

Attendance Network Meeting

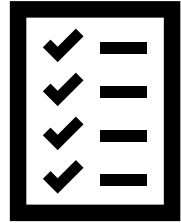
Welcome, the
session will
start shortly.



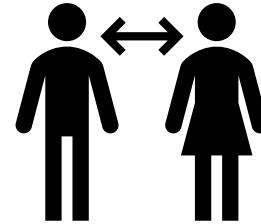
Welcome



Housekeeping



Plan of the
session



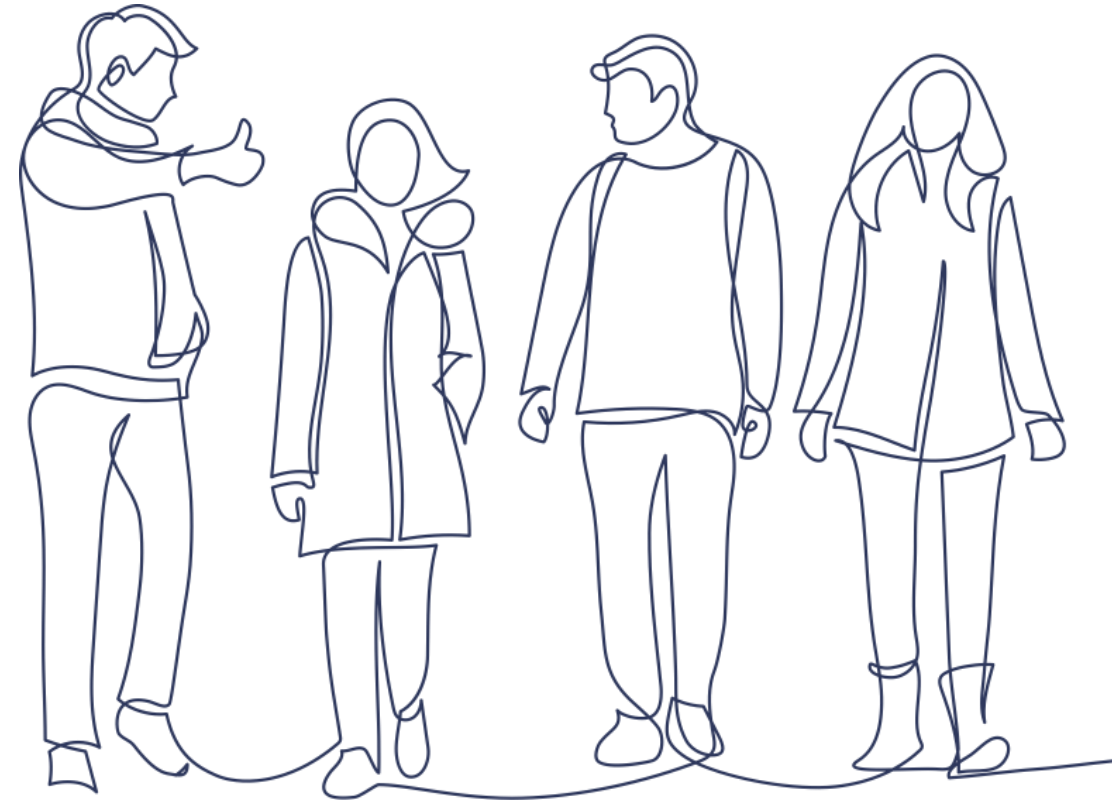
Confidentiality and
respect



Introductions

Agenda

9.30am	Welcome! Housekeeping and Term Headlines
9.45am	Termly Check up
10.15am	Let's share best practice
10.30am	School attendance: annual and one-off events driving short-term absences lets discuss
10.45am	Break and networking
11.00am	Reviewing the TSM offer
11.50am	Barriers to Education Tool
12.20pm	Complete evaluation form, time for final comments, questions and goodbyes!



Term Headlines

- **Children Wellbeing and Schools Act 2006**
- *Attendance continues to feature heavily within inspection conversations*
- *Unauthorised holiday absence remains a major national and local issue*
- *Refreshed Norfolk Attendance Strategy launched June 2026*



Save the date!

