

The Challenge of Improving Pupil Attendance at School

CASE STUDIES PAPER

November 2018

Introduction

1. The Department of Education (DE) has been working with approximately 20 schools over the past 12 months on the issue of attendance and how it can be improved at individual school level. The schools were identified as those whose attendance had been circa 90% for 5 years and which had high percentages of FSME children – they were therefore facing a range of different challenges which impacted upon pupil attendance at school.

Queen's University Belfast

2. Queen's University Belfast (QUB) has been supporting the Department in the delivery of its "**Miss School = Miss Out Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy**" published in December 2016. As part of its research, QUB identified the following influencing factors:
 - Individual characteristics of students
 - Relationships with teachers
 - Lack of parental support
 - Environmental influences ie home/friends/local/social media
 - Medical issues
 - Lack of 'hope' or 'potential success'
3. The most common and important factor was seen as 'Parents and their relationship with child and school'. As part of its research, QUB showed evidence of the success of the University of Pittsburgh's '**Be There!**' campaign which amongst other things, included using "text" to ask if the family needed help, along with breakfast and before school programmes and solving issues eg transport.
4. QUB researchers also developed the **Miss School = Miss Out** video which highlights the impact of non-attendance at school, the underlying reasons for absence and where children/young people can seek help or advice. DE has promoted this resource across schools over the past number of years as well as developing a series of posters/flyers for schools to share with parents and pupils.
5. We have been fortunate that QUB has continued to want to support schools in this important area of work and as part of this programme. Professor Tony Gallagher (Dean of Research), Dr Kathryn Higgins and Dr Julie-Ann Jordan have been involved throughout in supporting schools to identify the common issues which their pupils have to deal with on a daily basis and to consider what new or additional interventions might be possible if we were to approach the issues differently.

Key Interventions

6. Participants have demonstrated a clear commitment in tackling the issue of poor pupil attendance and have used a range of different approaches, suited to their own context. These can be categorised as follows:

High aspirations for all/Incentives

- Use of notice boards in staffrooms and form rooms to reinforce attendance messages.
- Monthly data shared amongst form teachers.
- Ensuring that teachers are aware of attendance policy including which attendance codes to use.
- Breakfast clubs each morning; After school clubs/Homework clubs in the afternoon; one school facilitated a "Before school sports programme".
- Important to celebrate success, encourage and intervene early.

Clear attendance policies

- Attendance policy in place and is understood by all staff and pupils.
- Corridor posters - Miss School = Miss Out; attendance league tables (on school notice board).
- School assemblies are typically used to show the link between attendance and success.

Relationships at home

- The provision of a dedicated Home/School worker - parent engagement worker links with parents prior to the need for Education Welfare Service (EWS) involvement.
- This was described by one school as a "nip-it-in-the-bud" intervention aimed at building positive relationships with parents and child, support with routines and linking families to other family support services.
- Home visits by attendance officer once a trigger figure is reached.
- Advice provided on sleeping patterns, energy drinks, online gaming.

Parental buy-in/engagement/understanding

- Use of social media channels to promote messages.
- Use of parent app provides up-to-date data and reports.
- Text sent to parents where child is missing in the morning.
- Nudge letters advising on attendance.
- Parent Report comments in respect of attendance and the golden figure of 95% is streamlined to parents.
- Letters sent by one school highlights the number of lessons missed in English, Maths, Science etc and the impact on results if poor attendance continues.
- Automated daily 'truancy calls' informing parents of non-attendance.
- Traffic light system – in one school is displayed in every classroom and this is used to traffic light individual attendance.

General attitude/behaviour/low self-esteem

- Recognising good attendance – award schemes for best attendance, most improved attendance; class of year competition; competition between years; individual rewards; eg in one school, a letter of praise was introduced for pupils who had improved their attendance by 10%.
- 'Pupil Voice' strategy created online. The pupils had the opportunity to share their views on tackling poor attendance and celebrating excellent attendance.
- In one school, 3 Heads of Year identified 3 boys each = 9 boys to work with (85% to 95% attendance).
- In another school, meetings are held with 5 pupils from each year group every month with 86%-92% attendance and set targets which are reviewed the next month.

