



**Education
Scotland**
Foghlam Alba



SWEIC Conference
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Setting the Scene

Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues

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For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

ATTENDANCE

There is a system-wide concern about reduced levels of attendance, particularly since the pandemic. National statistics provide evidence that there is a poverty-related gap in attendance. This report which is the result of a deep dive led by Education Scotland, aims to provide understanding of, the issues that impact on attendance and how as a system we might support improvement in attendance.

FINDINGS

ENGAGEMENT
is as important
as ATTENDANCE



PARTNERSHIP
Schools, families, partners, third-sector; to ensure support and effective communication and secure presence.

Groups more vulnerable to NON-ATTENDANCE

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Poverty | Anxiety |
| ASN | Secondary-aged pupils |
| Young carers | Gypsy travellers |
| Exclusion | |



Support should take place at the EARLY STAGES. Lengthier cases are complex to solve.



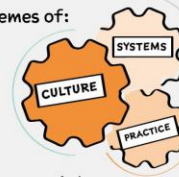
All local authorities in Scotland have included attendance as a Scottish Attainment Challenge stretch aim for the next three years



Absence can be caused by: INDIVIDUAL, PEER, FAMILY or SCHOOL factors. (or a combination of these)



Themes of:



Are CRUCIAL structures to support Attendance

Significant variations across Scotland in how DATA around attendance is used



ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Local authorities should carefully monitor their strategic and implementation plans for improving attendance or develop a plan where one is not in place.
- Put children and young people's views at the centre of refreshed approaches.
- ES, working with stakeholders and partners should provide bespoke support for areas where improving levels of attendance remains a challenge.
- Approaches to effective tracking and monitoring attendance should be collated and shared.
- ES and SG should collaborate with the wider system to bring coherence to the work on improving attendance.

Improving attendance in Scotland



Improving Attendance: Understanding the Issues

November 2023

Why do we need to focus on attendance?

Non-
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feelin

Our analysis shows that absence rates are higher for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, leading to lower attainment.

Schools can help to reduce and prevent these effects in disadvantaged areas.
Eyles, Gill
(Teacher)

Poor attendance has been linked to lower levels of attainment; peer relationships; emotional and behavioural difficulties and poorer employment opportunities.'

