

Overview <https://lp.impactd.org.uk>

The document is a report on the **Understanding Attendance** project, which analyses the drivers of pupil absence in schools across England, highlighting key findings and recommendations to improve attendance post-pandemic.

Key Points and Findings from the Survey:

Sense of School Belonging:

- A strong sense of belonging is a key driver of attendance across all contexts.
- Female pupils feel less connected to the school community and less safe, impacting their attendance.
- Persistently absent pupils scored lower on belonging-related questions, such as feeling respected and proud of their school.
- Improving female pupils' sense of safety and belonging should be prioritized.

Second Transition Challenge (Year 7 to Year 8):

- Attendance rates drop significantly between Year 7 and Year 8, especially for Pupil Premium pupils and those with SEND.
- Year 8 pupils report lower scores in school membership, engagement, and wellbeing compared to Year 7.
- Sense of community becomes more critical for attendance from Year 8 onwards.

Intersectional Attendance Drivers:

- Attendance challenges are intersectional, with female pupils eligible for Pupil Premium and SEND being particularly low attending.
- Pupil Premium status is associated with a 6% lower attendance rate compared to non-Pupil Premium peers.
- EAL pupils show higher attendance rates and stronger wellbeing and engagement compared to non-EAL peers.

Sanctions vs. Positive Relationships:

- Awareness of sanctions is not strongly linked to improved attendance.
- Positive relationships with peers, teachers, and family, as well as understanding the importance of school, are more impactful.
- Messaging around attendance should focus on benefits and opportunities rather than consequences.

Recommendations:

- Develop pupil leadership and voice initiatives to foster belonging and engagement.
- Create a positive whole-school culture around attendance, celebrating small wins and consistent improvement.

Target interventions for specific groups, such as female Pupil Premium pupils with SEND.

- Use wraparound opportunities like breakfast clubs and after-school activities to build routine and social connections.
- Focus on family communication strategies that avoid reinforcing negative perceptions of attendance.

what did the questionnaire ask?

The questionnaire used in the Understanding Attendance project asked questions across eight key measures to explore the drivers of pupil attendance. Below are the areas covered and their focus:

Sense of Belonging:

Questions adapted from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale.

Focused on whether pupils feel they belong, matter, and are part of the school community.

Safe in School:

Measured how safe pupils feel in the school environment, including during lessons, breaks, and their journey to and from school.

Understanding the Importance of Attendance:

Assessed pupils' understanding of attendance expectations, routines, and consequences, as well as their value of the school's attendance system.

Attendance Contextual Drivers:

Explored pupils' behaviours around attendance and how external societal events may influence their attendance rates.

School Engagement:

Measured behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement with school, which is linked to academic performance and attendance.

Wellbeing:

Focused on pupils' overall sense of purpose, contentment, and day-to-day happiness, which are associated with positive school outcomes.

Anxiety:

Measured pupils' anxiety levels related to physical sensations, thought patterns, and feelings, which can negatively impact attendance.

Grit:

Assessed perseverance and passion for long-term goals, which are linked to resilience, attendance, and academic achievement.

Schools participating in the project could select up to four measures most relevant to their context. These questionnaires provided insights into the social, emotional, and contextual factors influencing attendance.