Attendance Spotlight Webinars

Will be held approximately on the last Thursday of each month. They will begin at 10.30am and can be accessed via the links in the [Upcoming events](#) section of Attendance news and events page. Upcoming dates:

9th July 2026

24th September 2026

Countywide Attendance Network Meetings

Autumn Central network – 6th November 2026

Spring Central network - 4th March 2027

Summer Central network – 1st July 2027

West Network dates TBC



Keep up to date with Attendance news and events via:

[Attendance news and events page](#)

And by [registering](#) to receive weekly emails and updates from the News for Norfolk Education Providers.

Webpage for News for Norfolk Education Providers can be found [here](#).



Let's begin with a termly check up

In your groups reflect, discuss and share the challenges you have faced/facing in your setting this term. What strategies have you put in place? Don't forget to share your successes!



Norfolk County Council

Sharing best practice





SWANTON ABBOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Aspire to dream big, improve every day, master your potential.



**Improving Attendance: What's Worked at Swanton Abbott Primary School
Delivered on behalf of Fiona Russell, Head of School**

School context

- **Small rural primary school**
- **Reception to Year 6 provision across three mixed-age classes (currently 60 pupils)**
- **22% eligible for FSM**
- **28.3% identified SEND**
- **Key challenges include rural location, declining pupil numbers across Norfolk, farming-related holidays and mixed-age class structures**
- **Joined AIM federation (formerly Coastal Together) in 2023**



Improving attendance: sustained progress

- **Sustained reduction in persistent absence**
- **Attendance levels are consistent across all year groups**
- **Overall attendance at 97.8% (March 2026, Wonde data)**
- **Attendance 3.5% above the median for similar schools**
- **Ranked in the 1st quintile for overall attendance in Norfolk**
- **Continuous improvement since 2022-23, increasing from 91% to over 94% year on year**



Top tip 1 – Culture & expectations

- **Attendance is talked about positively and consistently**
- **Rigorous monitoring (daily and weekly)**
- **All staff monitor attendance and will speak with families to support them**
- **Strong teaching and learning expectations, with direct supervision**
- **Children know attendance matters every day, not just when it drops**
- **Children know they can talk to us about their attendance**
- **Class rewards but not the only thing celebrated!**



Top tip 2 – Communication with parents

- **Regular, consistent communication through Class Dojo, Facebook, email and newsletters – not just about attendance, but about school life in general!**
- **Parents invited into school through weekly pop-in sessions and regular termly events (e.g. Harvest Festival, Christmas Service, Easter celebrations)**
- **Parent cafés and planned opportunities for parents to engage with staff and be actively involved in their child's learning**
- **Parents feel genuinely welcome in school through informal initiatives such as 'Roast and Relax' sessions**



Top tip 3 – Make school somewhere children want to be!

- **An exciting and engaging curriculum, supported by a wide range of enrichment opportunities**
- **An inclusive curriculum that supports all learners and stretches the most able**
- **Engaging lessons that are varied and interactive – not ‘always at a desk’**
- **Lunchtime clubs available for all pupils**
- **Regular enrichment opportunities, including STEM Wednesdays, to help ‘break up the week’**



Key Takeaways

A dark blue circle containing the white number 1.

Strong attendance is built through culture, not just systems

Attendance improves when high expectations are embedded across the whole school community. By talking about attendance positively, monitoring it rigorously, and ensuring all staff take shared responsibility, children and families understand that attendance matters every day. Creating a culture where pupils feel safe, cared for and listened to has been key to reducing persistent absence and sustaining improvement.

A purple circle containing the white number 2.

Positive, proactive relationships with parents make a real difference

Consistent, open communication and a genuinely welcoming school environment strengthen trust with families. Attendance conversations are easier and more effective when parents feel involved in school life and communication is not just contact when things go wrong. Regular touchpoints, events and informal opportunities help align expectations and support improved attendance.

A yellow circle containing the white number 3.

Children attend more consistently when school is a place they enjoy

An engaging, inclusive curriculum, high-quality teaching, and enriching experiences give children strong reasons to attend. Lunchtime clubs, enrichment opportunities and varied lessons help children feel motivated, included and valued. When pupils want to be in school, attendance improves naturally.



Department
for Education

Research and analysis

School attendance: annual and one-off events driving short-term absences

Published 9 June 2026

[DfE Attendance Analysis – Key Messages for Schools and Local Authorities](#)

Why this Matters

DfE daily attendance data now provides much greater insight into *patterns* of absence.