IEI1: Promoting and managing school attendance 2019



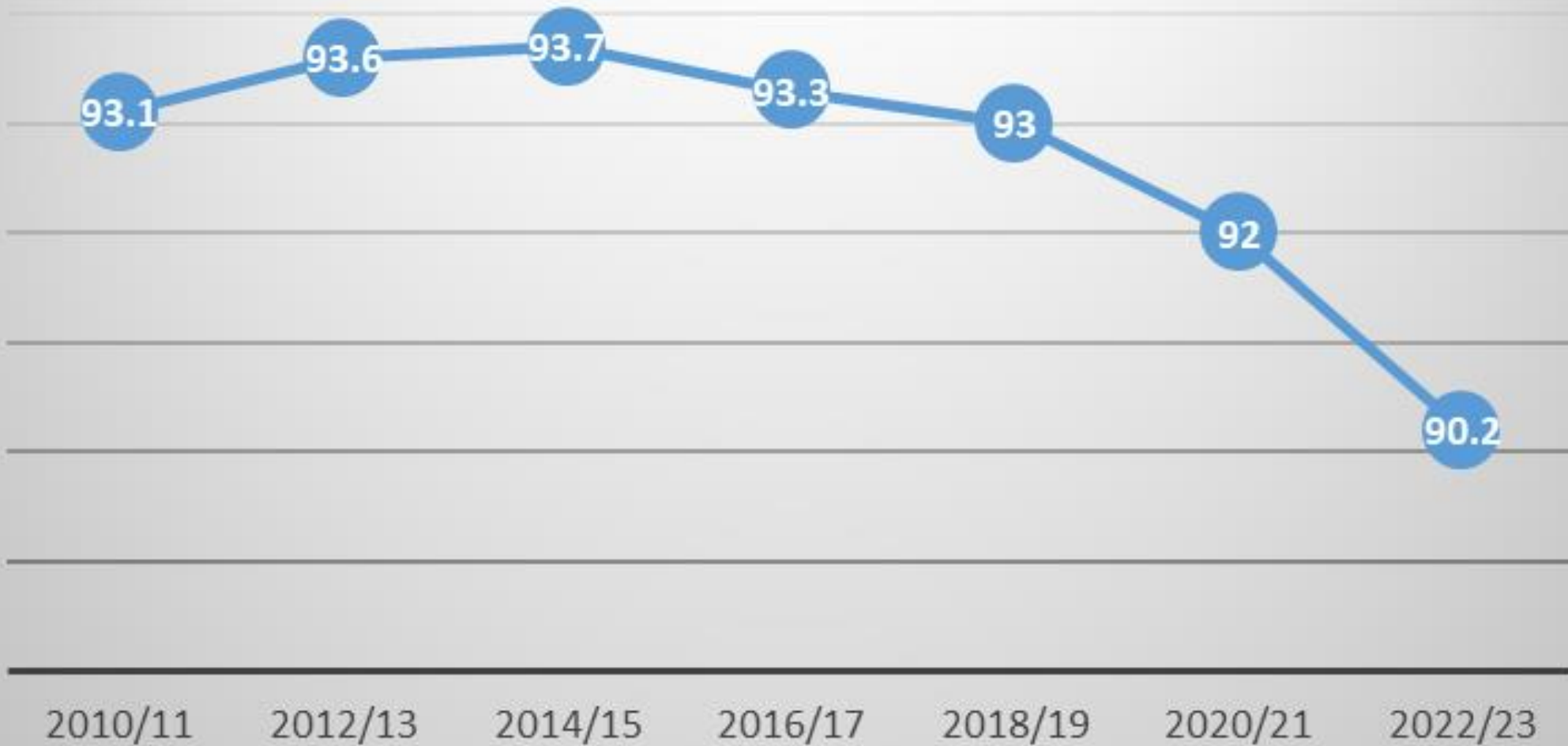
Facts about attendance

- a) **All** absence impacts attainment, even when related to illness (i.e. authorised)
- b) 90% average attendance by the time a young person has reached third year of secondary education, means they will have missed the equivalent of an entire year of school
- c) Absences can be linked to lower attainment and a greater likelihood of non-employment at age 42
- d) 5 days absence by age 10 = 5.7% more likely to have no qualifications, 4.2% more likely to unemployed
- e) 1% absence = 3% decrease of a standard deviation in post-16 qualification tariff scores
- f) Late coming is an early indication that absence may become a problem
- g) P7 increase in unauthorised absences can be an indicator of more significant absence in later years
- h) Absences may also cause greater harm to children and young people who experience socio-economic deprivation as their families have fewer resources to compensate for lost teaching time



