

Press Release

(Embargoed until 14th November)

London, 10 November 23

Education charity reports successful implementation of Whole Family Support Model to tackle the persistent absence crisis in schools

- Pupil absence statistics from the Department for Education revealed that in the autumn term 2022 and spring term 2023, 21.2% of children were persistently absent, with 139,000 children severely absent.
- The Whole Family Support model implemented by School-Home Support, a national education charity, demonstrated remarkable results, with 70% of those receiving assistance experiencing an average 8.4% increase in attendance, equivalent to 17 extra days of school attendance, highlighting the effectiveness of this approach.
- The Education Select Committee has endorsed the whole family-style support provided by School-Home Support and recommended its integration as a central component of programmes to address persistent absence, underlining the urgency for the government to provide a decisive and robust response to the attendance crisis.
- School-Home Support reported increased demand for support. The charity's interventions to assist children and young people have increased by 3%, and the number is 26% higher than pre-pandemic levels. Children are increasingly identifying housing as a major challenge, with a 57.7% increase in housing related support needs.

Pupil absence statistics published by the Department for Education¹ last month revealed the extent of the attendance crisis facing the country. In the autumn term 2022 and spring term 2023, 21.2% of children were persistently absent (1.56 million children). Although this is a slight improvement from 2021/22, the crisis continues with 139,000 children severely absent.

School-Home Support, a national education charity addressing high absence through family support, has presented its latest annual report confirming that families continue to grapple with the lingering effects of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and cuts to essential services. The charity says that the demand for support has continued to grow over the past academic year. The number of its interventions to support children and young people who are severely or persistently absent from school has increased by 3% and continues to be 26% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

¹ [Department for Education - National Statistics - Pupil absence in schools in England: Autumn and Spring term 2022/23](#)

School-Home Support

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The figures uncovered an important shift in support needs too. There has been a significant (57.7%) increase in children identifying housing as one of the biggest challenges they face. And, although overall safeguarding alerts remain relatively low, a 40% increase in safeguarding alerts relating to housing from the previous year highlights the dimension of the housing crisis.

School-Home Support provided crucial assistance directly to 5,248 individuals - a combination of children and family members. A notable 67% of these families were facing at least two complex challenges simultaneously including issues with home, money and employment. And, the number of applications to the charity's Welfare Fund (a financial resource established to provide urgent and practical assistance to children and families) has increased a significant 86% from the previous academic year.

Outcomes of the Whole Family Support model in the 2022/2023 academic year

In the academic year 2022/2023, the School-Home Support model has demonstrated its effectiveness in addressing the root causes of persistent absence in schools across England.

This model places dedicated practitioners in schools, allowing them the time and resources to dig deeper into the underlying causes of persistent absence. Once these factors are identified, practitioners develop comprehensive support plans that involve the entire family.

An analysis of the interventions, which offered bespoke support to both children and their families, revealed remarkable results. A significant 70% of those who received assistance from School-Home Support Practitioners experienced an average increase of 8.4% in their attendance rate. In practical terms, this translates to an extra 17 days of school attendance during a standard 8-month support period.

Furthermore, among the 73% of persistently absent children whose attendance initially was at an average rate of 68%, the charity observed an impressive 10% increase in their attendance rate, resulting in an additional 20 days of school attendance.

Even more notably, 86% of severely absent children, whose attendance averaged only 24%, achieved a 20% improvement in their attendance rates. This substantial boost equates to an extra 40 days of school attendance for these children.

Schools need additional resources to effectively address and reduce absenteeism

The whole family support model allows schools to get to the root of the causes of absenteeism so they can be tackled well and solved for good. To do this, the education system needs more capacity.

That's why School-Home Support launched the 'Dig a Little Deeper' campaign earlier this year calling on the Government to invest in a service of whole family support practitioners

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rolled out across the country as a key part of the national strategy to tackle the attendance crisis. It costs School-Home Support approximately £1000 to fund one tailored plan per child per year, compared to the £2,166² annual cost for a child missing at least 5 weeks of school.

The government should give a decisive and robust response to the attendance crisis

While the government has made high absence a top priority, data shows that high levels of absence have persisted.

The Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan recently told parliament that school attendance was one of her top priorities following a question from Government MP Paul Maynard³ about her efforts to reduce the number of persistently absent pupils in England. The MP spoke about School- Home Support's work in Blackpool which contains some of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods and their view that attendance support needs to focus on more than just individual pupils and embrace the whole family.

The Education Select Committee (ESC) made recommendations to the government to improve the effectiveness of the current approach to tackling absence and believes the Government's current Attendance Mentor Programme should be expanded nationally, beyond the current pilot schemes in areas with high levels of deprivation. The Committee heard that the support mentors offer directly to children and their parents helps to overcome their unique issues that discourage attendance, but the Department for Education should ensure the whole family-style of support becomes a central part of the programme, as recommended by School Home Support in its evidence to the inquiry.

As the Government considers its response to the ESC inquiry recommendations on tackling persistent absence in disadvantaged communities, it's evident that a multi-faceted, multi-agency approach and a strong and decisive response from the whole cabinet is urgently needed to tackle the attendance crisis effectively.

Jaine Stannard, School-Home Support CEO said:

“The attendance figures are truly shocking and have sadly become the norm. 1 in 5 children persistently absent from school is unacceptable. We know the government is trying, it is a priority, but we need to go further and faster. We need the collective might of the government and other agencies to respond. To invest time and energy in rebuilding the bridge between home and school. The bridge is broken and the disadvantaged gap is widening.”

² Government funded cost benefit analysis research for Greater Manchester Combined Authority
https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/7283/gmca-unit-cost-database-v2_3_1-final.xlsx

³<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-10-23/debates/600020BA-C6E9-46A1-87B0-FEE6766672CB/PupilsAbsences>

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Note to editors

- **Breakfast event for the launch of School-Home Support Impact Report**

We invite you to a breakfast event on 14 November to help launch our latest Impact Report. Hear about School-Home Support achievements over the past year, current trends in attendance, and our plans for the future.

Date: Tuesday 14th November

Time: 8:00-9:30 AM

Location: Nesta, 58 Victoria Embankment, Temple, London EC4Y 0DS

Confirm attendance to **Teresa Caballero** Teresa.Caballero@shs.org.uk

- [Linked here is a full copy of School-Home Support Impact Report 2022-2023](#)

About School-Home Support

School-Home Support is a national charity which supports families whose children are severely and persistently absent by addressing the root causes of high absence through whole family support. We are campaigning for an appropriately funded, reliable family support network around schools to support the growing number of vulnerable families who need help.

Since 1984, we have used early intervention and a whole family support approach to break intergenerational cycles of deprivation and low aspiration. Partnering with schools, local authorities and communities, our expert practitioners work one-to-one with families to establish long-term trusting relationships that build a bridge between home and school.

We look beyond the classroom to tackle the underlying causes of school absence such as poverty, domestic violence or mental health challenges, using bespoke support strategies to overcome barriers to learning and ensure children can achieve their potential.

For more information and interview requests please contact:

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