intervention toolkit

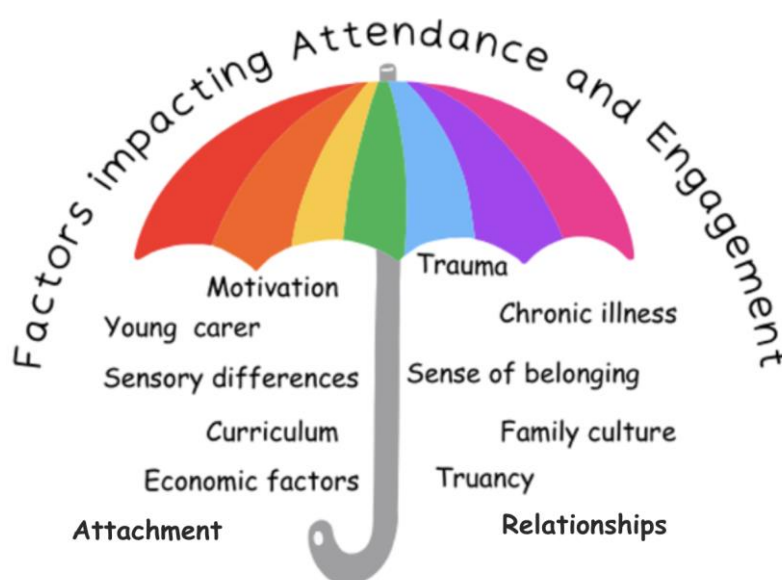
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1. Background

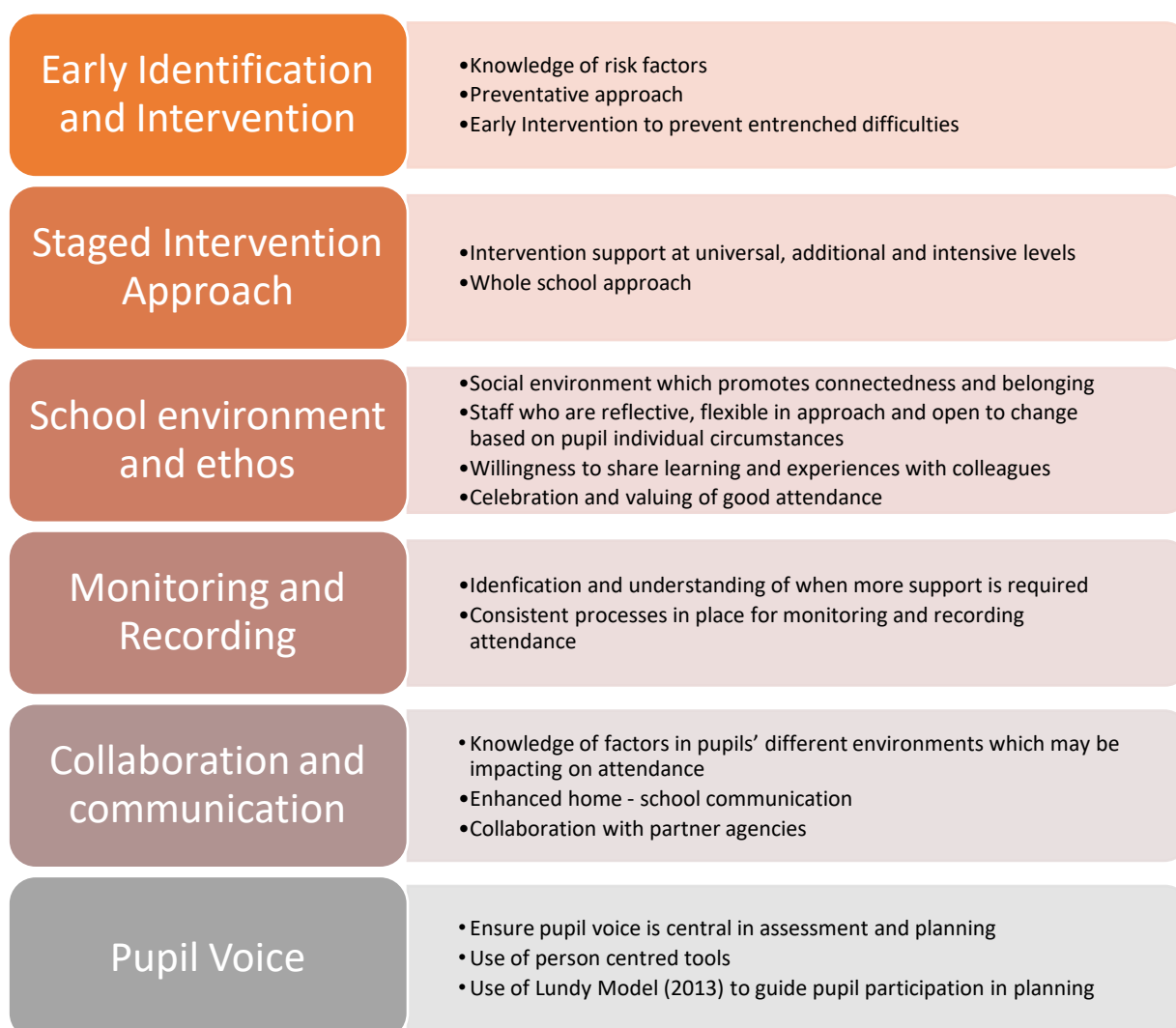
Many factors can affect school attendance. This toolkit aims to support school staff working with learners with a profile of non-attendance, including emotionally based non-attendance, and provides a framework to support assessment and intervention.

The language we use is important. Throughout this toolkit, we are using the phrase 'non-attendance' to encapsulate the broad range of underlying factors influencing attendance and engagement. Historically, this has been referred to as 'school refusal' or 'school avoidance'. Instead, we now understand that non-attendance is usually related to a learner's emotional wellbeing which is largely influenced by a range of environmental factors (NAIT, 2020; Zapata et al., 2018). The image below illustrates the range of possible underlying contributing factors which need to be considered when gathering assessment information and planning supports. With this in mind, this toolkit should be used in conjunction with Fife Council's attendance guidance. A flowchart of how to use the toolkit can be found in [Appendix 1](#).



2. Effective whole school practice

The diagram below outlines six key themes identified in research investigating practice that most effectively supports learners whose emotional wellbeing is creating a barrier to school attendance (Corcoran et al., 2022; Daily et al., 2020; Durham & Connolly, 2017; Finning et al., 2018; Kearney & Graczyk, 2014; Sommer et al, 2017; Zapata et al., 2018).



In summary, the literature suggests that early identification and intervention are key. Central to this is having a robust and consistent process for recording and monitoring attendance and the inclusion of learners in this process. The research calls for a staged approach to assessment and intervention where relationships are at the centre. Schools that are nurturing and reflective are more open to working collaboratively with learners, their families and other supporting professionals. Collaborative working and pupil voice and participation are recurring themes in the research. They are also highlighted as good practice within Getting it Right for Every Child and Fife's Child Wellbeing Pathway.