2023 Data

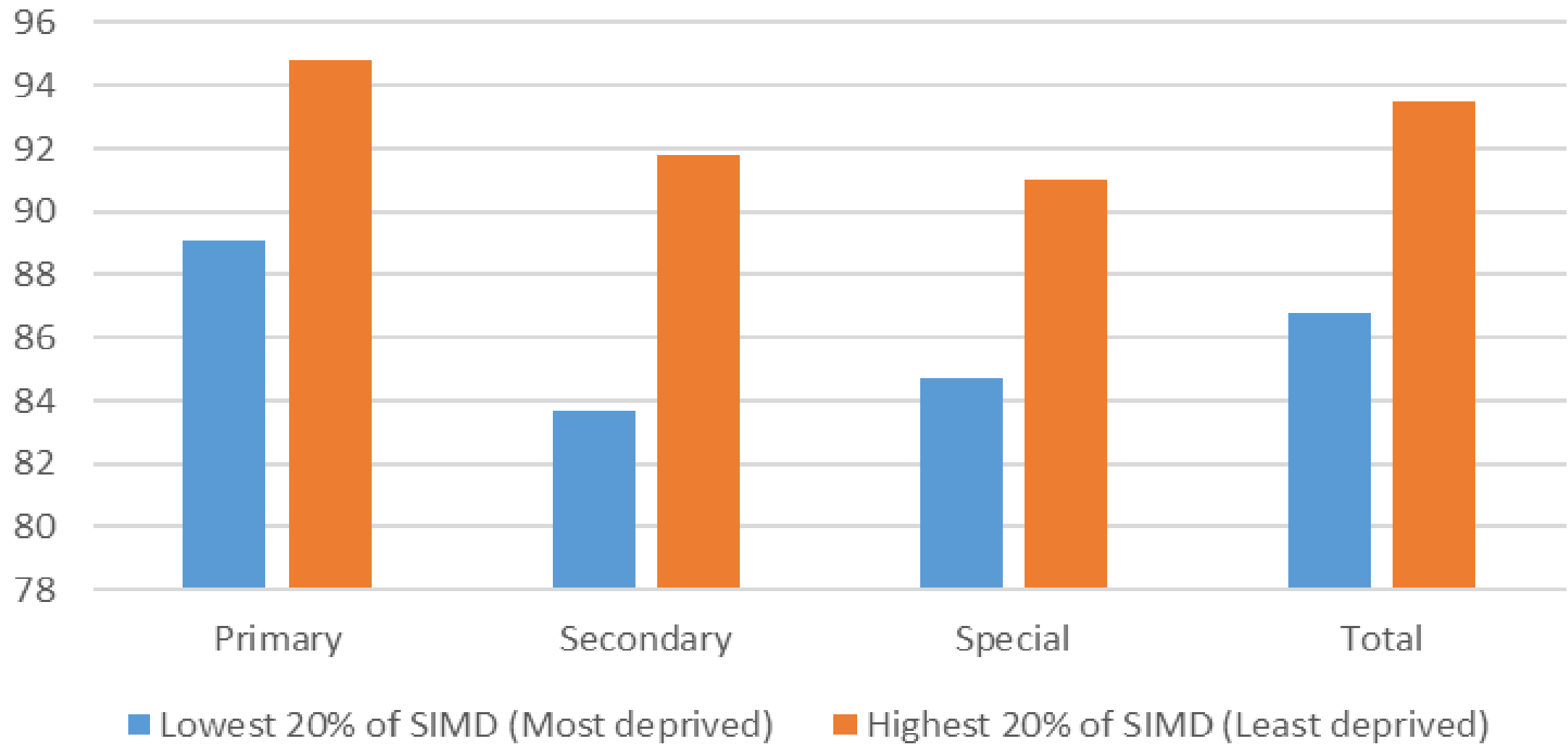
Attendance



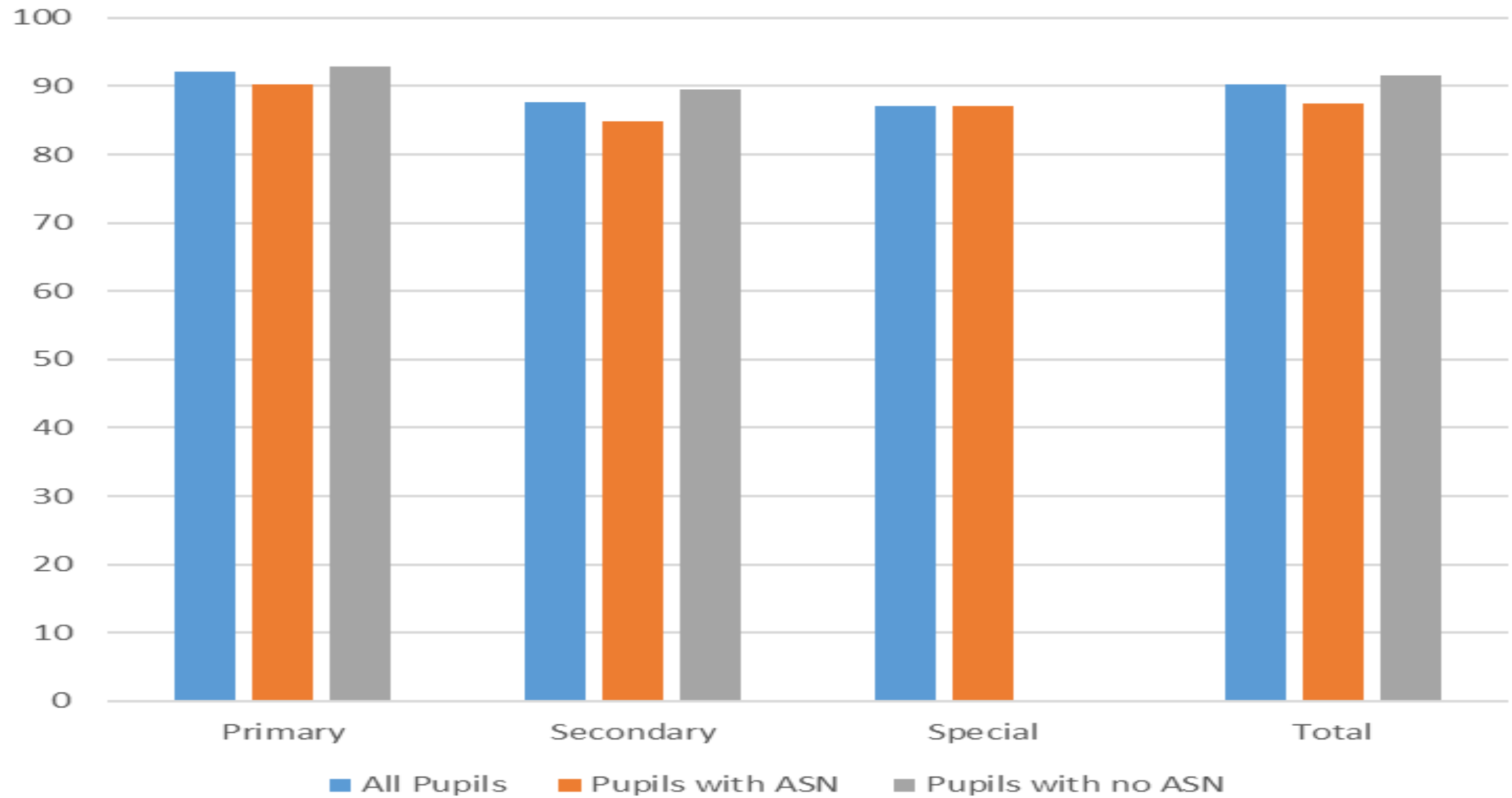
Supporting attendance- percentages can be misleading...

Percentage	Number of days missed	Comment
100%	0	Gives a learner the best chance of success
> 95%	9 days	Scottish national averages between 90-95%
> 90 %	19 days	Less chance of success due to poor attendance
> 85%	27 days	Serious implications on learning and progress
> 80%	More than 36 days	Serious implications on learning and progress Wellbeing implications

Poverty-related Gap



ASN GAP



When does absence impact on attainment?



1 percentage point increase in days absent



....associated with a decrease of 3%- a standard deviation in post 16 qualification tariff scores



Entire year missed

(SG, 2019a).

(Klein et al., 2022).

Attendance and engagement – what's the difference?

Engagement

Attention to & involved in a learning task

Types of engagement:

- emotional (interest, boredom, happiness)
- behavioural (attention, effort, and persistence)
- cognitive (motivation, learning strategies)
- agency (CYP leading their own learning)

The Education Hub

Attendance

Defined as participation in a programme of educational activities arranged, and agreed, by the school, including:

- attendance at school
- learning out with the school (college or other learning provider) while still on the school roll
- educational visits, day, and residential visits to outdoor centres
- interviews and visits relating to FE/HE or careers events
- debates, sports, musical or drama activities
- study leave during the period of the examination timetable
- receiving tuition

Included, Engaged & Involved: Part 1



Possible reasons for absence and lack engagement

“School management, health-team members, and teachers blame parents, circumstances at home, attitudes towards school, social and cultural heritage, addiction, and class.

