ATTENDANCE NEWSLETTER

Autumn term 2 | November-December 2026

Right support at the right time

A practical follow-up to the Attendance Network Meeting on 10 November 2026

This half term at a glance

Attendance and inclusion

Attendance support continues within a more joined-up Education Inclusion structure.

Use the data story

Check codes, reports and requests before Targeted Support Meetings so discussion can focus on pupils and barriers.

Support first, prepare early

If legal intervention may be needed, build an accurate chronology and court-ready evidence from the outset.

New pathway and future systems

The Earliest Support Pathway launched on 1 November; EYES changes are expected in spring 2027, with training to follow.

Audience: headteachers, Attendance Champions, DSLs, attendance officers and administrators, governors, and colleagues in primary, secondary, special and independent settings.

Welcome

Thank you to everyone who joined the autumn Attendance Network Meeting and contributed practical feedback. This edition brings the key messages together for the remainder of the half term, with an emphasis on joined-up inclusion, accurate data, early support and well-prepared legal intervention. The aim is not to create additional work, but to help schools use existing information and resources more effectively, resolve routine issues earlier and keep attention on the pupils and families who need support most.

Department for Education update

Checked 11 November 2026 The latest DfE fortnightly attendance release was updated on 5 November 2026 and covers 7 September to 23 October 2026. Schools should use the latest dashboard alongside their own MIS and local intelligence, rather than treating any single headline as the whole story.

Pupil attendance in schools - latest official statistics | Working together to improve school attendance - July 2026 statutory guidance

Why this matters

- The statutory guidance continues to expect schools to build strong relationships with families, understand barriers, maintain accurate registers and analyse attendance regularly.
- Governing bodies and trust boards should review attendance trends and help leaders focus improvement work on the pupils and cohorts who need it most.
- Targeted Support Meetings are most useful when routine coding, reporting and data-quality questions have already been checked.

Local attendance picture

The indicative 2025/26 data shared at the network meeting places Gloucestershire broadly in line with the national position overall, with a lower persistent absence rate. The figures below are presented as the meeting's published headline comparison and should be read alongside school-level and cohort analysis.

Measure	Gloucestershire	National
Overall absence	6.97%	6.93%
Persistent absence	18.45%	19.05%
Primary absence	5.33%	5.31%
Secondary absence	8.66%	8.57%
Special-school absence	12.45%	13.19%

School action for this half term

- Look beyond the overall percentage: identify which pupils and cohorts are driving the position, whether attendance is improving or deteriorating, and whether SEND, FSM, vulnerability, health or part-time timetable factors are relevant.
- Check that C2 coding aligns with part-time timetable reports submitted to GCC.
- Check that G-coded absence and penalty-notice activity tell a consistent story.

- Resolve routine discrepancies before the Targeted Support Meeting so time can be used to agree barriers, priorities, support and next actions.

Attendance sits within inclusion

Attendance support continues, but it now sits within a wider Education Inclusion structure designed to connect whole-school inclusion, legal attendance, Section 19, early intervention, community support and other education services. Routes into support may evolve, but the core commitment to schools remains.

Whole-school	Child and family	Accessing education
Inclusion Officers, attendance systems, Targeted Support Meetings and whole-school improvement.	Early Intervention and Community support, with a whole-family and multi-agency focus.	Legal Attendance, Section 19, children missing education and related statutory pathways.

Earliest Support Pathway: now live

The Graduated Pathway has become the Earliest Support Pathway. The change is intended to simplify planning, align with Family Help and SEND reform, and reduce repetition for families. My Plan, My Plan Plus and My Assessment have been brought together into one Earliest Support Plan covering overview, assessment, planning and review.

- Use the refreshed guidance, tools and examples when support needs first emerge.
- Move existing plans to the new format at their normal review point; do not rewrite all current plans immediately.
- Use accessible, strengths-based language and involve the child, young person and family in shaping the plan.
- The Earliest Support Plan is not a statutory document and is not a prerequisite for requesting an EHC needs assessment.

Earliest Support Pathway | Planning tools and resources

Section 19 update

Our Section 19 arrangements continue to develop, with a greater focus on ensuring schools know where to go for advice and support. A new shared Section 19 inbox is now available at S19@gloucestershire.gov.uk, and all Section 19 queries should be sent to this address going forward. We are also working on updated Schoolsnet information to make the Section 19 pathway, support available and next steps clearer and easier for schools to navigate. More information and resources will be shared as this work is completed.