The analysis shows how:

- Local events,
- Family decisions,
- School calendar design,
- And occasional absences

Can significantly affect overall attendance.

- Attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels nationally.
- Government ambition: attendance to exceed 94% by 2028/29

Medical & Dental Appointments

Key Findings

- Over **8 million sessions** missed due to medical/dental appointments
- Around **half of pupils** missing one session for an appointment also missed the other session that day
- Many pupils effectively lose a *full* school day for one appointment

Reflection Points

- Can appointments be scheduled outside school hours where possible?
- Are schools encouraging pupils to return after appointments?
- Opportunity to reduce avoidable “add-on” absence.

Suggested message:

“Small decisions around appointments can create significant lost learning”

Broken Weeks

What are broken weeks?

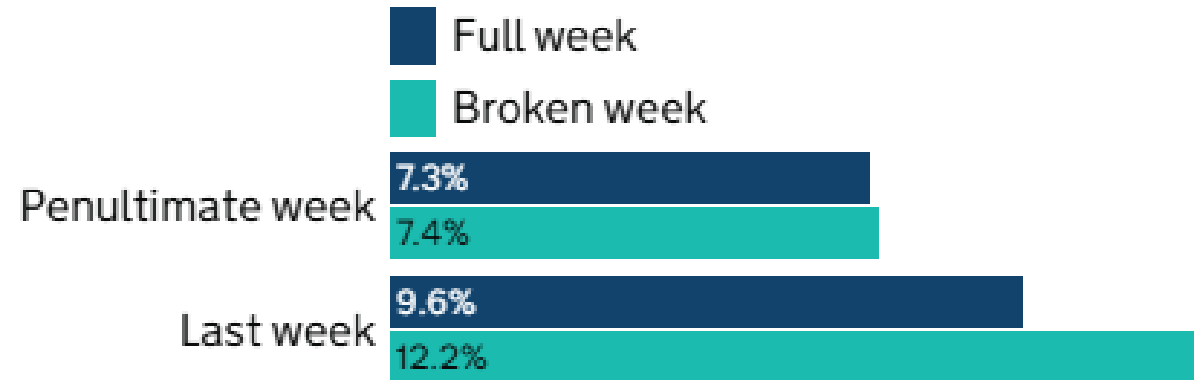
School weeks with fewer than 5 full teaching days

Key Findings

- Schools with a broken final week had:
 - **12.2% absence**
 - Compared with **9.6%** in schools with a full final
- Equivalent to approximately 130,000 additional missed school days

Implications

- Calendar design matters
- INSET day placement may influence attendance behaviour
- Families may perceive shortened weeks as less important.



Birthdays & Occasional Absence

Birthday Absence Patterns

Absence on birthdays:

- 9.6%

Absence on non-birthdays:

- 6.9%

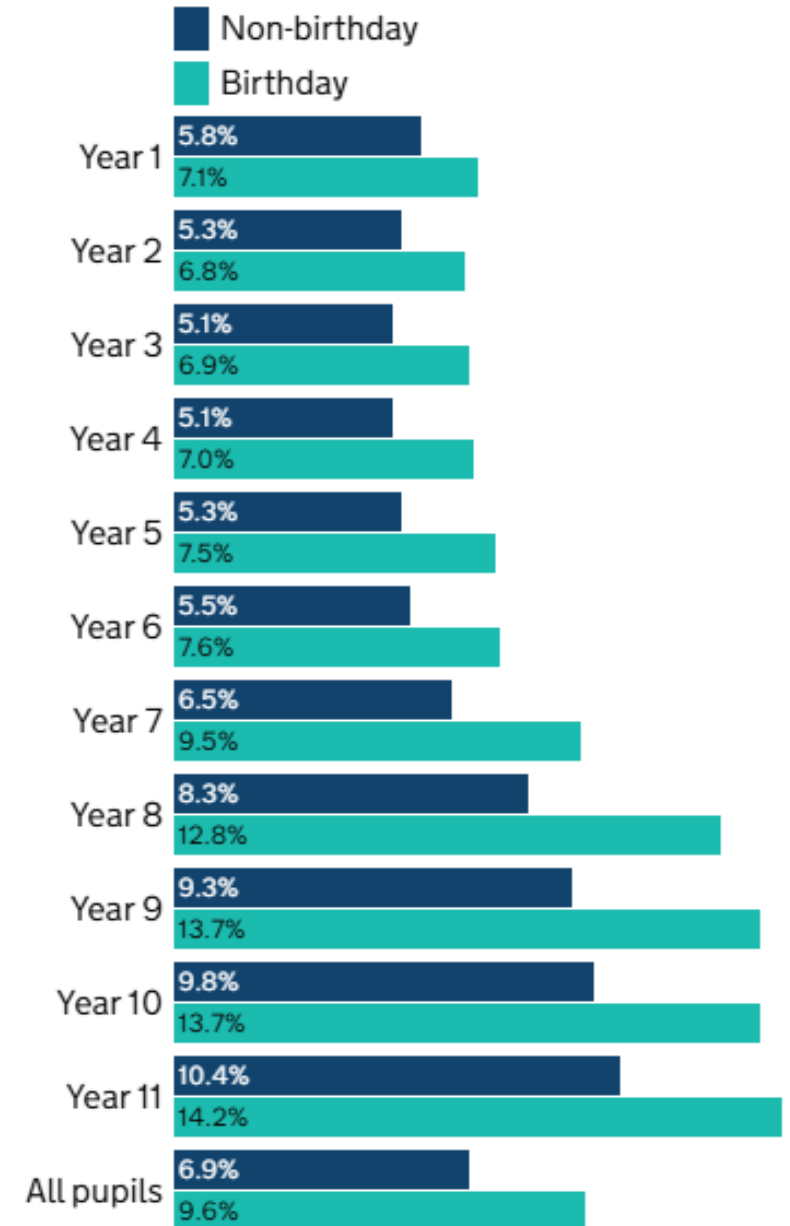
Most notable:

- Year 8 pupils were approximately 55% more likely to be absent on birthdays.

Key Learning

- Occasional absence is often socially normalised
- Individually small absences collectively become significant

“This is a reminder that attendance culture matters just as much as enforcement”