Youth and parents find causes in the school’s treatment: teachers who do not truly see the pupils or engage either in their subject or the students, in combination with lessons that are not stimulating.”

What it takes to keep children in school. Erkstrand



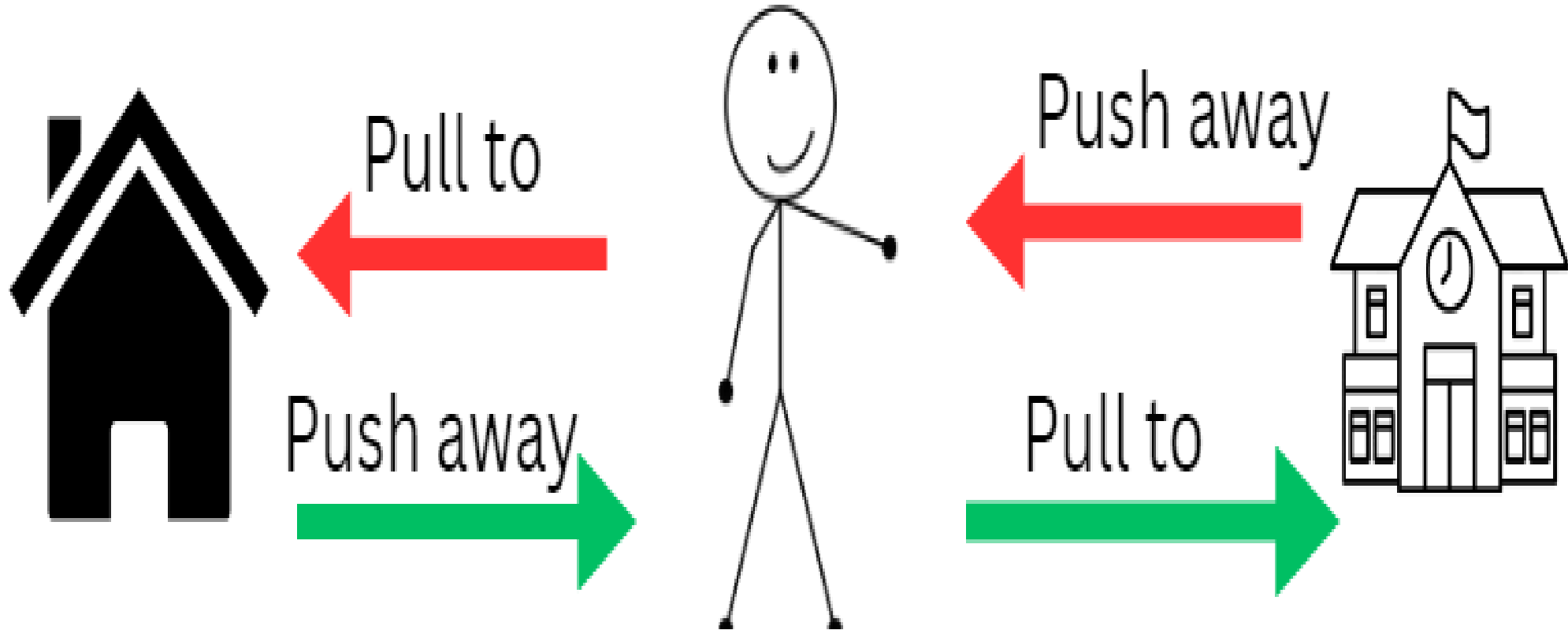
Causes of absence



(Forth Valley West Lothian)

Causes are multifaceted and should be considered only as part of a bigger picture of the individual CY

What do we need to consider?

