



Department
for Education

Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Tel: 0370 000 2288

www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Date: 16 December 2022

Dear colleagues,

As you may have seen, on Wednesday 7 December 2022, the Secretary of State for Education confirmed that Government will not be continuing with the Schools Bill in the third parliamentary session.

We understand that this may be disappointing news, however I wish to reassure you that the decision on the Schools Bill does not mark any change in policy in respect of attendance.

Safeguarding children and young people remains of the highest priority for the Department and for education and childcare settings. The Schools Bill contained some important measures to strengthen this system, and we remain committed to progressing the attendance measures, alongside other measures, when parliamentary time allows. The government therefore still intends to make the new attendance guidance 'working together to improve school attendance' statutory. This will happen as soon as possible, but no earlier than September 2023.

We expect local authorities to continue to implement the changes introduced through the new school attendance guidance. As with all government guidance, local authorities are legally obliged to take the new school attendance guidance into account in exercising their functions (such as when making decisions about their attendance service and on school attendance matters).

The department will continue to support local authorities in aligning their service with the expectations set out in the guidance. In the new year, my team will be hosting a new series of webinars to address specific feedback we have received on the guidance so far. This includes a dedicated webinar on targeted support meetings and a demonstration on how to use the new attendance data collection system. We will also be producing written clarity around the most frequently asked questions on the new guidance, such as what elements of local authority's attendance service can continue to be traded.

In addition, we have expanded our team of attendance advisers to enable every local authority access to at least 5 days of free support over the next 2 academic years to support local authorities in meeting the expectations in the new guidance. These attendance advisers have also been facilitating a series of peer-to-peer action learning sets to discuss the challenges and opportunities presented by the new school attendance

guidance. If your local authority has not been involved in these discussions and would like to, please contact my team at school.attendance@education.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Simon Blake

Head of School Attendance Division