Despite decades of research into non-attendance at school, it has been difficult to identify universal effective intervention strategies due to the complexity and individual nature of non-attendance. Core areas of effective intervention, however, can be broadly themed in the areas of school culture, school systems and school practice. Education Scotland (2023) offer a model for intervention based on these three areas.

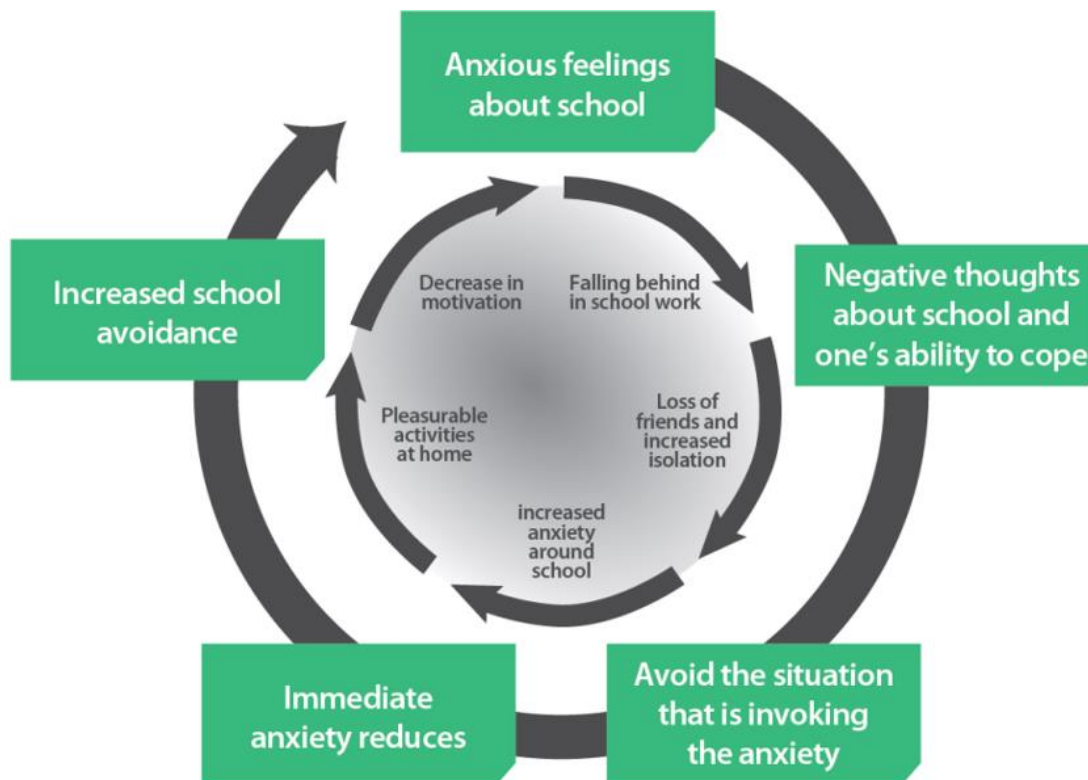


It is recommended that schools consider the following aspects in the table below when seeking change in the three core areas above.

Culture	Systems	Practice
• Effective leadership • Attendance a priority focus • Equity & Inclusion focus • Safety & belonging priority • At least one trusting relationship • Supporting families • Collaboration with schools in cluster • Staged intervention	• Identify early signs • Robust tracking & monitoring • Analysis & triangulation of data • Data analyses by different characteristics e.g. age • Examine historical patterns • Review policies & procedures • Continuum of support • Partnerships • Evidence based approaches • Whole school approaches	• Demonstrates values & culture • Long term approach • Young person's voice central • Individualised planning • Curriculum, teaching & learning flexibility • Key person for young person • Prioritising mental health & wellbeing • Referring on for financial help • Address environmental barriers • Consider young person's motivation

2.1 School-Based Anxiety and Early Intervention

Anxiety is a normal response to stress, and when linked to school avoidance, it manifests as fearful thoughts and unpleasant physical sensations about attending school. This can lead to withdrawal, refusal, and ongoing non-attendance.



From: West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2022). [Emotionally Based School Avoidance | West Sussex Services for Schools](#)

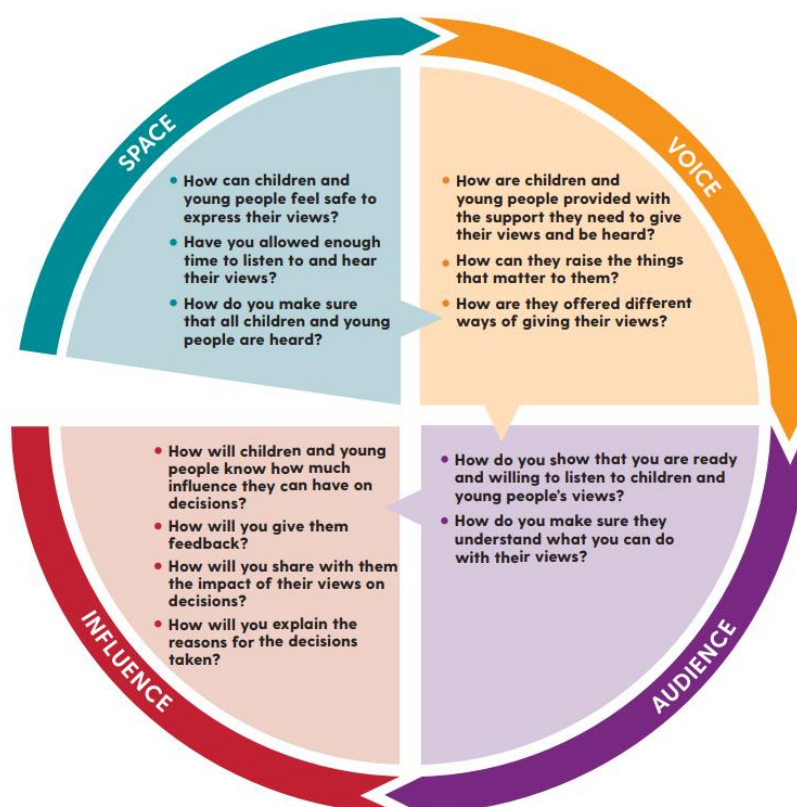
To avoid these overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with school attendance, the learner may withdraw from the situation by refusing to get ready for school, leave the house or enter the school. These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, can contribute further to the non-attendance over time. Heyne and Rollings (2002) suggest that the learner's own perception of their ability to cope is important to consider. If a learner is worried about their ability to manage their emotional regulation, their learning or their social abilities, those worries can feed into their anxiety cycle. The response of the adults around the learner can be key in supporting the learner to cope with this feeling.

The illustration above supports the adults to consider the unintended psychological consequences of jumping too quickly to remove perceived demands. Priority should be given to first consider supports that can help the young person cope with those demands, this includes adults communicating a belief in the young person that they can do it. Once a full assessment has been

carried out, strategies such as reducing demand temporarily can be considered as discussed in the intervention section below.