Legal intervention: prepare it, check it, own it

Legal intervention remains a last resort within a continuing support-first approach. If it may be considered later, preparation must begin during early support, not when a legal request is submitted. The school's records should show what support was offered, how the family responded, what changed and why escalation is being considered.

Five-minute pre-submission pause

1. Have we used the current training, guidance and templates?
2. Have we identified every relevant parent based on responsibility for the absence?
3. Do the facts, dates, codes and chronology agree?
4. Are statements, exhibits and certificates complete, signed, dated, labelled and appropriately redacted?
5. Has someone other than the author proofread the submission?

Key evidence reminders

- Start with who caused or allowed the absence, not simply who completed a form.

- Prepare one parent-specific witness statement for each relevant parent; all relevant children can be included together within that parent's statement.
- Keep exhibits separate, traceable and in the same order as the witness statement. Each child's attendance certificate is a separate exhibit.
- A declaration confirms that the checks have already happened. It does not replace them.
- Continue support and record keeping after a notice or prosecution. Legal intervention may not, on its own, change attendance.

If any check is incomplete, pause and correct it before submission.

Legal intervention snapshot

The 2026/27 Power BI snapshot, reported as at 11 November 2026, shows 832 penalty-notice requests and 716 notices issued. A further 50 requests required action before they could be issued. The figures below are aggregate operational data and contain no case-identifying information.

Measure	2026/27 snapshot
Penalty-notice requests	**832**
Penalty notices issued	**716**
Requests requiring action	**50**
Individuals / CYP requested	**503**
Individuals / CYP issued	**415**
Second penalty notices	**86**
Individual parents issued (post Sept 2024 only)	**631**

What the 50 requiring action means

These requests had not been declined. They needed further information or corrections before the local authority could decide whether a penalty notice could be issued. Schools should check the portal's Action Needed area, supply missing information and correct inaccurate details promptly. Complete, consistent requests reduce avoidable delay and help protect the time available if an unpaid notice later needs to proceed to prosecution.

FPN outcomes

Of the issued notices shown in the Power BI outcome view, 447 are recorded as paid and 160 as proceeding to prosecution. Since September, 20 cases have been submitted to our Legal Services team for consideration for prosecution, with a further two cases due to be reviewed following an interim caution. This means that, at present, only 22 cases from the much larger number recorded as proceeding to prosecution have reached, or are expected shortly to reach, this stage. The difference is significant. Where a case progresses to prosecution, schools need to act promptly: check the MRI Portal regularly, complete the required witness statement and exhibits, respond to requests for amendments and return accurate paperwork within the deadline provided. Without the required evidence, a case cannot progress simply because it is recorded as "Proceed to Prosecution".

Withdrawal quality check

The separate withdrawal-reason view shows 26 records across the quality categories displayed: 16 should not have been issued, 7 contained material errors, 2 were recorded as NFA by the local authority, and 1 had been issued to the wrong person. The supplied data does not show how many notices were withdrawn because cases were out of time, so no out-of-time withdrawal figure is included.

Preparing for EYES

A move to new EYES portal routes is expected from March or April 2027 for Elective Home Education, Section 19 and Legal Attendance. The present MRI arrangement is expected to end. Detailed guidance and training will follow nearer implementation, so schools should not change current submission routes yet.

- Continue using current processes and current Schoolsnet forms until a formal change is communicated.
- Use this half term to strengthen internal checking and proofreading. The future system is expected to require clearer decisions on incomplete submissions rather than repeated correction cycles.
- Ensure more than one appropriate colleague understands the process, deadlines and evidence requirements.

What schools asked for next

Feedback from the network meeting strongly favoured practical, current and locally relevant support. Recurring themes included:

- locality or feeder-school links that improve transition and consistency for siblings and families across phases;
- clearer information about who does what, who the school's Inclusion Officer is and how to access Section 19 and other services;
- more real-time problem solving, case studies, training and opportunities to share effective practice;
- a thoughtful approach to special and independent settings, recognising both shared themes and distinct contexts;
- concise follow-up information with working links, and a sensible balance between online access and occasional face-to-face networking.

Useful support and links

- Attendance Network Meetings
- Attendance Connections
- Attendance training and support
- DfE attendance statistics collection

For attendance legal intervention queries: attendance@gloucestershire.gov.uk. Schools should also contact their Inclusion Officer for whole-school attendance support and use the relevant Section 19 route for illness-related absence and access-to-education questions.