


Pupil attendance: still a lingering issue

04 October 2023  Laura Murphy

Following the pandemic pupil absence has risen more than 50% and persistent absence has doubled. Reports show that there is now a disconnect between school and home and the focus on attendance has shifted to other priorities for some parents, for example, youth mental health, term time holidays or the cost of living.

Why does it matter?

Regular attendance is vital for success but understanding the rise in absence and tackling it needs addressing. The government has put in place guidance and toolkits to help schools in discussing the issues they are facing with parents. Data shows that pupils who performed better missed fewer school days than those who did not perform as well. Alongside attainment there are issues such as access to extracurricular opportunities, safeguarding and pastoral care which is why there is focus on getting pupils back to school.

When schools can permit absence

Schools may only permit absences in certain limited circumstances and school leaders are responsible for deciding what counts as an 'exceptional circumstance' when it comes to a pupil missing school (e.g., applications for leave of absence). Schools should look at applications individually, considering the specific facts and the background context to a request.

Strategies for increasing attendance

Schools should be aiming to boost attendance through initiatives and use of the data visualization tools to highlight patterns. This will help schools focus on issues in their area surrounding attendance and where necessary increase access to Attendance Hubs and Mentors to support pupils back into schools by sharing best practice and practical resources.

Available support for schools and trusts

If you would like any further information or want to talk to us about a specific issue you are dealing with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Key contact



Laura Murphy

Associate

Laura.murphy@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)115 908 4886

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