2.2 Pupil Voice and Participation

Pupil voice is crucial when supporting non-attendance (Corcoran et al., 2022; NAIT, 2020). Listening to the perceptions of learners themselves is thought to be the best way of ensuring that the assessment process is as individualised as possible. Children and Young People's right to be included in all educational matters affecting them has been incorporated into Scottish Law (UNCRC Scotland Act, 2024). To ensure that learners are meaningfully included in decision making, Lundy (2013) developed a 'Model of Participation' in which the conditions required to support this right are outlined. There are a range of tools available to support these conversations. Staff are encouraged to use their relationship with the learner to make a professional judgement when considering the best method or tool to use. For additional pupil voice and participation tools, please see [Appendix 2](#).



The Lundy Model (2013) of Child Participation ([Assessment and Planning Guidance](#))

3 Assessment

3.1 Importance of Early Intervention

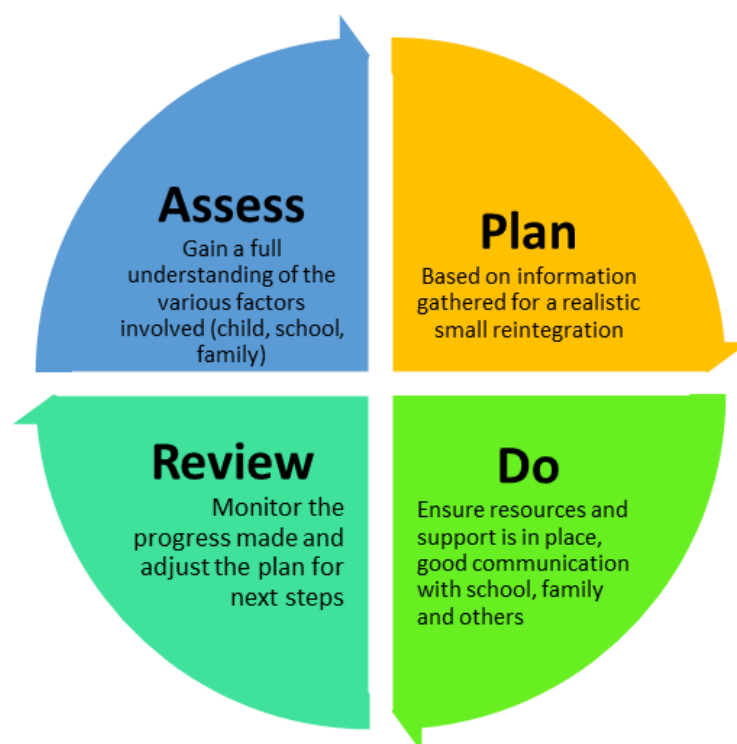
It is particularly helpful if all staff are aware of the early indicators of school non-attendance as shown by examples in the first column of the table below. When early indicators are identified, information and concerns about attendance should be actively shared, explored, and care fully tracked and monitored. The second column of the table below shows indicators of non-attendance that are at risk of becoming an established pattern of behaviour. These are just some examples of what you might see. It is important to involve the learner at each stage and remain curious about barriers to attendance.

Early Indicators of school non-attendance	Indicators of school non-attendance
•Frequent or sporadic attendance and/or lateness •Regularly asking to leave class or go home •Parent reporting that CYP does not want to come to school •Physical symptoms believed to be linked to stress (e.g., stomach-ache, sickness, headache) or complaining of feeling ill. •Behavioural changes or fluctuations e.g., interactions with others, reduced motivation and engagement in learning tasks •Child reluctant to leave home and stays away from school with the knowledge of the parent/carer •For younger children, a reluctance to get out of the car •Reluctance to attend school trips •Social isolation and avoidance of peer group •Unauthorised absence on any day of first week of term •Missing the second, third or fourth day of term for unauthorised reasons	•Periods of prolonged absence •Persistent lateness •Parent/carer capacity to support CYP attendance •Patterns within non-school attendance e.g., specific days, subjects, staff members •Minor reasons for school absences •Anxiety in relation to home factors •Greater reliance upon family members e.g., separation anxiety •Reduced academic progress due to non-school attendance / missed education, or severe absent mindedness in school due to concentration •Anxiety in relation to their learning and/or poor self-concept as a learner •Under-achievement •Low self-esteem and/or lack of confidence •Struggling with peer relationships and/or social situations •Physical symptoms and/ or physical changes believed to be linked to stress (e.g., stomach-ache, sweating rapid weight loss or gain) •Emotional dysregulation and/or distress

Taken from: Solihull EPS: Emotionally-Based School Non-attendance: Guide for Professionals, West Sussex EPS Guidance, Wakefield EPS guidance and The Children's Commissioner for England Guide (2022).

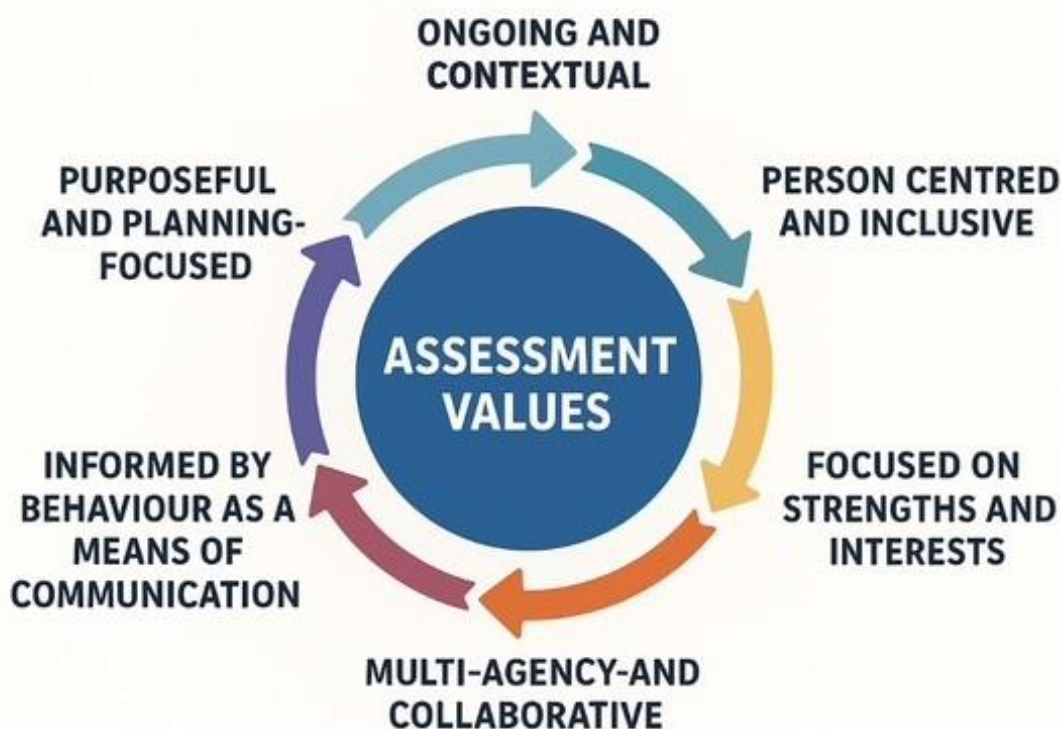
3.2 Assess, Plan, Do, Review Process

Where concerns about a learner's attendance are identified, further information needs to be gathered from them, their families and any involved professionals. Understanding the learner's unique circumstances and individual reasons behind the non-attendance will allow staff to identify supports and strategies that will work for them. Early intervention is key to avoiding school non-attendance becoming an entrenched pattern.



The Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycle is a helpful way of conceptualising the process of supporting a learner to gradually reintegrate back into school.

The model below outlines key assessment principles underpinning all assessment processes.



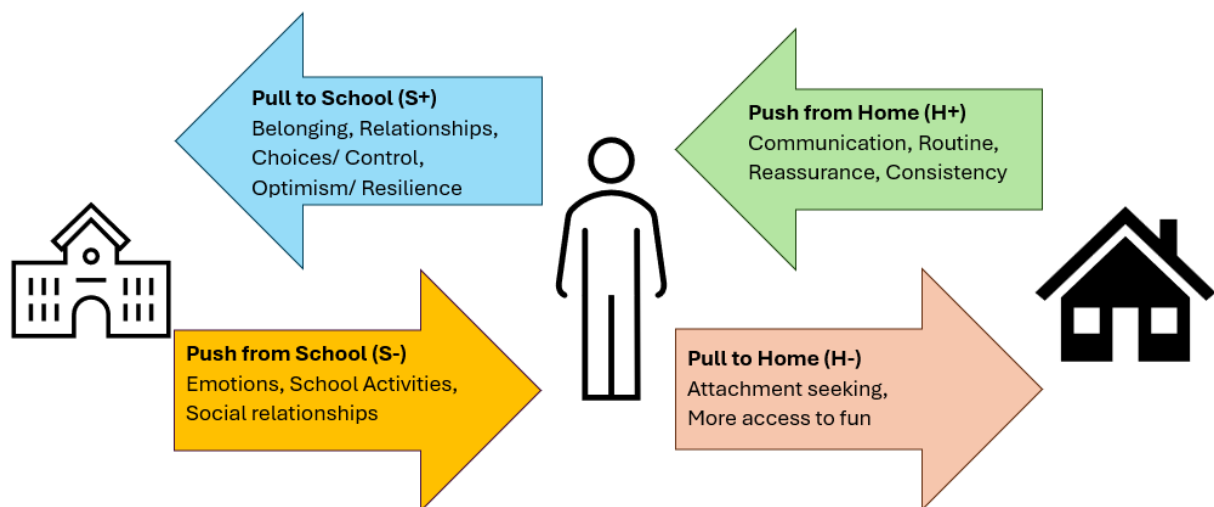
3.3 Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool

The Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool will help to build a holistic assessment picture of supports and the barriers to a learner's school attendance. Information should be gathered through collaboration with the learner, key staff members and parents. [Appendix 3](#) could be used in advance of a meeting to gather parental views on what is helping their child to attend school and what are the barriers.

The tool can be used to collate information on an ongoing basis. Populating the tool may involve initial information gathering from the learner and parent before meeting together to agree the relevant information to include. It is not necessary to complete each box, nor to repeat information if it applies in the same way in different boxes; however, consideration should be given to where there are gaps in assessment information.

Within each box, decide together if the factor:

- Pulls the learner towards school (**Pull S +**)
- Pushes the learner positively away from home, and into school (**Push H +**)
- Pushes the learner away from school (**Push S -**)
- Pulls the learner towards being at home, rather than in school (**Pull H -**)



Highlight the relevant aspects and add any additional information. The TAC may decide that the factor involves elements of both 'push' and 'pull'.

More information on 'push' and 'pull' factors can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

See [Appendix 5](#) for a worked example of the Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool.

Understanding attendance assessment tool

Name: _____ **Stage:** _____ **School:** _____ **Completed with:** _____ **Date:** _____

Review date: _____

Individual factors				Family/home factors				School factors			
Emotional wellbeing / mental health				Care circumstances (e.g. at home, foster care)				Relationships with peers			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Past experiences (e.g., positive experience of school, traumatic events, move school, etc.)				Family experiences / change (e.g. separation, loss & bereavement)				Relationships with staff			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -

Individual factors				Family/home factors				School factors			
ASN (e.g., Neurodivergent)				Relationships in the home				Specific subjects / lessons			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Making and sustaining friendships				Separation / being apart from parents or carers				Response to academic demands / pressure incl. exams assessments			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Self-image				Current family circumstances (e.g. level of stress, physical and mental health)				Primary / secondary transition			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -

Individual factors				Family/home factors				School factors			
Learning / appropriate curriculum				Parent/ carer work circumstances (e.g. work demands, shift work, working from home, have had to give up work, not in work)				Behaviours in class (own or others)			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Motivation and mindset				Family resources to support attendance and/or engagement in school learning				School ethos (e.g., relationships, sense of belonging, connectedness/community)			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Physical health				Family support for learner's resilience to attend (e.g., parents' own experiences and beliefs)				Transition to school in morning			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -

On completion of the Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool, you may decide more in-depth assessment is needed in a particular area. Some supportive tools are outlined in [Appendix 6](#). These are organised into themes of emotional needs, learning needs, and neurodivergence.

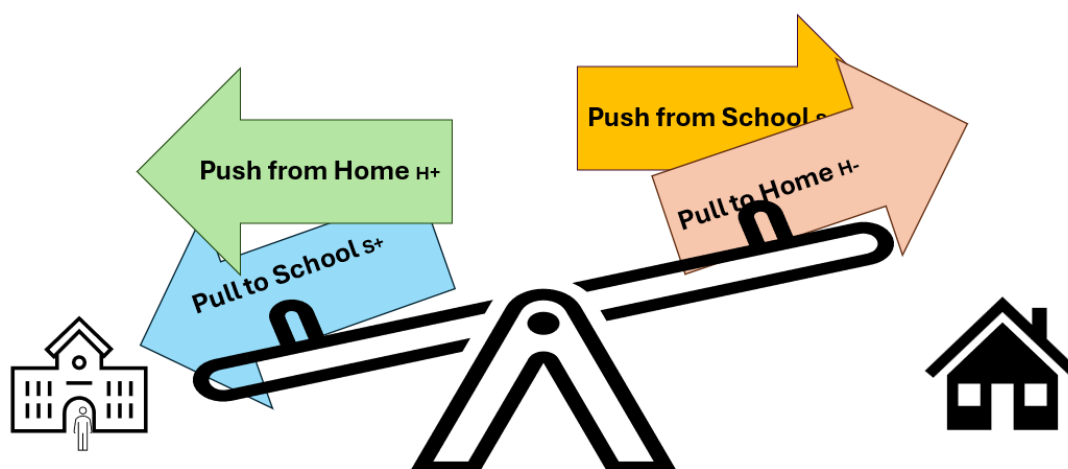
For autistic learners there may be additional aspects to take account of in assessment and intervention. [Appendix 7](#) outlines some key areas for consideration.