Lessons Learnt (so far)

7. The following were identified by schools:

- Schools have learnt that more nuanced and graduated nudge letters seem to have greater impact.
- A stronger message is required by courts in respect of attendance.

- Whole-school buy-in is required in order to achieve maximum impact.
- More funding is required within schools to tackle emotional health/well-being issues.
- Parents need to play their role in recognising the importance of good school attendance.
- There are particular issues for some Section 75 groups, ie improving attendance for Roma and traveller children can be particularly challenging therefore schools which have high numbers of children from these groups can be particularly impacted.

Good Practice Case Studies

8. As a consequence of the work to date, ten schools have provided details of the range of interventions that they have introduced and what lessons they have learned from these initiatives. See case studies outlined at [Annex A](#) and some high-level data at [Annex B](#).
9. We hope that these case studies will be useful to other schools facing similar challenges. We intend to continue to work with schools on this important issue.

ETI report on attendance in Schools – Good Practice Report 2016 (“If you don’t attend, you can’t attain”)

10. We also want to use this opportunity to remind readers of the work which ETI undertook in 2016 with primary and post primary schools culminating in two reports in July 2016. These came about following the Public Accounts Committee report on improving pupil attendance¹ when ETI was commissioned by DE to undertake a good practice survey into how schools are improving attendance:
 - a. [Part One: Attendance in Schools ETI Good Practice Report; and](#)
 - b. [Part Two: Attendance in Schools Introduction to the Case Studies](#)
11. As part of this work, there were 24 case studies of schools available which addressed attendance effectively – 12 primary and 12 post-primary. These can be found at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/articles/part-two-attendance-schools-case-studies>

¹ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2011-2016/public-accounts-committee/reports-2011-2016/report-on-improving-pupil-attendance-follow-up-report/>

12. We highly recommend that you take time to read these reports from which we have distilled the following important and complementary findings.

"The findings of this Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) survey of attendance in schools confirm that there is no one tip which offers a 'quick fix' for poor attendance. The reality, in those schools that are successful in improving attendance and raising standards, is that an holistic approach, with determined leadership which creates a positive culture for success and acts on all of the pieces of the attendance jigsaw, is necessary for an effective solution.

Leadership, vision, ethos, culture, pastoral care, a relevant and adaptive curriculum, careful consideration of the needs, interests and ability of all of the learners, teaching which engenders engaged learning for all learners, prompt responses to upward trends in absence data, close engagement with parents, external agencies and others; all of these pieces make up the jigsaw.

Underpinning the findings is the need for teachers and leaders to have a research-informed understanding of the personal, social and emotional reasons why and how learners learn and, more importantly, why and how they may fail. The development of this understanding is necessary right from initial teacher education and must be reinforced through continuing professional learning and development. And, no matter how well-informed or holistic, nothing works well forever, so evaluating the impact of each action and making adjustments matters to a school's continued success. [Page 1]

2. What works – a summary [Page 2-3]

*Through the survey we identified **four central elements** which evidentially lead to improved attendance and higher standards in schools. Furthermore, we identify **three effective actions** which need to be taken when low attendance is evident.*

Although it is impossible to make a causal link between the strategies outlined here, and improvements in academic attainment, the evidence is that a relentless focus on promoting attendance can help to break the cycle of deprivation and raise standards.

