



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Minister for Schools

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Dear colleagues,

Thank you for the hugely important role you play in supporting the governance of our schools and trusts.

I am writing to ask you to support the Department for Education's new school attendance campaign, which is designed to influence parental attitudes toward school attendance, and to remind you of the incredibly important role that you play as a school governor in ensuring children are in school as much as possible.

Improving school attendance is vitally important. Between the last pre-pandemic academic year 2018/19 and academic year 2021/22, persistent absence (missing more than 10% of sessions) doubled to 1.6m (22.3%, or 1 in 5), with around 850,000 **more** children affected.

Resetting attitudes to school attendance

This is why the Department for Education is running a communications campaign on school attendance this term. We are reminding parents that **moments matter, attendance counts**.

This includes reassuring parents that the NHS and the [Chief Medical Officer](#) say it is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses, including general cold symptoms like a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat – but children should stay at home if they have a high temperature (38C or above).

It also includes letting parents know that children can sometimes feel a little bit worried about going to school. Mostly, this is a very normal emotion. It is important to recognise that going into school can help children to feel less worried than letting them stay at home.

[Here](#) is a toolkit with tips and templates for communicating with parents and carers about attendance, alongside campaign materials. This includes a list of resources for schools, including [guidance on mild illness](#), [links to support](#) for children who are anxious about school, and [toolkit for communicating with families](#). **Please help your school or trust to share these messages with parents.**

What you can do to support attendance at your school

As a governor or trustee, you play a key role in working together with school and trust leaders to set whole school attendance cultures. The Department's [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) guidance sets out the expectations of academy trust boards and governing bodies of maintained schools. The National Governance Association has produced [guidance](#) and a [webinar](#) for governors that will help you in meeting these expectations.

The expectations include recognising the importance of school attendance and promoting it across the school or trust ethos and policies, as well as regularly reviewing attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school and trust leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most. We would also be very grateful if you could support your headteacher or CEO to share these important messages about attendance with parents regularly.

If your school is not already doing so, you should consider joining the 87% of state-funded schools [sharing their daily school attendance data](#) which can be done easily with no additional burden on the school. This will allow your school to access their attendance data on the View Your Education Data (VYED) digital service to see more up-to-date pupil-level attendance data and compare its performance against other schools. The government has recently committed to mandating participation so that all schools and local authorities can benefit – signing up now will ensure you are ready this comes into force.

Finally, January provides schools with a great opportunity to take stock of their first full term of attendance data, and to devise strategies for ongoing support into the spring and summer. **At your next governing board meeting, I encourage you to review your school's attendance data and see how it compares to [national and local data](#).** You can use this information to discuss the school or trust's current strategies to attendance, their effectiveness and whether alternative approaches are needed.

I am very grateful for all that you do to make your school or trust a great place for children to learn. Your commitment and leadership are critical to the strong running of our schools, and I thank you in advance for your continued support to improve school attendance.

Sincerely,



**Damian Hinds
Minister for Schools**