4 Analysis and Planning

The Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool provides insight into “what” is happening for the learner in relation to attendance and its influencing factors. Once this has been completed, the information can be analysed to answer, “So what” are the learner’s unmet support needs? This will guide the next step; targeted decisions for “Now what” interventions and supports to put in place.

Keeping in mind the key assessment values (highlighted above in Section 3.2) will ensure meaningful, relevant, individualised answers to the “So what?” question.

Prioritise a small number of areas to begin, either by asking the learner what impacts them most or by seeking quick wins, such as removing easily addressed barriers or implementing immediate strategies, for example, supporting a smoother physical transition into school. Not every issue needs to be tackled at once; the goal is to increase factors that encourage attendance while improving the learner’s overall school experience.



The table below enables analysis of the assessment information gathered and reflection on factors that both push and pull. Supports should be considered at the individual, home, and school levels, and focus on what is within the circle of influence. For example, a home factor like family illness cannot be changed, however individual strategies, (e.g. breathing techniques) or school-based interventions (e.g. office facilitated check-ins with home) can

help minimise its impact. Through the analysis process, it is likely that themes such as **relationships, motivation, regulation, safety and sense of belonging** will occur across all push and pull factors.

4.1 Understanding Attendance: Reflection and Planning Tool

This tool can be used to support the analysis of the 'Understanding attendance assessment tool' and identify next steps and interventions.				
	Pull to school (Increase factors which pulls the learner towards school) Pull S +	Push from Home (Increase factors which push the learner positively away from home, and into school) Push H +	Push from School (Reduce factors which pushes the learner away from school) Push S -	Pull to Home (Reduce factors which pull the learner towards being at home, rather than in school) Pull H -
Individual	How can we build on the learner's identified strengths/interests/hopes for the future to make attendance feel purposeful and rewarding? How can we strengthen the learner's connections with trusted adults and peers to foster a sense of belonging that encourages regular attendance? Does the learner feel understood, celebrated and valued?	What support is needed to help the learner feel emotionally safe and understood? How are we supporting the learner to develop their resilience and coping strategies? How is this communicated to the adults supporting the learner? How can we ensure the learner feels heard and sees their views reflected in their education planning, building their sense of inclusion and ownership?	How is the learner supported to understand and manage difficult emotions that affect their attendance? When school feels challenging, what supports help the learner build confidence, feel a sense of control, and access regular opportunities to pause and regulate? How is the learner supported to explore their social and communication preferences in ways that reduce stress and affirm identity?	How is the learner's connection to home acknowledged and supported throughout the school day? If the learner has caring responsibilities, what supports are in place to help them engage meaningfully in learning while balancing their role as a young carer?
Family	Is there a need for additional agencies and support for the family to manage the transition into school? For example, school buddies,	What home-based routines and strategies can we support or suggest to help the learner feel emotionally and physically ready to transition into the school day -	How can we encourage a positive narrative around school attendance that feels meaningful to learners and their families? Would any of our families benefit from additional	How can we build the learner's confidence to take part in activities away

	Includem, Barnardo's, wider friends and family.	such as consistent sleep habits, co-regulation practices, or positive end-of-day plans? How can the learner's connection to home be supported during their day at school?	information and support e.g., Access Fife Therapy courses, Flourish, etc.?	from home in a way that feels manageable? If the learner finds separation from their caregiver difficult, how can the caregiver be supported to ease this transition? Is there scope to shift enjoyable or connecting activities with caregivers to times outside the school day? Can home-based learning be used during the school day as a bridge to re-engagement, rather than a replacement for school?
School	How do learners with decreased attendance know that the school has a culture where all learners are understood, celebrated and valued? How can we foster strong, trusting relationships with key adults for this learner? How can we maintain meaningful connection with learners when they are not physically present in school? How can we increase positive aspects of school? For example, extracurricular and social experiences.	In what ways does the school environment offer the learner meaningful opportunities to experience success — academically, socially, or personally? Are there regular chances for the learner to engage in activities that feel relevant, motivating, and aligned with their interests or strengths? How does the learner know that they are kept in mind by key school adults throughout the day?	What aspects of the school environment may need reviewing to reduce barriers to attendance, and how can tools like CIRCLE guide this process? What school community-based supports (e.g. buddies, home liaison) are in place to strengthen the learner's sense of belonging and connection? What does a safe space look like for this learner, and how are they supported to access it when needed?	How do learners with decreased attendance know that the school has a culture where all learners are understood, celebrated and valued? How can we foster strong, trusting relationships with key adults for this learner? How can we maintain meaningful connection with learners when they are not physically present in school?

			How is the learner's return to class or school thoughtfully planned after missed lessons — with care, flexibility, and connection? How are social opportunities throughout the day used to build peer relationships in ways that feel safe and affirming for the learner? Does the learner's timetable offer the learner regular experiences of success, and is there flexibility to adapt it when needed? How do key adults in school stay attuned to the learner's needs and actively build trust and connection? How are we making learning feel relevant, motivating, and achievable for the learner?	What signals or routines help the learner feel that they matter - even during transitions, unstructured times, or when things aren't going well? How can we increase positive aspects of school? For example, extracurricular and social experiences.
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4.2 Interventions

The table below outlines common interventions to consider when creating a plan to increase the learner's attendance at school. Collaborative problem solving is key when considering which interventions will best meet the learner's underlying needs and address barriers to attendance at individual, home and school levels.

Theme	Intervention	Additional information
Learner voice and relationships with staff	Person Centred Planning	Tools such as a Giftedness Poster, PATH and MAP can be useful. For pupils who struggle to verbalise the barriers to attendance, a 'Talking Mat' or 'School wellbeing cards' may be useful. See Appendix 1 / link with Educational Psychologist (EP) for more information.
	Identify at least one key adult in school for a secure, trusting relationship	
	Emotion check-ins at regular points through the week/day	
	Regular staff check-ins / links with learner when out with school (e.g. home visit, Teams call, email)	
Using learner's strengths	Consideration of using interests / motivators in school	

	Responsibility jobs, specific roles in school	
	Links with community opportunities to build motivation for future roles	
Social supports	Buddies / peer supporters	
	Encourage into structured social situations e.g. clubs and activities	
	Small group intervention on targeted social skills	
	Use of Cool in School online resource	Cool in School – A site about keeping your cool in school
	Maintain a sense of belonging via peer links (e.g. Seesaw, Teams, online, peer activities out with school)	
Structure of school day	Soft start / breakfast club	
	Alternative start and finish times from school	
	Alternative break and lunch plans	
	Timeout card	
	Identified safe spaces	
	Early pass from class	

