



# Checklist for school leaders to support full opening: behaviour and attendance

## Introduction

This checklist is to assist all school leaders and staff in preparing to welcome back all pupils full-time from the beginning of the autumn term (see [full opening guidance](#)). It is a tool for schools to support the re-engagement of pupils and the return to orderly and calm environments in which all pupils can achieve and thrive. The tool is intended for mainstream schools and has been developed by the Department for Education (DfE) with input from the Department's Lead Behaviour Adviser, Tom Bennett, and the [behaviour adviser team](#).

As set out in the [full opening guidance](#) for schools, for the new school year we are asking schools to work with families and local authorities to secure regular school attendance and to evaluate their behaviour policies and practices, ahead of welcoming all pupils back this autumn. Over the last few months schools and parents have worked hard to support children and young people, either in the classroom or remotely, to continue their education. Some school cultures, norms and routines have been disrupted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and some pupils may have been exposed to a range of adverse experiences. Schools will need to make changes to reset behaviour and attendance expectations and consider additional support to successfully reintegrate pupils back.

School leaders will be best placed to use this advice to develop their own plans for re-engaging pupils in a way that works for their pupils' needs and in line with the following key actions:

1. Plan
2. Communicate
3. Be consistent
4. Support
5. Monitor and Improve

The DfE guidance on [attendance](#) and [behaviour](#) includes advice on the powers and duties schools have to support good behaviour and attendance.

# 1. PLAN: ensure your school has clear, consistent and robust behaviour and attendance policies and practices in place

- ✓ Review existing behaviour and attendance policies, systems and practices.

For behaviour:

- ✓ Set clear, reasonable and proportionate standards of behaviour. Make things as simple as possible so that the plans can be remembered and understood easily by everyone.
- ✓ Plan new routines, habits and systems, including:
  - expectations for arriving at and leaving school (including behaviour on public transport)
  - hygiene practices
  - lunch and break time routines
  - any transitions between lessons
  - staff supervision of movement during social times
  - safe use of school spaces and equipment
  - consider restrictions on movement within school and new hygiene rules (see [guidance](#)).
- ✓ Plan how new behavioural expectations will be monitored and supported. Take time to train staff in the behaviour that will be expected of them and also in the behaviour that they will be expected to teach to pupils.
- ✓ Clarify sanctions and rewards and how rules will be enforced consistently, including use of exclusions. Make sure that this can be effectively maintained in the changed school environment and take into account individual needs. Make explicit what behaviours are now considered more serious due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, for example purposefully coughing on someone, including any escalation points in how they will be dealt with.

For attendance:

- ✓ Be clear that attendance will be mandatory from the start of the new school year, except where statutory exemptions apply. Ensure that parents are clear about when pupils should not attend due to public health or clinical advice (see [guidance](#)) and plan a process for keeping absence for these reasons under review, for example when a self-isolation period should come to an end. Ensure these pupils have access to remote education and that engagement is monitored.
- ✓ Take the register as usual and use attendance codes consistently. Consider extending registration periods to accommodate any staggered start times. We will issue further guidance for schools on recording attendance and absence.

- ✓ Resume the expectation that parents will let the school know if a child is unable to attend and the reason. Contact the pupil's parent or carer on the first day of absence where this does not happen. Schools should be clear with parents and carers that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies.
- ✓ Consider how attendance policies will address new or more prevalent causes of absence (for example, anxiety) due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, balancing reward, support for pupils and families and sanctions appropriately.

## **2. COMMUNICATE: set high expectations for behaviour and attendance and actively communicate this to parents and pupils**

- ✓ Make sure all staff, governors and trustees understand the importance of good behaviour and attendance and have a good understanding of the school's policies. This may include having an attendance and/or behaviour lead on the senior leadership team to ensure policies are implemented effectively and on the governing body to provide additional visibility, support and challenge.
- ✓ Communicate revised behaviour and attendance policies to staff, pupils and parents as soon as possible and ensure expectations are clearly understood. Ensure the Senior Leadership Team are visible around the school and invite discussion and feedback.
- ✓ Include behaviour and attendance expectations in your induction sessions with pupils and parents, newsletters and your website. Establish new ways to communicate, use visual reminders around the school and make use of technology where appropriate.
- ✓ Build a strong relationship and keep an open dialogue with parents who need further information or reassurance on the importance and/or safety of returning to school.

## **3. BE CONSISTENT: ensure expectations are enforced consistently**

- ✓ Set and maintain a culture where excellent behaviour and attendance is valued and expected by everyone in the school community. Provide regular feedback to staff, pupils and families on how well they are executing new procedures.

#### **4. SUPPORT: identify pupils who are at risk of disengagement (including absence or poor behaviour), and provide specific support**

- ✓ Many pupils are likely to need some social and emotional support on their return to school. Some pupils will need extra support, such as those who have previously had poor attendance or fixed term exclusions as well as those new to the school, with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or who have not engaged with school during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.
- ✓ Engage with the parents and carers of these pupils as soon as possible, ideally before the start of the new school year, to set expectations, understand concerns and build confidence.
- ✓ Make sure Pastoral Leads and Designated Safeguarding Leads have undertaken appropriate training to spot signs of distress and poor [mental health](#). Ensure staff are able to identify where changes in behaviour (for example being fearful or withdrawn, aggressive or oppositional, or excessively clingy) may be an indication of an underlying issue.
- ✓ Where further support is needed, staff should consider what additional support or reasonable adjustments are needed and put a plan in place to deliver it, with regular points to review. Where pupils already have education, pastoral support or multi-agency plans, these should be updated.
- ✓ Where children have special educational needs and disabilities, work with local services (such as health and the local authority) to ensure the services and support are in place that will ensure a smooth return for pupils.
- ✓ For children who have a social worker or who are otherwise vulnerable, work with social workers and other relevant services to ensure the right services and support are in place. This includes making contact to discuss re-engagement over the summer and informing them if the child does not attend in the new school year.

#### **5. MONITOR AND IMPROVE: track attendance, behaviour data and intelligence to intervene early and review policies and processes regularly**

- ✓ Regularly review your behaviour and attendance data and compare it with neighbouring schools and local and national averages where possible. This will inform decisions on where to focus efforts to intervene early and prevent patterns of poor attendance and behaviour becoming habitual and entrenched.
- ✓ Invite feedback from staff and pupils regularly and discuss how new habits and routines are working, in order to provide useful data to support high-quality strategic decisions, inform practice and provide a regular commentary to all stakeholders on new expectations. Regularly use data to assess the effectiveness of behaviour and attendance policies and adjust provision in what is likely to be a changing context.