



# Managing primary school attendance during the pandemic: What can we learn?

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**Davina Wakelin**





# Cavendish Education Trust

**Cavendish is one of three Primary Schools  
in the Cavendish Education Trust.**



# Securing Good Attendance

- Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence.
- Ofsted research and analysis document. Published 7th February 2022
- **Listen, understand, empathise and support - but do not tolerate.**



# Challenges

## Continuing Challenges:

**Most common reasons for absence:** (from HMI Survey Autumn Term 2021)

- Pupils having Covid-19
- Parents' and pupils' anxieties - not always related directly to school

## New Challenges:

- Pupils with non-Covid related illness
- Families taking holidays - postponed during pandemic
- Families self-isolating before a family event - wedding, holiday
- Covid being used as an excuse for poor attenders.



# Removing Barriers

- Working with vulnerable pupils/families in lockdown - building relationships
- Parents' anxieties - carefully challenge them
- Pupils' anxieties - is it a worry? Is it a mental health issue?



# Communicating Expectations To Parents

- Communicating attendance expectations to parents - crucial
- Building positive relationships with parents - honesty, asking the right questions
- It's a 'child's right to attend school, not the parents right to keep their child at home' - challenge and support
- Challenge parents' misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like - holidays in school term
- Relationship between attendance and achievement - talk freely



# Communicating Expectations To Pupils

- High expectations - letting pupils know expectation is to come into school each day
- School leaders - At the beginning of the day having a presence on the school gate, greet pupils
- Attendance rewards - communicating the importance of attendance



# Identifying Patterns

- Systematic analysis of attendance - FFT Attendance Tracker weekly tracking
- Identifying absence patterns - acting quickly
- Acting swiftly - can prevent attendance issues for individual pupils becoming embedded
- Attendance & Welfare team - complete absence calling, log absences due to mental health on My Concern, put pupils on attendance plan where necessary.



# Ambition

- Good attendance - is everyone's job
- Link between achievement and attendance - exciting curriculum
- Change staff thinking - from **this child is not achieving because they are not attending to what do we need to do to improve their attendance so that they can achieve?**
- Governors - attendance of groups not just in relation to overall attendance figure compared to national averages (FFT attendance tracker)



# Tackling Persistent Absence

- Being analytical - identifying patterns
- What is stopping individuals from attending? - vulnerable pupils
- Breaking down barriers - hard to reach families