

ATTENDANCE IN PLYMOUTH SCHOOLS

The evidence. The story. The actions.



CENTRAL MESSAGE

Attendance is relational.

Students are more likely to attend when they feel connected, valued, supported, safe and understood.

WHAT DRIVES ATTENDANCE?



FRIENDS

The strongest attendance motivator. Most students attend because of their friendships.



PARENT / CARERS

The second strongest attendance influence. Especially important for older students and those with lower belonging.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF

Fairness, trust and care matter. Relational school climates support attendance.



BELONGING

Students with stronger belonging report fewer attendance barriers and are more likely to attend.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?



HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

The largest attendance barrier across both students and parents/carers. Particularly important for girls and older students.



MORNING DIFFICULTIES

The second largest student barrier. Linked to adolescent sleep patterns, routines, homework and transport.



ACADEMIC PRESSURE & CURRICULUM

Become more important during secondary school. Many students want more engaging and relevant learning.



RULES PERCEIVED AS UNFAIR

- Behaviour systems
- Uniform policies
- Attendance communications
- Holiday fines

These can damage relationships and reduce engagement.

WHO MAY NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?



YEAR 8 STUDENTS

Lowest belonging and a key turning point.



GIRLS IN YEARS 9-11

Report lower belonging and higher health & mental health barriers.



STUDENTS WITH SEND

More likely to report lower belonging and more barriers to attendance.



STUDENTS WITH LOW BELONGING

Across all years, low belonging is linked to more attendance barriers.



Whose wellbeing concerns may be less visible but still impact attendance.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL JOURNEY

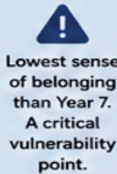
YEAR 7



New start.



YEAR 8



Lowest sense of belonging than Year 7. A critical vulnerability point.



YEARS 9-11



Increasing health & mental health barriers. Increasing academic pressure. Belonging continues to be relatively low.



OUTCOME



Attendance difficulties become more visible and entrenched.

Challenges appear to accumulate over time, especially during adolescence.

WHAT SHOULD PLYMOUTH DO?



BUILD A RELATIONAL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

Place relationships, belonging and trust at the heart of attendance practice.



INVEST IN PEER CONNECTION

Peer connection is a strongest motivator for attending school.



STRENGTHEN FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Parents/carers are powerful partners in supporting attendance.



EXPAND HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Accessible, early and whole-school support is critical.



ADDRESS MORNING DIFFICULTIES

Support routines, sleep, transport and punctuality.



STRENGTHEN FAIR, SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS

Review behaviour policies, uniform rules, communications and holiday fines.



IMPROVE CURRICULUM ENGAGEMENT

Make learning relevant, interesting and inclusive.



INTERVENE EARLIER

Identify signs early and provide continuous support before difficulties become entrenched.



CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHT

Attendance is shaped by multiple interacting factors.

Health, relationships, belonging, school experiences, family circumstances and wider systems appear to interact and accumulate over time. Different barriers become more or less important for different students and at different stages of secondary school.

THE IMPACT



Better attendance leads to better learning and achievement.



Stronger wellbeing and positive life outcomes.



Stronger relationships and connected communities.



A fairer future for Plymouth's children and young people.



THE BOTTOM LINE

How school practices are experienced appears as important as the practices themselves. Across curriculum, attendance communications, attendance expectations, behaviour policies and attendance rewards, approaches are most effective when they are experienced as fair, meaningful, responsive and relational.