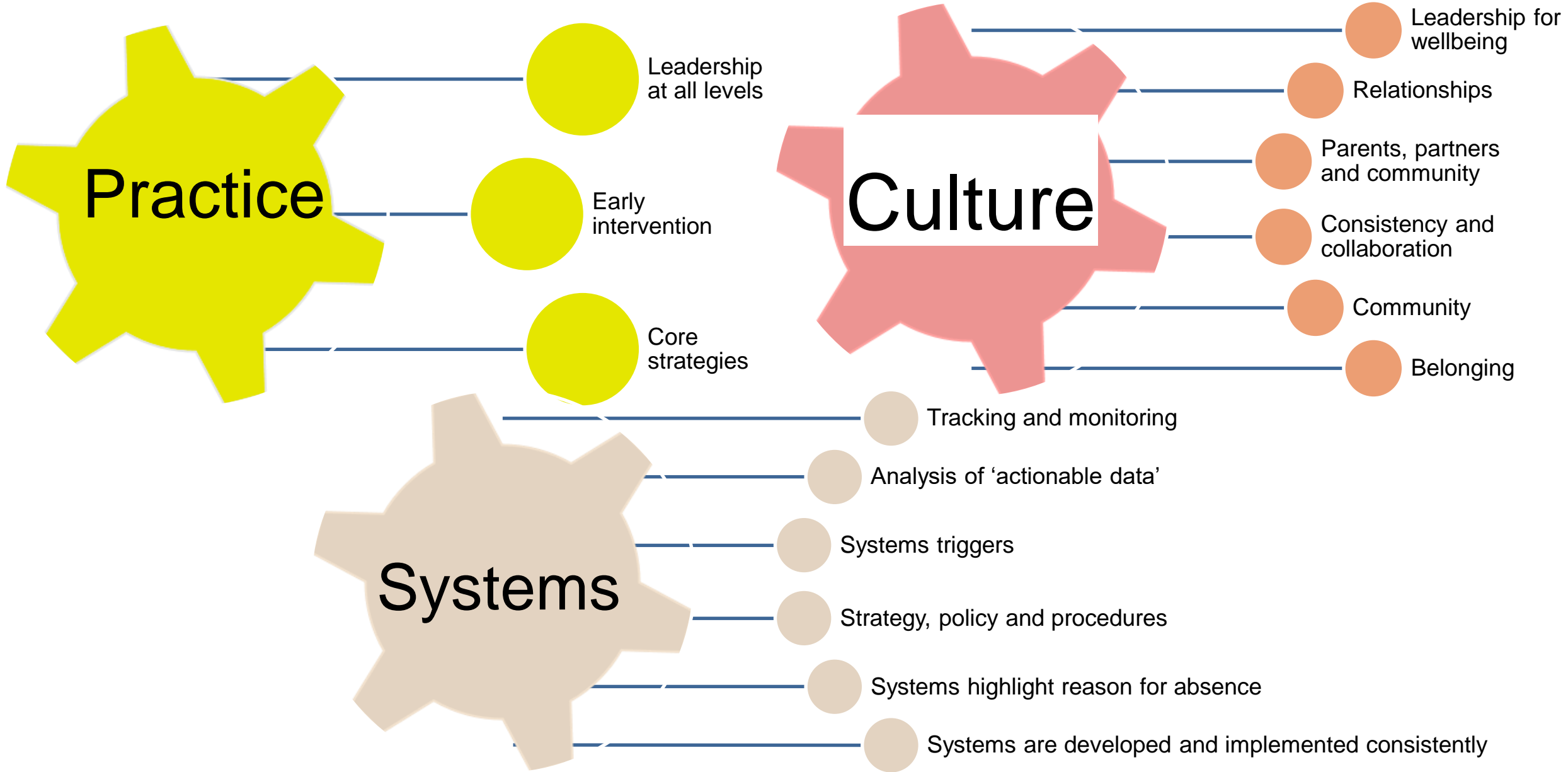


Vulnerable Groups:

- Children and young people impacted by poverty.
- Secondary-aged pupils
- Young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities.
- Pupil with additional support needs including:
 - children and young people who have experienced care
 - young carers
 - children and young people who have experienced exclusion.
 - anxious children and young people

