



Leadership and Management: Attendance

Audit which identifies the aspects of classroom practice which leaders should focus upon

Taking over the Headship in September 2013, attendance was identified as a main focus for the 2013-14 SIP. At Easterside Academy attendance has always been an area that we have had to work extremely hard at with our parents and regardless of this we have still not managed to reach the NA, although improvements have been seen at times.

Historical Whole School Attendance Data

Year	%	PA%	100% for Year
2011/12	90.9%	5.5%	-
2012/13	94.5%	4.5%	3 (children)

Good attendance at school has been recognised as having direct impact on pupil progress. In particular at Easterside Academy an impact has been seen directly on the progress in reading and writing at KS1 through absence of 'Letters and Sounds' teaching and learning; as well as across the school within Maths. Absence of even the odd Maths lesson can mean that gaps within the children's learning can appear and their understanding of important concepts. Reception attendance was also identified as the lowest within the school historically.

Leadership activity which focus upon making a difference in classrooms

As Head Teacher I initially looked at the current attendance systems in place and reviewed what key strategies were seen to be working well and having an impact on pupil's attendance across school. Some of these included:

- ❖ Weekly attendance awards in the celebration assembly.
- ❖ Our School Attendance Team.

However I did feel there was a lot more that could be done in terms of incentive and raising its profile across the school both with parents, pupils and staff. I also felt that although the 'Attendance Team' worked well at addressing attendance, it took up a lot of their time (they also have other roles within school e.g. Care Team) and potentially damaged relationships they were trying to build with parents.

As a result and after discussions with the SLT, Attendance Team and Governors, we agreed for 2013-14 to bring in the following strategies in order to raise attendance across the school:

- ❖ Employ Education Welfare Ltd – EWO – working one morning a week in school. Education Welfare Ltd would continue to work closely with the school's 'Attendance Team' but for parents it would very much be seen as an external company coming in to monitor pupil attendance.
- ❖ Education Welfare Ltd to be invited to the new Reception Parents Transition meetings in order to explain school attendance and their role at the school.
- ❖ Weekly class attendance would be included within the new Head Teacher's fortnightly newsletter – colour coded (traffic lights) to highlight what is acceptable attendance and what is not. 'Lates' also to be recorded.
- ❖ Introduce 'The Easterside Experience' as a new award for those pupils with 100% attendance at the end of each term; and the 'Ultimate Experience' for the whole year.
- ❖ An attendance board for pupils would be displayed in the corridor to show weekly class attendance.
- ❖ The new approach to consultation time would include 'Attendance' dialogue with parents using Assertive Mentoring assessment sheet. This is traffic lighted to make it clear for parents to understand and also addresses punctuality.



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As a SLT we also ensured that attendance was at the forefront of everyone's mind along with progress in pupil progress meetings, and attendance meetings would be held regularly with the EWO and the school's Attendance Team which included SLT members.

It was also felt that pupils may have more of a desire to attend school with our new engaging curriculum and with our parental engagement drive, parents would begin to see what actually happens within school and therefore want their child to be there and involved.

In 2014 – 15 the following strategies were also put in place to drive improvements further:

- ❖ Introduced attendance virtual coins to alongside the weekly attendance rewards. These could then be collected in class and spent at intervals within the school year.
- ❖ A flexible start to the day across the school was introduced to enable parents to get their pupils into school on time and therefore reduce 'lates' and improve punctuality.

Interventions designed for adults to learn how to do things differently

At the start of the new academic year the SIP priorities were shared with the whole staff which included the new strategies being introduced to promote good attendance in school and raise its profile with all stake holders. This also included looking at how they as classroom practitioners could support and raise pupil attendance within their own classrooms. It was agreed that regular information from the SLT and Attendance Team would enable them to do this better.

A letter was sent out at the beginning of the academic year from Education Welfare Ltd, introducing the new service and explaining their role within the school. The new Reception parents had already had the opportunity to meet Roz from the company at the transition meeting and were fully aware of her company's role and the importance of attendance, especially within Reception when they are starting full time school.

A letter also went home to all parents explaining to them the new legislation that had just come out regarding taking holidays during school time. The letter highlighted to parents that although holidays would not be authorised unless in exceptional circumstances, parents did still need to complete a holiday request form in order to ensure that school knew where their child was should they be absent.

Through the use of the celebration assembly on Fridays, as Head Teacher I promoted the new reward 'The Easterside Experience' with staff and pupils. This was done continuously throughout each term, praising the pupils for coming in and celebrating those that were still at 100% as the term went on, as well as celebrating the weekly attendance awards.

In preparation for the new approach to consultation time, the attendance team produced attendance and punctuality data for class teachers. This then enabled teachers to complete an Assertive Mentoring form for each child ready for the 'Learning Conversations' with parents and child.

New practice and provision in classrooms

Observations and monitoring of new practice and systems for attendance across the school identified a number of key things emerging:

- ❖ Parent behaviour and attitudes to attendance began to change in response to having Education Welfare Ltd. Parents began to bring in medical evidence if their child was ill, and also ensure pupils got their attendance mark before taking them out of school for an appointment, and then bringing them back into school afterwards. This was also seen to be an impact from the pupils wanting to get 100% attendance for the term and therefore receive



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the 'Easterside Experience.'

