

7 POINT BRIEFING

1

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT?

The Department for Education (DfE) has stated, 'persistent failure to send children to school is a clear sign of neglect'. The NSPCC has cited, 'failure to ensure regular school attendance which prevents the child reaching their full potential academically' as one of their six forms of neglect.

Working Together to Safeguard Children provides a neglect description, 'The **persistent failure** to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the **serious impairment** of the child's health or **development**'. and since Dec 2023 this definition now explicitly includes 'a parent or carer failing to provide suitable education'

For local attendance information [Education Welfare Service - introduction - Wakefield Council](#).

[NSPCC - Neglect: Learning from Case Reviews](#)

For local attendance strategy etc [please click here](#).

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HIGHLIGHT EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT?

Educational neglect, persistent and severe absence are recurring themes in Safeguarding Practice Reviews. In contrast, regular school attendance is a protective factor for the most vulnerable children and young people, providing opportunities for support whilst giving them the best possible start in life.

In accepting that "school attendance is everyone's business" ([Working Together to Improve School attendance](#)), The Local Authority intention is, not to increase social care referrals, but to agree a pathway that creates a shared responsibility for responding to "educational neglect".

Professor Jan Horwarth, describes "educational neglect as involving a carer failing to provide a stimulating environment, show an interest in the child's education (**at school or otherwise**), support their learning, or respond to any special needs, as well as failing to comply with state requirements regarding education and attendance".

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CHRONIC / SEVERE ABSENCE INCLUDING 'NOT IN EDUCATION'

Combined with safeguarding / child protection concerns is included in Wakefield's continuum of Need.

We are required to review our shared thresholds and definitions of persistent (90% or less) and severe (50% or less) absence from school.

90% attendance at school over a year, equates to 4 weeks of education missed.

Educational Neglect of a child (less than 75% attendance over 3 terms) which significantly impacts their welfare and/or educational outcomes is likely to result in the **serious impairment** of the child's health; well-being, development and/or life chances.

This may be exacerbated by poor routines and boundaries or a lack of parental engagement.

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WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

There is a demonstratable link between absence and attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4. Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared with those with lower attainment.

- Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.
- Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and Maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.
- Research shows associations between regular absence from school and extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

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INDICATORS

- Parent(s) consistently failing in maintaining schooling or identifying provision for their child.
- Parent(s) failing to engage in school meetings to address attendance concerns.

- Parent(s) unable to provide substantiated reasons for absences from school.
- Parent(s) failure to engage in statutory or non-statutory interventions to improve attendance.
- Parents fail to prevent children from becoming PA- (below 90% attendance) and/or severely absent over a period equal to an academic year (9 months / 6 half-terms).
- Parents “can’t” rather than won’t enforce boundaries and routines.
- Child refusal to attend school / adhere to parental boundaries.
- Impact of adverse childhood experiences or multiple moves (school / addresses).

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ALL PRACTITIONERS SHOULD:

- Consider the significance of educational neglect if they become aware of persistent and/or severe absence from school. Refer to the [Neglect toolkit](#) education section.
- Demonstrate Professional curiosity in relation to children not in school including those who are Electively home educated / not on roll.
- Challenge parents and carers as to why children are not in / attending school.
- Consider how they and others might resolve the absence from school. E.g. Screen for Emotionally based school avoidance.
- Seek advice from the child’s school, the Education welfare service If they are concerned about a child’s attendance.
- Use the [Continuum of Need](#) to consider the child and family’s wider circumstances to see if submitting a MARF is required. Ensure that where a child has a child in need plan or child protection plan, and there are concerns around their attendance, that this is reflected in the plan.

Please refer to the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) document.

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SUPPORT / ACTION: ATTENDANCE PERCENTAGE

90-100% All schools should adopt a universal whole school approach (school, parent, child, and community) to attendance, ensuring that internal policies and processes are applied to promote good attendance and/or challenge where concerns arise.

70-90% Schools should consider all early help (single agency) options including children’s centres, school nursing, inclusion support and police etc or an Early help assessment may be offered.

50-70% *Where attendance concerns remain multi-agency (e.g. TAS)* targeted support may be considered following the completion of an early help assessment. (If consent / cooperation is withheld, intervention by the Educational Welfare service may be appropriate).

50% or less school attendance should trigger all schools and partners to consider “**educational neglect**” including the possibility of an Education Supervision Order via the Family Court (if not previously considered/actioned – see guidance).

Any breach of an Education Supervision Order places a duty on Social Care to complete an assessment, following a MARF referral.

** Please also see [Wakefield's Neglect & Neglect Toolkit OMG](#)

Additional information and guidance that further explains the duties detailed above in the OMG, can be found [here](#).

"SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS"



Wakefield
Safeguarding Children
Partnership