Implementing Change





Developing a positive culture for attendance:

- **Leadership for wellbeing** is visible and effective
- **All stakeholders** (pupils, parents, partners and the wider community) understand the importance of attendance and promote it
- **Equity and inclusion** are embedded
- **Feelings of safety and belonging** are prioritised
- Attendance is regarded as ‘**a public health issue**’
- Compassionate, flexible **relationships**
- Strong connections with **significant adult(s)**
- **Parents, partners and community** members are valued equally and **collaborate to support wellbeing/attendance**
- **Support families to build their confidence**
- **Cross-sector working** - avoiding a discrete problem-solving approach



Digging deeper - Whole School Approaches



Reviewing systems to support attendance:



- Effective use of **data** to identify early warning signs – triggering support at an 'early' stage
- Rigorous **tracking and monitoring**
- Analysis of '**actionable data**'
- Identify **history of absence**
- Highlight **absence through a range of lenses** e.g. types of absence, trends, groups(e.g. care experienced young carers, anxiety-based absence), 'pedagogical truancy', environmental factors
- Systems (including attendance policies and procedures) are developed and implemented **consistently by all team members and across sectors**
- **Multi-dimensional, multi-tiered system** (a spectrum) of support (including SCRA)
- Effective **partnerships**
- **Evidence-based support** approaches



Digging deeper - Data

What types of data, demographic information are you using and how frequently is it analysed?

Consider:

- All absence can affect progress
- Initial un-challenged unauthorised absences lead to more
- Attendance that falls below 90% impacts negatively on progress

What data are you using to respond?

What is your early warning system?

Consider:

- Assessing the reasons for non-attendance: what is pushing the child or young person away from school and pulling them towards home?

How is this data gathered and used?

Consider:

Certain groups are more vulnerable to non-attendance

- those impacted by poverty
- secondary-aged pupils
- young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities
- pupils with additional support needs including:
- children and young people who have experienced care
- young carers
- children and young people who have experienced exclusion
- anxious children and young people

Who are you using data to prevent the groups that are more vulnerable to non-attendance in your school?

Consider:

- Patterns of unauthorised attendance in P7/S1 can lead to more persistent absence later in secondary school

Do you share attendance data at points of transition?



Digging Deeper - Tracking and Monitoring



Example of supportive/improvement tasks

- Agree what data is required and who will collect this
- Agree definition of engagement and/or attendance
- Use previous phase data to inform decisions
- Record instances of this consistently
- Ensure system facilitates analysis



Reviewing practices to support attendance:



Adopt a **'long-term view'**

Align to **values** and **culture**

Support **individuals & families** (GIRFEC)

Reflect the **views** of the **young person**

Prioritise **social** and **emotional support**

Build connections with a **key person(s)** e.g. mentoring

Targeting underlying **causes such as health and wellbeing** and additional support needs

Provide **flexibility** in **learning** and **teaching**, **environment** and **curriculum (learning pathways)**

Provide **individualised** support which is regularly **reviewed**

Activate children and young peoples' **motivation**



Digging Deeper - Building Affiliation



What does this mean for the learner:

- Someone knows you well and notices when you aren't there
- You are noticed when you are doing well
- You feel safe and know what to do when you are upset
- You have fun

Supportive action: Develop a community of learners

- Peer mentor/adult mentor/registration teacher....
- Provide opportunities to work together
- Small group learning tasks
- Project tasks
- Think/pair/share
- Study buddies

**SOMETIMES,
IT ONLY TAKES A SINGLE
TEACHER TO TURN A
CHILD'S LIFE AROUND.**

**SOME CHILDREN WILL
COME TO SCHOOL TODAY
BECAUSE OF THAT TEACHER.**



Practice - Wellbeing and belonging - the big 3 (A's)



Affiliation – a sense of belonging

- I belong (nurtured and included)

Mentoring

After school opportunities

Autonomy – a sense of self determination

- I'm allowed/trusted (responsible & respected)