	Preventative sensory breaks or regulating opportunities built into day	
	Option to access learning out with main school building	
	Agreed Reduced Attendance / Flexi Arrangements	See guidance on intranet Promoting engagement and attendance . ARA agreements can be considered as a short-term intervention, in combination with addressing wider underlying needs and barriers.
Teaching and learning	Timetable review to rate subjects and match to teacher approach where appropriate	
	Differentiate curriculum (learning approaches in class)	
	Adapted timetable (wider achievement, planned time out of class)	
	Online learning offer	E.g. access to work on Teams page Or online learning offer from E-Sgoil Home Page e-Sgoil
Learner Emotional Wellbeing strategies	Mindfulness exercises	Info available on Moodcafe Mood Cafe For young people
	Support learner to understand anxiety cycle and / or link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour	See link EP for 'Anxiety is Normal Resource Pack' Courses available on Access Therapies Fife website

		Home - Access Therapies Fife NHS
	Individualised or small group targeted intervention for emotional wellbeing/ emotional literacy	E.g. Kitbag group, Energy Accounting
	De-sensitisation approach to reduce fears, where aspects of school causing anxiety are identified and gradually managed in a structured plan.	E.g. Visits after school, link with one member of staff initially, etc. (Link further with Educational Psychologist for more information on de-sensitisation)
Home	Agreed routine for separation from parent	May be supported by a social story depending on age and stage of learner
	'Keeping in mind' object from parent e.g. a note, something which reminds learner of them	
	Support family to understand learner's needs, including any anxiety	Courses available on Access Therapies Fife website Home - Access Therapies Fife NHS

5 Do and Review

Staged intervention is based on the principle that a learner's needs are best and most effectively met at the universal level with an intervention designed to offer solutions in the least intrusive manner. The stages of intervention offer a framework for facilitating problem-solving to ensure that appropriate and proportionate supports are offered to learners and families who need them most, based on assessment information. Staged intervention does not imply that each stage must be tried and tested to move on. Rather, the stages are assessed and considered in relation to each individual's circumstances.

Following your analysis of the assessment information, the next step involves identifying and agreeing on appropriate outcomes and actions. The process of assessing and planning is a continuum, from Universal to Additional or Intensive levels. Given the nature of the challenges around attendance, it is key to regularly review the plan to ensure it is effective and is progressing towards set outcomes. Guidance on effective [assessment and planning](#) can be accessed on the intranet.

5.1 Partner Agencies

Universal supports / consultation

- Educational Psychology Service offers 'no name' consultations
- Supporting Learners Service (SLS), including the Neuroinclusive Support Team. All teams offer no name consultation
- Primary Mental Health helpline
- Neurodevelopmental Pathway helpline
- Occupational Therapy helpline
- Speech and Language Therapy helpline

Referrals and Requests for Assistance for additional / intensive supports

- Educational Psychology Service

- SLS, including Neuroinclusive Support Team
- Pupil Support Service (PSS) offer initial consultation with receipt of a 'Request for Assistance' form.
- Early Help and Support Team (Social Work early intervention)
- Primary Mental Health / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy

Signposting

[Choosing the right support](#) website is continuously updated to reflect any changes to agencies and services, including third sector partners involved in supporting families, children and young people. Further information can also be found on the [Our Minds Matter - Mental Health Information for Young People in Fife - Wakelet](#)

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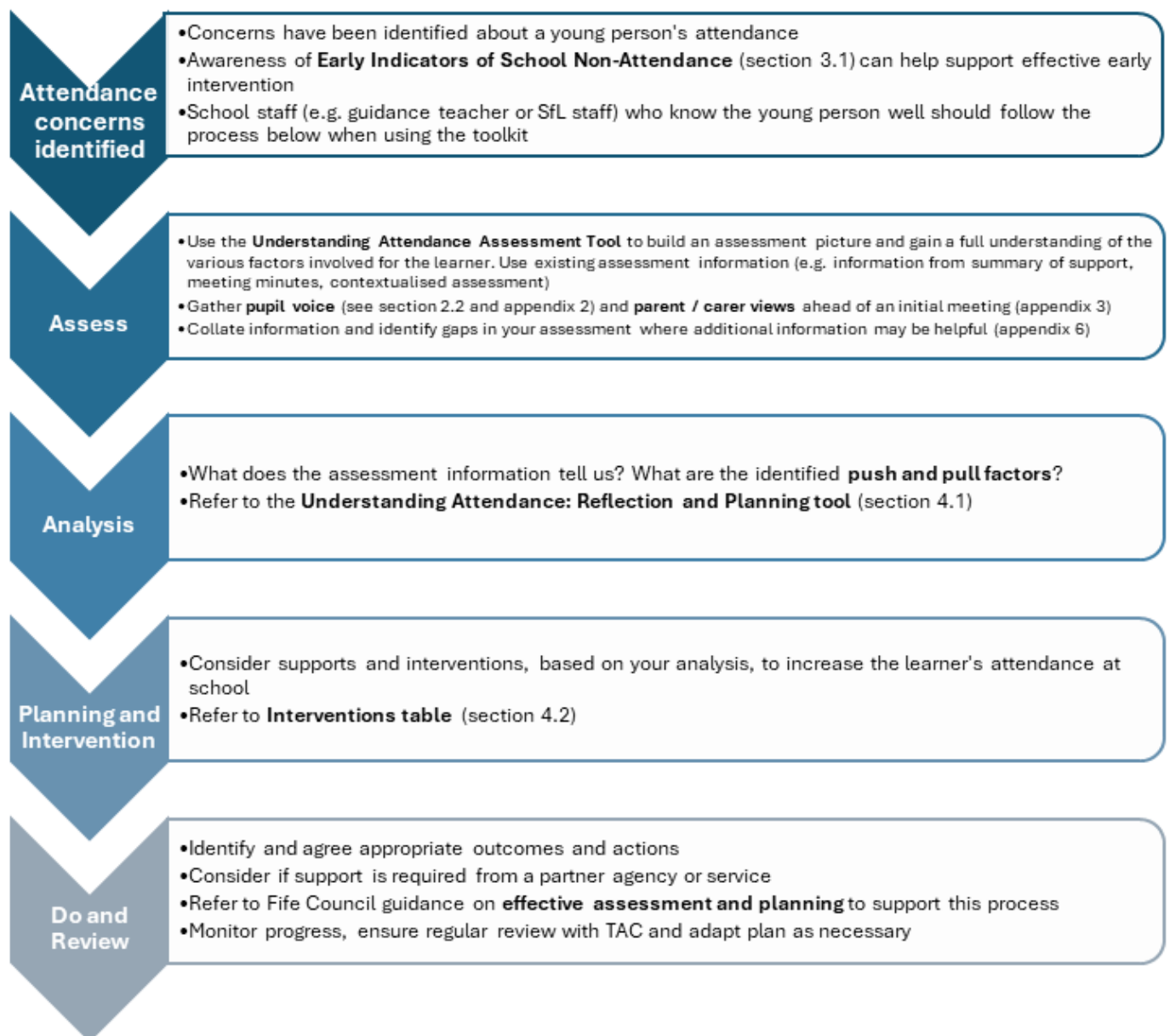
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Appendix 1: Flowchart – How to use the Toolkit



Appendix 2: Pupil Voice and Participation tools

Person-centred assessment allows a shift in focus from the surface behaviour to the function of those behaviours, helping the team around the learner understand which underlying needs are not being met. Subsequently, individualised interventions and planning can then be identified to target support for these underlying needs.

