



# SHS Manifesto 2015-2020

children in school,  
ready to learn



School-Home Support

School-Home Support (SHS) is a charity working with children and families to maximise educational opportunities and improve their life chances. Partnering with schools, local authorities and families, SHS looks beyond the classroom to understand and tackle the issues affecting children's learning. Since 1984 we have used early intervention to break inter-generational cycles of low aspirations, academic failure and worklessness, replacing them with children in school, ready to learn.



SHS practitioners provide support to children and their families both within school and in their home to address the underlying issues that are resulting in absence from school or behavioural concerns when they are there.

Recognising the link between attainment and attendance, governments have been focusing on poor attendance over the last decade. Despite successive government initiatives to tackle poor attendance, there are still over 300,000 children persistently absent from school each year (missing at least 15% of school days)<sup>1</sup>. Last year 77 per cent of the persistently absent children SHS worked with were back in school, out of the

category, within the academic year.

There is clear evidence of the negative impact poor attendance has on educational achievement. Pupils who are persistently absent during Key Stage 4 are four times less likely to achieve 5 A\*- C grades at GCSE including English and Maths and a third will not be in education, employment or training (NEET) at 18<sup>2</sup>.

We know that a lack of attainment at school and being NEET at 18 increases the chances of being unemployed, having no training, having a criminal record, and suffering from poor health and depression by the age of 21<sup>3</sup>.

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1. DfE 2014 Pupil absence in schools in England: 2012 to 2013
  2. DfE 2011 Research Report DFE-RR171 A profile of pupil absence in England
  3. PHE 2014 Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

There are over 300,000 children persistently absent from school

One third of persistent absentees will not be in education, employment or training (NEET) at 18

Poor attendance affects the most disadvantaged children. Children eligible for free school meals (FSM) or with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are over three times more likely to be persistently absent than their peers. A child is more likely to be persistently absent if they live in the most deprived areas than if they live in the least deprived area<sup>2</sup>.

It is vital that these children and families are supported to ensure that we see an increase in the attainment and life chances of our most deprived children and

break the intergenerational cycle of poor attendance, poor attainment and poor employment prospects. Based on 30 years of experience working in partnership with schools, children and families, SHS has produced seven recommendations for the next government. These recommendations aim to tackle low attainment, reduce the gap between pupils eligible for FSM and their wealthier peers and increase the life chances of the most disadvantaged children by getting them in school, ready to learn.

If these seven recommendations are enacted by the next government and supported at a local level, they would increase the attainment of the most disadvantaged children, giving them the opportunity to succeed and contribute to their local community and economy.



Families need solution focused support to increase attainment and life chances



## Recommendations

1. Ensure the Pupil Premium is used effectively to increase the educational attainment of the most deprived 20% of children by requiring schools to provide effective and measurable school-home links.
2. Require school-home link staff to be trained to a recognised national standard with on-going case work supervision.
3. Require schools to ensure that no child misses school due to the family's inability to pay for school essentials.
4. Improve the integrated working between schools, children's services, health services and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector by having a named individual responsible for coordinating services.
5. Ensure all vulnerable children receive support during the important transition phases in their education by requiring nurseries and schools to adopt pro-active transition programmes.
6. Ensure that funding for the Troubled Families programme is used in a targeted way by actively monitoring outcomes and impact.
7. Include training on how to engage parents in their child's education in initial teacher training.

Ensure the Pupil Premium is used effectively to increase the educational attainment of the most deprived 20% of children by requiring schools to provide effective and measurable school-home links.

It is vital that the Pupil Premium is used effectively to increase the attainment of the most deprived children in order to give them a better chance in life and end the inter-generational cycle of deprivation. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission have highlighted that many schools are adding the Pupil Premium funding to their general budget and just continuing to fund what they have always done<sup>4</sup>. This misses the opportunity to look at the needs of children and tackle the barriers that are limiting their ability to succeed.

Every school should have a dedicated member of staff to provide the vital link between schools and families.

We know that members of staff dedicated to the role of home liaison and family support are incredibly beneficial to the outcomes of children, their families and the whole school community. A study from researchers at the Institute of Education<sup>5</sup> found that SHS practitioners resulted in significant improvements in a range of categories including educational attainment, attendance, classroom behaviour, confidence, controlling emotions and building relationships.

Funding dedicated staff is also beneficial to the economy and reduces demand for public services. An economic analysis found that for every £1 invested in SHS practitioners, there was an £11 cashable saving to the public purse.

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4. Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014). Cracking the code: how schools can improve social mobility
  5. Rogers, Hallam and Long (2013) Evaluation of the Impact of 'Unlocking Potential' Pilot on Children, Young People and Families, Institute of Education, University of London



All schools should have systems in place to address attendance issues; often this involves engaging with parents and families to address the underlying problems that are affecting the child. Without this support, the children who are not in school will not benefit from any other support the school is providing, and these children will not see an improvement in their life chances.