- ❖ Children were very motivated by the 'Easterside Experience' and after the first one this only motivated pupils further. Children were visibly seen to be trying for the award each term. Rising data supports this.
- ❖ Children and staff were seen to be talking about attendance. This again was a shift in culture, from it mainly being the Attendance Team talking about attendance and less of a whole school approach.
- ❖ Feedback from the new approach to consultation time that had included attendance and punctuality data being shown and discussed was very positive. Questionnaire feedback included comments such as:

"It helped us all work together on things we need to concentrate on."

"We could discuss targets together."

This included attendance or punctuality for some identified children.

- ❖ The number of PAs was reducing.
- ❖ The number of holidays was reducing.
- ❖ Reception attendance was improving.

Improved outcomes for children

As well as some of the improved outcomes identified in the section above, the improvements could also been seen within the data during this first year. The new strategies and systems were also continued for the academic year 2014-15 and again showed some gains in improved outcomes for children.

Whole School Attendance

2011 - 12	2012 - 13	2013 - 14	2014 - 15
90.9%	94.5%	95.5%	95%

The Whole School Attendance improved to the National Average in the first year and although dipped slightly in the second year, the data below shows there were improvements and gains in other areas in that second year.

Whole School PAs

2011 - 12	2012 - 13	2013 - 14	2014 - 15
5.5	4.5	2.6	1.6

The number of Persistent Absentees within school and dropped significantly.

Reception Attendance Data

2011 - 12	2012 - 13	2013 - 14	2014 - 15
93.4%	92.4%	95.7%	95.4%

Whole School Termly 100% Attendance

Autumn		Spring		Summer	
13 - 14	14 - 15	13 - 14	14 - 15	13 - 14	14 - 15
59	76	86	69	36	75



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The number of children who achieved 100% attendance each term rose in each term from 2012 – 13.

Whole School 100% Attendance for the Year

2012 - 13	2013 - 14	2015 - 16
3	17	29

The number of children who achieved 100% attendance for the whole year increased significantly in both the first and second year of the new attendance initiatives, procedures and systems.

Holidays

Sept – Dec	Sessions	Days
2013	556	278
2014	319	159.5

Jan - April	Sessions	Days
2014	32	16
2015	38	19

Some analysis of the holiday data shows that holidays reduced in the first year (2013-14) and then again in 2014-15.

If attendance is one of the factors linked to progress and attainment within school, outcomes in all phases of the school were excellent in both 2014 and 2015.

Enquiry into and reflection upon what difference it makes and where to focus next

On reflection it is felt that the employment of Education Welfare Ltd has been cost effective. An impact from the service provided has been clearly visible through the data both for disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged (highlights good use of pupil premium money), as well as through the shift in parent culture when allowing their child to have a day off e.g. bringing in medical evidence; ensuring pupils get their attendance mark before and after appointments. Education Welfare Ltd has also enabled us as a school to build relationships with some of our hard to reach families. Instead of our 'Care Team' members being wholly responsible for chasing attendance in school, having an independent company do it has enabled our staff to play a more supportive role whilst still working in partnership with the EWO. We also feel that the increase in Reception attendance has also been an impact of the EWO coming into the transition meetings before children start full time school and speaking to the parents about her company and school attendance.

The new attendance rewards and incentives have also had a positive impact for the pupils. They can be visibly heard talking about attendance and will regularly check and talk about the pupil attendance board. For the majority of children they want to try and achieve the 100% award for the term and they are reminded each term that they have another chance to try. We've also enabled class teachers to have an attendance dialogue with parents through our termly 'Learning Conversation' with parents and pupils. This has been a very visual way of letting parents know what acceptable attendance is and what isn't. The Head Teacher's fortnightly newsletters have also done this.

Stepping back and looking at what we have achieved we are also able to identify what we need to do in 2015-16 to sustain and improve these outcomes. We have set an attendance target of 96% this



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year and as well as continuing what is working well, we are also introducing further strategies. These include:

- ❖ Following Governor input and discussions within the Discovery Alliance, we will introduce 'The 12 Days of Christmas' attendance initiative in the Autumn Term. This would be used to encourage all pupils to try and come into school every day for 12 days. Daily Christmas prizes would be used as an incentive to give the attendance a boost at the end of the Autumn Term. For parents, any pupil who attends the full 12 days will have their name put into a draw for a Christmas Hamper.
- ❖ If the above initiative is successful we will plan one for each term linked to 'Easter' and 'Summer Time'.
- ❖ 'Marvellous Me', which has been introduced this year will also be used to congratulate pupils with good attendance, improved attendance or punctuality. This can be used by the Attendance Team as well as class teachers.
- ❖ The pupil attendance board will be re-vamped to make it even more child friendly.
- ❖ A new signing in book for pupils/parents that arrived late was introduced, with parents and pupils being asked to record their reasons for being late. This is hoped to reduce some 'lates' for some families.
- ❖ 'Scholarpack' will be introduced within the academic year 2015 – 16. This will allow each class teacher on their 'dashboard' to see their class attendance that week as well as cumulatively over the year.