Religious Observance

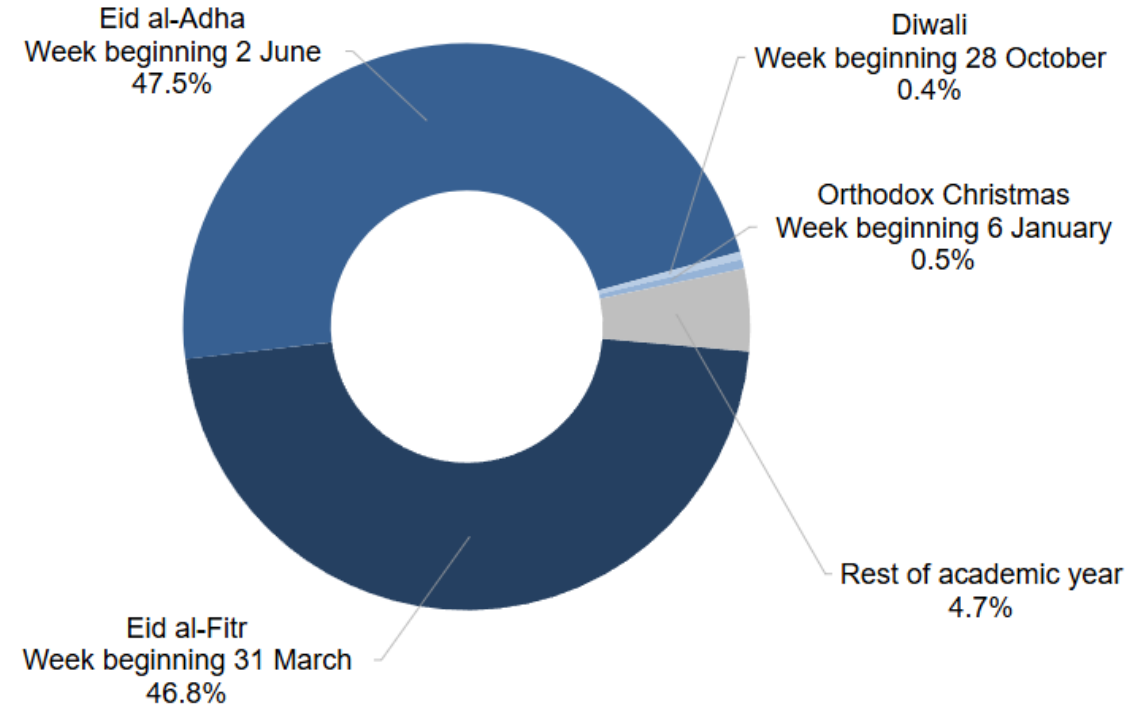
Key Findings

- 90% of pupils had no religious observance absence
- Absence peaks aligned strongly with:
 - Eid al-Fitr
 - Eid al-Adha

Considerations

- These are authorised absences.
- Predictable patterns allow strategic planning and supportive communication.
- Important balance between:
 - Inclusion,
 - Cultural understanding,
 - And minimising additional absence around observance periods.

Figure 3: Religious observance absence sessions recorded by selected week



Local Community Events

Example: Royal Norfolk Show

DfE identified significantly higher absence in Norfolk during show dates compared with:

- Regional averages
- National averages

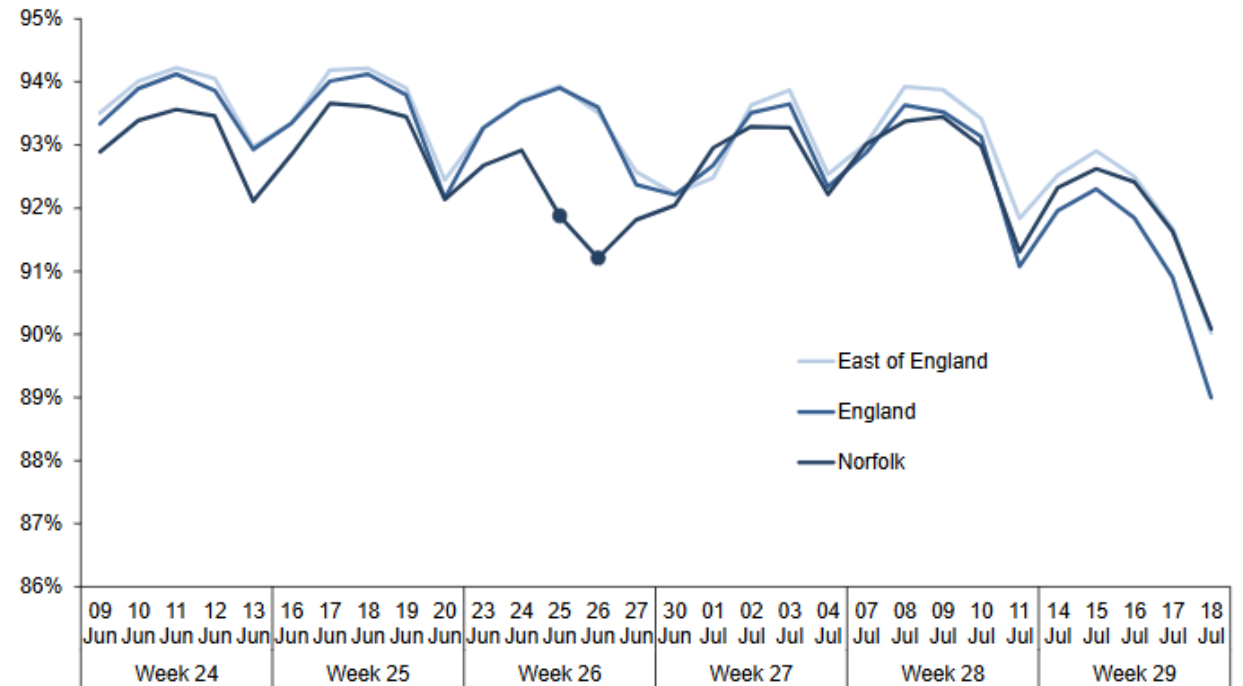
Largest Impact:

- Older secondary pupils
- Highest increase
 - Year 9 boys:
 - +5.1 percentage points

Key message:

“Local cultural and community events can materially impact attendance”

Figure 5: Attendance rate in Norfolk local authority, East of England and England (selected dates)



[Careers guidance and access for education and training providers – Statutory guidance](#)

Concerts & One-Off Events

Liverpool Taylor Swift Concert Example

Significant rise in absence for:

- Year 9 and Year 10 girls
- Particularly on the Friday concert date
- Year 10 girls had around 30% higher absence than comparison Fridays

Wider Learning

- Popular culture events can affect attendance patterns
- Social media and major live events may increasingly influence pupil absence behaviour

Overall Strategic Messages

The DfE's core message:

Attendance is affected by:

- School systems,
- Family choices,
- Community events,
- And cultural patterns.