Guidance for adults gathering young people's views on school attendance

1. **Early Intervention:**

Use the form on the following pages to gather young people's views as soon as you are aware of any difficulties around attendance.

Examples may include:

- Parents are reporting difficulties getting their child into school
- A young person stops attending some of their classes
- A drop in overall attendance

Some young people may require varying levels of scaffolding to answer the questions, and the form would be best completed in collaboration with a key adult who can help expand on / elicit further responses.

2. **Be Curious:**

As well as recording a young person's response, be curious about those responses and record additional information shared during your conversation.

3. **Tailor questions:**

Consider the stage of the young person's attendance journey and adapt questions to suit their context.

For example, if a young person has not been attending school for a prolonged period the questions may be more focused around concerns and worries around returning to school.

When tailoring the questions, explore the barriers identified in relation to current attendance.

e.g., "I feel worried..."

Leaving the house

Going into the school building

Leaving the base

Going into specific locations

Or another tricky situation that you have identified.

Where there are blanks, add examples that are specific to your setting or learner.

Mags insert the proforma here please

Below are more tools and resources for gathering young people's views for you to explore.

Learner tool	Location
Generic Tools	
Tools for Gathering the Views of Learners	Highland Educational Psychology Service Tools for gathering the views of children and young people – Highland Council Psychological Service
Person-Centred Planning (PCP) tools	SEND Person Centred Planning tool Person-Centered Thinking Tools - Helen Sanderson Associates
Solution-focussed framework	NSPCC Solution-focused practice toolkit
Pupil Voice Framework (based on Lundy model) Learner Feedback form (based on Lundy model)	OneNote Assessment and Planning > Good meeting practice > Additional Resources Assessment and Planning Guidance for Additional Support and Wellbeing Needs Feb 2023 This section also contains examples of solution focussed questions
Attendance Specific	
West Sussex Educational Psychology Service: Emotionally Based Avoidance	Emotionally Based School Avoidance West Sussex Services for Schools
Neurodivergence and Attendance	
Barriers to Education – Young Person Voice Tools	Young Person Voice Tools - Barriers to Education

Appendix 3: Parent / Carer Information Gathering for Secondary Learners

Parent/ Carer Information Gathering for Secondary Learners

We understand that children and young people may miss school for various reasons. Sometimes this is related to their physical health, their mental well-being, or a range of other school / family related factors.

We would like to meet to talk about what is supporting your child to attend school and to gain a better understanding of the reasons why they haven't been able to attend. Parents and carers play a crucial role in this. We invite you to share your thoughts below which will help us know what to focus on when we meet. You might find it helpful to talk these through with your child.

Individual factors

These might be things like emotional wellbeing, additional support needs, friendships, self-image, physical health or their past experiences of school or learning.

What is helping your child to go to school?

What is making it difficult for your child to attend school?

Family / home factors

This might include any family changes, how they feel about being apart from you, your current relationship with your child, and how easy or difficult it is for you to support your child to attend school.

What is helping your child to go to school?

What is making it difficult for your child to attend school?

School factors

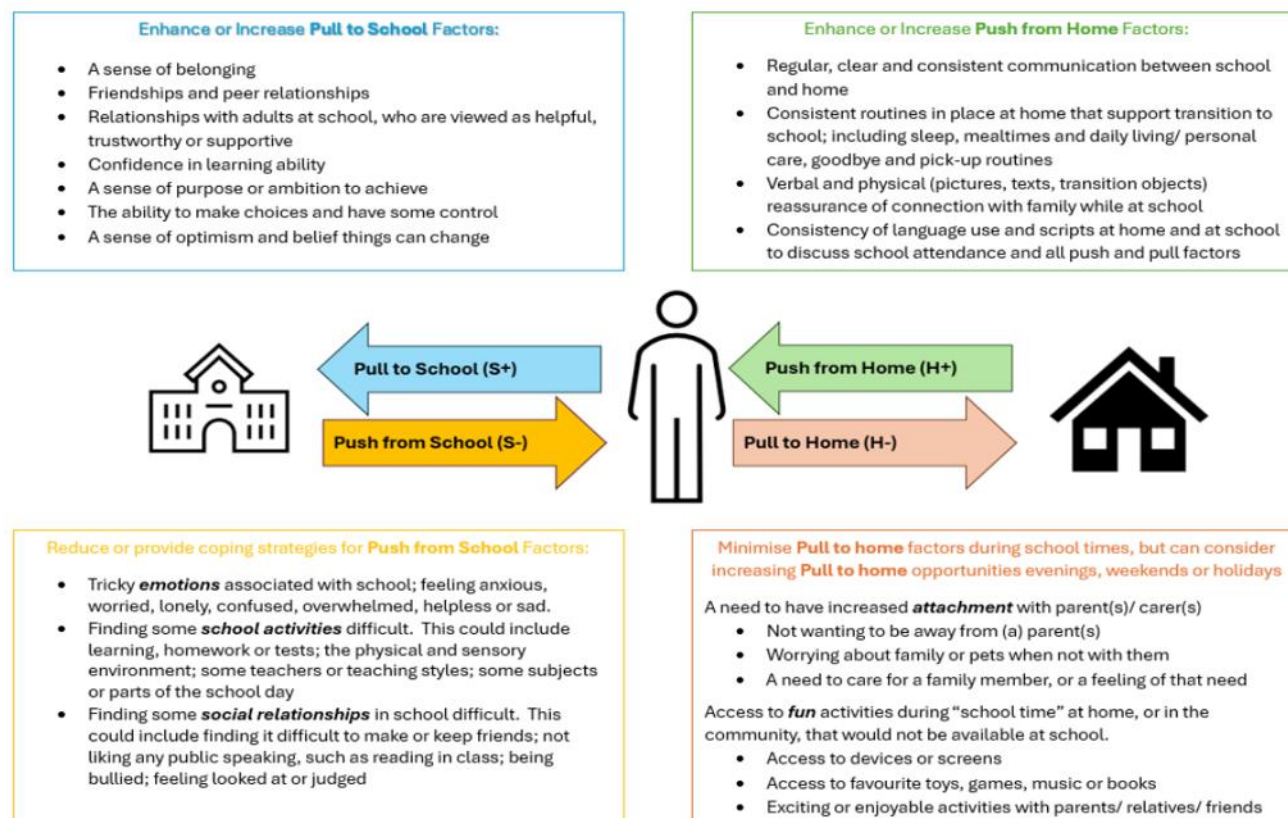
This might include relationships with staff or other pupils, how they feel about specific subjects, how they respond to tests, the move to secondary school, how much they feel part of school life, or how easy or difficult it is to come to school in the morning.

What is helping your child to go to school?

What is making it difficult for your child to attend school?

Please let us know if there is anything else you would like to talk about when we meet.