Require school-home link staff to be trained to a recognised national standard with on-going case work supervision.

Dedicated school-home staff should be trained to a recognised national standard. As with other professionals working with children, interventions are most effective when delivered by trained staff.

School-home staff require a range of skills to provide effective support to children and families. There are various techniques used in this work including mentoring, group sessions, action planning and delivering courses such as Triple P Parenting.

Whilst training at the start of a professional's career is crucial to providing a grounding in their work, continual professional development is equally important. We know that the needs of families change over time, and professionals need to be supported to adapt to these in order to continue providing effective interventions. Throughout their careers, staff need to be able to incorporate new innovative techniques of working with families and make use of new technologies to improve their effectiveness.

There are examples of schools and councils recognising the importance of having well trained staff in school to engage parents in their child's learning. SHS has been commissioned by a London borough to deliver NVQ level 3 training to over 80 members of staff in 70 schools across the borough. This will ensure that all staff have the skills and confidence to engage with parents effectively. All staff should have access to the appropriate support and training they need.

Require schools to ensure that no child misses school due to the family's inability to pay for school essentials.

It is unacceptable that children miss school because their parents cannot afford to buy a school uniform or pay the bus fare to school. In response to the financial difficulties of families our practitioners work with, SHS established a welfare fund to provide practical assistance to families.

In 2013/14, the SHS Welfare Fund provided £4,000 to purchase school uniforms for the children we work with. In many cases children have been bullied at school because they have been wearing the same shirt every day, without it being washed. To get away from the bullying, children have stopped attending school, negatively impacting on their educational attainment and life chances.

It is vital that a child's education and future is not adversely affected by living in a low income family. Parents should not be forced into choosing between

feeding their children or paying for school essentials.

The next government should ensure that policies do not adversely impact on a child's fundamental right to education. Families need to be given the support necessary to ensure that children do not grow up living in poverty.

In 2013/14, the SHS Welfare Fund provided £4,000 to purchase school uniforms for the children we work with.



Improve the integrated working between schools, children's services, health services and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector by having a named individual responsible for coordinating services.

People's issues do not affect them in isolation, and children are no different. If a child has mental health problems, they do not disappear when they walk through the school gates, and neither do problems that are happening at home. All services working with children need to work in a more integrated way, to ensure that a child's needs can be addressed in a joined up way, preventing children slipping through gaps in provision.

Research by SHS has found that the majority of children and families we support have multiple and overlapping needs, including child protection, family relationships, poor behaviour, insecure housing, mental and physical health, domestic violence and substance misuse.

This is supported by research from the Department of Communities and Local Government which found that on average, families supported in the Troubled Families programme, faced on average nine different needs<sup>6</sup>.

In order to provide effective support to families to overcome these complex challenges, there needs to be more joined up working between professionals. To achieve this there needs to be improved communication and information sharing between schools, social care, health services, police and other support groups.

As has been reported in numerous Serious Case Reviews of child protection failures, poor communication between professionals can lead to tragic consequences. It is vital that schools have the capacity to take a leading role in cross-profession working.



Ensure all vulnerable children receive support during the important transition phases in their education by requiring nurseries and schools to adopt pro-active transition programmes.

We know that the transitional periods throughout life are challenging, particularly so during childhood. There are three key transitions during childhood; starting at nursery, primary and secondary school. Negative transitions can affect a child's subsequent engagement with school, impacting on attainment and future life chances. These transitions can be challenging for all children, but particularly so for vulnerable children from deprived backgrounds or with SEND<sup>7</sup>.

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission report on the role of schools in improving social mobility<sup>4</sup> highlighted the importance of the transition period for children and the need for schools to support those children who need help to make it a positive experience.

Schools should work together in the build up to these transitions, helping



Enabling a good start to school through a positive transition.

children to understand what to expect from the new environment, the differences in the school day and the new expectations on them.

To support primary and secondary schools in enabling successful transitions, SHS has developed Fresh Start, a tool kit for schools to use to provide effective support during the transition period. The toolkit provides tools and resources on a range of topics including increasing pupil's understanding of life and expectations at secondary school, developing relationships with adults and classmates, understanding bullying and how to respond to it.

6. DCLG, Understanding troubled families, 2014.

7. GALTON, M., GRAY, J. and RUDDUCK, J. (1999). The Impact of School Transitions and Transfers on Pupils Progress and Attainment (DfEE Research Report 131). London: DfEE.

Ensure that funding for the Troubled Families programme is used in a targeted way by actively monitoring outcomes and impact.