Opportunities for schools and LAs:

- **Target occasional absence early**
- Reduce avoidable linked absences
- Review calendar structures
- Strengthen attendance culture
- Use local intelligence and contextual understanding



Norfolk County Council

Reflection

Are we seeing local patterns?

How do we distinguish:

- **Unavoidable absence ,**
- **Authorised absence,**
- **And avoidable absence?**

What messages are we giving about:

- **Birthdays,**
- **Appointments,**
- **End-of-term attendance,**
- **Local events?**





15-minute
comfort
break,
See you back
soon!

Reviewing the TSM Offer



KEEP

What is working well?

- **What do schools value most about TSMs?**
- **What works well in TSMs?**
- **What do schools find helpful?**
- **What should we keep?**
- **What has the biggest impact?**
- **What works well for attendance improvement?**

Targeting Support Meetings
(TSMs) - Shaping the 2026/27
Offer



STOP/CHALLENGES

What is not working well?

- **What feels ineffective or duplicated?**
- **What do schools find difficult or frustrating?**
- **What gets in the way of effective TSMs?**
- **What feels unclear or inconsistent?**
- **What barriers affect impact?**



IMPROVE/DEVELOP

What could make TSMs more effective?

- **What would an ideal TSM look like?**
- **What would make them more useful for schools?**
- **What should schools leave a TSM with?**
- **What information/preparation would help?**
- **Should frequency/format change?**
- **What quick wins could improve the offer immediately?**

Targeting Support Meetings
(TSMs) - Shaping the 2026/27
Offer



FUTURE MODEL

What do schools/system leaders need from TSMs going forward?

- **What should TSMs be trying to achieve in 2026/27?**
- **How should they fit with other support for schools?**
- **What gaps could they help fill?**
- **What does a good TSM look like?**
- **How do we know TSMs are making a difference?**

Targeting Support Meetings
(TSMs) - Shaping the 2026/27
Offer





**Scan the QR code to
provide your
feedback via our
online survey**



Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs) - Shaping the 2026/27 Offer



Barriers to Education Tool



Using the Barriers to Education Tool – why it matters

Feedback from the Severe Absence Pathfinder highlighted that:

- Practitioners did not always feel confident in identifying individual barriers
- Children's voices were inconsistently captured
- Plans did not always address the root causes of absence

This can lead to:

- Gaps in support
- Repeated or ineffective plans
- Limited impact on improving attendance

The Barriers to Education Tool has been developed to:

- Support earlier and more consistent identification of barriers
- Place the child's voice at the centre of planning
- Help create more effective, holistic support plans
- Align with emerging best practice and national guidance

Activity: Testing the Barriers to Education Tool

What you will do

- Work in groups using a case study scenario
- Use the Barriers to Education Tool to identify possible barriers

Consider:

- What is the child's voice telling us?
- What may be the root causes of absence?
- What support or interventions may help?

Support available

- An AEO will support each group throughout the activity
- Use professional discussion and curiosity when completing the tool

Feedback focus Please note:

- What worked well?
- Was the tool easy to use?
- Did it help identify underlying barriers?
- Did it support holistic planning?
- Any gaps, improvements or suggestions?

**Think beyond
attendance – what
is getting in the way
of education?**

Barriers to Education Assessment
Tool Trial - Practitioner Feedback





**Scan the QR code to
provide your
feedback via our
online survey**

Barriers to Education Assessment Tool Trial - Practitioner Feedback



Evaluation

Please take 5 minutes now to complete our evaluation form

Attendance network meeting evaluation form





Further support and guidance can be found at:

[School attendance - Schools \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

If you have any further questions that have not been answered today, then please contact the Attendance Team on 01603 233681 or at csattendance@norfolk.gov.uk