Appendix 4: Pull and Push Factors for Home and School



Appendix 5 Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool Worked Example

Name: Carol McKay **Stage:** S2 **School:** High school **Completed with:** Alex Smith, Guidance **Date:** 25/05/25

Review date:

Individual factors				Family/home factors				School factors			
Emotional wellbeing / mental health				Care circumstances (e.g. at home, foster care)				Relationships with peers			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Can have anxiety about new experiences and feels more comfortable at home				Recent return to mum's care and may feel anxious about being removed again				No difficulties			
Past experiences (e.g., positive experience of school, traumatic events, move school, etc.)				Family experiences / change (e.g. separation, loss & bereavement)				Relationships with staff			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Has had a change of high school. Moved here in November								Good relationships with some teachers, PSO and guidance			
ASN (e.g., Neurodiversity)				Relationship in the home				Specific subjects / lessons			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Diagnosis of autism, finds home less demanding for social and sensory reasons				Good, nurturing relationship. Mum supportive of school attendance				Keen to access drama and music. Knows needs			
Making and sustaining friendships				Separation / being apart from parents / carer				Response to academic demands / pressure incl. exams assessments			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -

Two friends but finds it hard to make new links				Wants to be close to mum				Feels anxious due to missed learning			
Self-image				Current family circumstances (e.g. level of stress, physical and mental health)				Primary / secondary transition			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
				No current stressors. Supportive of school							
Learning / appropriate curriculum				Parent/ carer work circumstances (e.g. work demands, shift work, working from home, have had to give up work, not in work)				Behaviours in class (own or others)			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Finds multiple instructions difficult to follow. Variable across classes				Flexibility in day to support Carol for morning routine and getting to school							
Motivation and mindset				Family resources to support attendance and/or engagement in school learning				School ethos (e.g., relationships, sense of belonging, connectedness/community)			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
Currently not motivated to attend school and feels interventions won't help				Mum helping Carol with learning at home so can keep up with curriculum				Doesn't feel part of or connected to X high school			
Physical health				Family support for learner's resilience to attend (e.g., parents' own experiences and beliefs)				Transition to school in morning			
Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -	Pull S +	Push H +	Push S -	Pull H -
				Mum trying to engage Carol in wider community activities to build confidence				Finds bus busy and noisy			

Analysis and Planning

Guidance arranged a meeting with mum and Carol to consider the assessment and plan next steps. The actions would be included in the Child's Plan. The actions they agreed on were:

Individual factors: - For the Guidance teacher to ask EP for information on anxiety to send through to mum and Carol - For Carol to consider an online anxiety course through Access Therapies Fife - For Guidance to ensure the Summary of Support is up to date with information and resend to staff to support Carol's processing of instructions and awareness that she needs to use headphones to help with her sensory sensitivities	Who? AS -GT CM -Learner / MM -Parent AS -GT	By when? 10/6/25 6/6/25 17/6/25
Home factors: - For Mum to link with SW to let them know Carol's anxieties about being removed to foster care again - Mum to write a note to Carol each morning that she can keep in her bag to help with Carol's feelings of anxiety about being apart - Mum to continue to encourage Carol to try new activities and clubs outside school	MM- Parent MM - Parent MM - Parent	10/6/25 6/6/25 6/6/25
School factors: - Guidance to ensure all class learning is uploaded on Teams so Carol can access it. Carol can meet with English and Maths teachers after school to go over recent learning before coming back into class - Guidance to take Carol along to the drama club to help build her connectedness to school and give her a wider peer group - Review meeting to be held in 4 weeks (29/6/25, at 2pm)	AS - GT AS – GT	17/6/25 10/6/25

Appendix 6: Additional Assessment Tools

On completion of the Understanding Attendance Assessment Tool, you may decide more in-depth assessment is needed in a particular area. Some supportive tools are outlined below. Please speak to your Educational Psychologist (EP) for further information.

Emotional needs	Anxiety is Normal - learn how to control it. School Resource Pack (Primary or Secondary) Please speak to your link EP.	To assess the factors which may be causing a learner anxiety
	School Based Resilience Assessment Tool (Primary or Secondary) Please speak to your link EP.	To identify ways to build a learner's resilience
Learning needs	CIRCLE Resource (Primary or Secondary) CIRCLE ThirdSpace .	To identify universal strategies to support learning and access to the learning environment
	Cognitive Skills Assessment Tool Please speak to your link EP.	To unpick specific cognitive skills and the impact on learning
Neurodivergence	See below- Appendix 5: Additional consideration for autistic learners	Areas to consider for assessment and intervention for learners with autism
	NAIT Anxiety Related Absence. A guidance for Practice (p.21) NAIT-Anxiety-Related-Absence-Guidance-2020.pdf	Questions to reflect on the daily experience of a learner with autism
	Barriers to Education Website Welcome to Barriers to Education	This includes tools to gather the young person's voice to better understand their school experience and the barriers to education
	The Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing Tool Dimensions - Public Landing	To assess home and school factors affecting wellbeing, including possible neurodivergence

Appendix 7: Additional Considerations for Autistic Learners

“Being neuro-affirming means that you believe in a strengths and rights-based approach to developmental differences and aim to provide support and adaptations that affirm the child's neurodivergent identity.” (NAIT, 2023)

Autistic learners, or those where autism is being considered, experience many of the same anxieties as all learners who struggle with attending school. However, some aspects can be particularly challenging including:

- Potential misunderstanding or misinterpretations of language and social communication
- Managing multiple relationships with peers and adults, with heightened social anxiety
- Transitions to and from school, and transitions between subjects or activities
- Sensory processing needs or sensory sensitivities to specific aspects of the physical environment
- An uneven learning profile with specific areas of strengths and needs
- May focus attention well in learning tasks only if they appear meaningful or interesting
- High anxiety or dysregulation around change and unpredictably
- Specific phobias or anxieties e.g. fear of germs, fear of hats
- May be unaware of, or find it hard to communicate, the barriers to attendance and therefore predicting what may help

These challenges may mean the learner is in a near constant state of high anxiety.

Additional considerations which may be helpful for learners with autism include:

- Developing a detailed understanding of the profile of underlying needs
- Ensuring the learner's day is as predictable as is achievable by using supports such as timetables, visuals, checklists
- Preparing the learner for any potential changes as well as predictable, but unanticipated, events, e.g. a cover teacher as a result of illness, an unplanned fire alarm
- Carrying out a sensory questionnaire to understand any barriers to the physical environment e.g. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Sensory Processing [Sensory Processing | RHCG](#)
- Considering each transition the learner experiences in a day and what helps these to go as well as possible
- Mapping the social environment including all adults and young people the learner has interaction with, and looking at how those interactions feel for the learner
- Having an awareness of perceived peer rejection. Scaffolding peer relationships, potentially through shared interests
- Making teachers aware of motivators or areas of interest which may help to hook the learner into learning and class activities
- Using concrete questions, examples or options to gather the learner's view
- Use person centred and strengths-based tools to support the learner's flexibility of thought and openness to interventions / new plans

Fuller information can be found by accessing 'Anxiety Related Absence: A guide for practice'.

National Autism Implementation Team. 2020. Lorna Johnston and Dr Marion Rutherford. [NAIT-Anxiety-Related-Absence-Guidance-2020.pdf](#)