Our experience over the last 30 years of working with families with complex needs and recently in delivering services through the Troubled Families programme has shown that targeted interventions have a hugely positive impact on the lives of all family members. As such

we strongly welcome the Troubled Families programme being extended to children under the age of five.

Whilst recognising the difficult financial circumstances local authorities are operating in, it is important that the funding for this programme is targeted to ensure it is used effectively to address the underlying issues that affect families facing multiple difficulties. This is the only way the outcomes set out will be met. It must not be used to fill gaps in other local authority budgets, however pressing they may be.

## Case study

Mary, a single mother, and Steven, her 17 year old son were facing a number of overlapping issues which were affecting their quality of life, including mental health issues, unemployment, caring responsibilities and domestic violence. They have been working with Kim, their SHS practitioner to overcome their challenges.

Kim referred Steven to CAMHS, where he has been able to receive regular counselling sessions and both Mary and Steven were referred to a local voluntary organisation which provided support around Steven's suspected autism.

Kim worked with his FE college to ensure that he received the support he needed to enable him to engage with his studies and, with her support, he has increased his attendance significantly.

Mary, helped by Kim, engaged with an employment support programme and, after receiving an invitation for an interview, the SHS Welfare Fund was used to buy some new interview clothes for her.

Following the interview, Mary was offered the job. She has maintained full time employment and is no longer claiming out of work benefits.

## Include training on how to engage parents in their child's education in initial teacher training.

There is clear evidence that children's attainment is linked to parental engagement<sup>8</sup>. Parents want the best for their children, but some have a variety of complex needs which can affect how engaged they are in their child's education. This may mean that a child's attendance drops or that issues at home affect the child's behaviour in school. Both of which will negatively affect the educational attainment of the child and thus their life chances.

It is important that trainee teachers are given an understanding

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8. Grayson, H. (2013). Rapid Review of Parental Engagement and Narrowing the Gap in Attainment for Disadvantaged Children. Oxford University Press.

of these issues and are provided with techniques in how to support further engagement of parents in their child's education. This should be included within teachers' initial training and continuing professional development.

We know from our work in schools that when there is a poor or non-existent relationship between the school and home, the pupil's education suffers. As we have called for in recommendation one, schools should have a dedicated member of staff to develop these relationships. However, it is also important that teachers understand the importance of this and have the skills to cultivate a positive relationship with parents.



The implementation of these recommendations would help end the cycle of deprivation faced by so many children.

For 30 years, SHS has seen the impact that providing school-to-home family focussed interventions can have on attainment. In 2013/14, 77 per cent of children who worked

with an SHS practitioner improved their attendance. At the same time, 98 per cent of parents became more involved in their child's learning, which supported 62 per cent of children to make academic progress.

Below is just one example of the direct impact that school-to-home support has on families.

## Case study

Connor, 11, had become erratic in his behaviour and often violent towards his classmates. He showed little remorse when reprimanded. His school were very concerned about it and how he would cope with his impending transition to secondary school.

Connor was referred to the school's SHS practitioner, Tina, to help address his behaviour. Tina spoke to Connor's mum, Faye, and found that he was fighting constantly with his four younger brothers at home and had recently been sent to live with his grandparents as his mum was struggling to cope.

Tina met with Connor on a weekly basis and kept in regular contact with his mum and his class teacher.

Connor was resistant at first, but Tina worked to gradually build a trusting relationship with him and he started to really open up during the sessions. Tina and Connor worked on a 'Who Am I?' workbook to help him express himself and how he was feeling.

Connor's behaviour has improved considerably and there are now very few outbursts in class or incidents with his classmates. He is now living back with his mum and Tina keeps in regular contact with her. Connor is looking forward to moving on to secondary school and, equipped with more constructive ways to cope with his feelings rather than lashing out, he is likely to have a much more positive experience there.



## How to get involved

1. [Tweet](#) your support for the manifesto using #SHSmanifesto
2. Share the manifesto with your network on [LinkedIn](#)
3. Help us to reach more children by [donating](#) online
4. [Share](#) your thoughts with SHS on what more can be done
5. Send the manifesto to your local MP and councillor – you can find contact details for your local representatives at <https://www.writetothem.com/>

77 per cent  
of children who  
worked with an  
SHS practitioner  
improved their  
attendance



For more information on any of our services, or to discuss how you can support us in reaching more children and families please contact us on **0845 337 0850** or email **enquiries@shs.org.uk**.

\*All case studies have been anonymised and the photos used throughout the document have come from the SHS image library and do not represent the case studies or quotes used.

## children in school, ready to learn

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School-Home Support



School-Home Support

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**e: enquiries@shs.org.uk**

**t: 0845 337 0850 www.shs.org.uk**

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