LTA approaches & environment adapted to

meets need and interests of the learners

Flexible curriculum - skills and competencies

Agency – a belief in ones ability to achieve goals

- I can (achieving and active)

Learning is relevant to learners

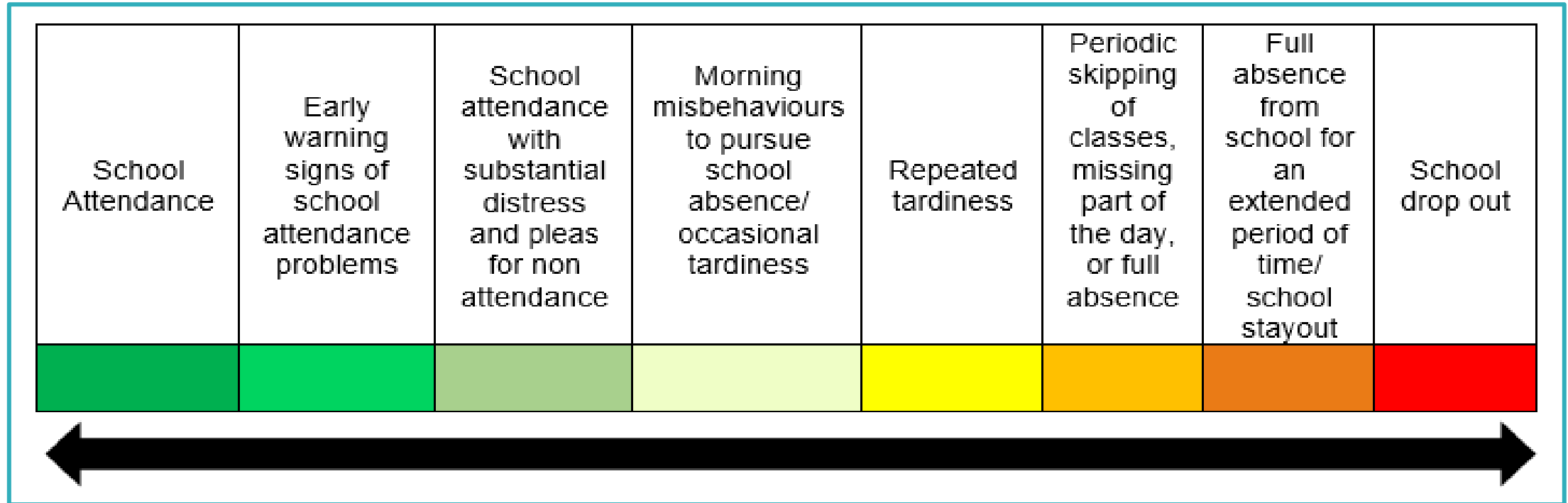
Learners given choices

Learning promotes self-esteem/management

GMWP

When supports should be initiated?

Full attendance through to school refusal can be considered as a spectrum which can be used as an early warning system to initiate support.



When supports should be initiated

What now?

Actions for consideration (primarily from deep dive report):

- Monitor strategic and implementation plans for improving attendance
 - review how effectively IEI1 is implemented – local/school policy
 - consider preventative measures as well as responsive ones
- Effective use of data and consistent tracking and monitoring
- Work with stakeholders and partners to provide, or develop, bespoke supports to improve attendance
- Put children and young people's views at the centre of refreshed approaches

Supportive Resources

- **Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: A Positive Approach to the Promotion and Management of Attendance in Scottish Schools**

This national policy provides the framework for the promotion and management of attendance and absence.

- **Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC Attendance Toolkit**

An interactive attendance toolkit, created by FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative, is freely available. This piece of work was designed and launched in 2022 and quality assured by colleagues at Strathclyde University. It provides a mix of watch me first videos, self-evaluation toolkits, resources and research.

- **Promoting Attendance: self-reflection questions for educational settings.**

This resource provides self-reflection questions for schools to further explore and implement practices which will encourage good attendance.