2.1 The four central elements

- i. **Leadership:** means taking responsibility for prioritising good attendance and building a culture which connects attendance and attainment in the minds of staff, pupils and parents. A key characteristic is a defined role for a senior member of staff, sometimes a specific post of responsibility, to take the lead and link with the local community, with parents, local social agencies and businesses. In successful case studies, the governors take an active part in constructing the school attendance policy and strategies, holding those who take the lead to account and monitoring the impact.
- ii. **Close educational engagement with parents:** seeks to raise awareness of the intrinsic link between attendance and attainment, and especially the importance of building habits of good attendance from the earliest years: both in early years settings and in primary schooling. Inspection work by ETI in early years settings affirms the importance of pre-school and nursery providers placing an emphasis on establishing good habits of attendance from the outset.
- iii. **Tailored education programmes:** refers to the need to ensure that young people experience the curriculum and teaching as relevant to their needs, interests and learning styles as well as addressing the barriers which they may experience as individuals. Mentoring young people is cited by successful schools as a key driver in raising attendance and attainment by reminding them of the intrinsic value of learning.
- iv. **Strategic monitoring, reporting and evaluating:** refers to a clear strategy for closely monitoring relevant data and evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of actions taken to promote improvement. In these case studies, evidence is collected systematically; data on attendance is recorded accurately and is linked to progress and attainment. For example, in terms of qualitative data the measurement of the impact of mentoring with the most vulnerable learners is a key feature of the most effective practice.

2.2 The three effective actions

When closely-monitored attendance data indicates poor or falling attendance, for individual or for groups, three effective actions need to be taken:

- i. **Prompt and direct contact with individual parents:** in the effective case studies, schools take action on the first day of absence and do not wait until absence drops to formal trigger points. The personal contact with parents works best because it establishes that the school knows the learner as an individual and can guide the family or carer to appropriate support, if necessary.*
- ii. **Early intervention of external support:** early engagement with external services initiates early intervention and provides bespoke support as soon as poor attendance shows signs of becoming an established pattern.*
- iii. **Rewarding attendance and sanctions:** rewarding good attendance, both explicitly with the use of extrinsic rewards (prizes, recognition and so on) alongside highlighting the intrinsic motivation of success, is used along with being equally clear with parents and carers about the sanctions available for absence”.*

13. Of particular note is the following:

“5. Tailored education programmes [Page 6]

- 5.1 Schools which have focused on the relationship between the curriculum and teaching on attendance have found that: creating a positive, happy, engaging learning ethos for learners; nurturing the learner; providing a good education in the classroom; tailoring better the curriculum to the needs of the pupils; including guest speakers from business and industry in the school's careers education information and guidance (CEIAG) programme; building the pupils own awareness of the importance of attendance and the negative impact of their absence, are all strategies which make for a more engaging curriculum and a climate for eager learning.*

A stronger emphasis is placed on differentiated learning to ensure that learning activities are better matched to the ability of the learners who are succeeding in school and want to attend. The high levels of activities make learning interesting, such as educational visits to engage children, to give them more experience of self-improvement and so that children do not want to miss out on school.

11. Summary [Page 13]

Although it is impossible to make a causal link between the strategies outlined here and improvements in academic attainment, the evidence is that a relentless focus on promoting attendance can help to break the cycle of deprivation and raise standards.

The outcome of the ETI analysis indicates that those schools which adopt an holistic approach, effect improvement best of all. Such schools do not regard poor attendance as an inconveniently chronic and fundamentally unfixable problem, but rather as a symptom that indicates that they are, in some way, failing to meet the needs of all of the young people.

These school leaders take responsibility for prioritising good attendance and building a culture which makes the intrinsic link between attendance and attainment in the minds of staff, pupils and parents alike. They review and revise the curriculum offered, and evaluate and improve teaching to ensure that it is engaging for all learners, ensuring that they want to come to school for fear of missing out.

They have a clear strategy for monitoring relevant data closely and evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of actions taken to promote improvement. When attendance drops they act quickly, engaging directly and immediately with parents, carers and intervene as necessary with the help of the appropriate external agencies. And, while they are clear with parents and carers about the sanctions available for absence and do resort to extrinsic rewards, which recognise and prize good attendance, they recognise that such strategies have a limited value in the medium to long term".

Case Studies 2017/18

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY																				
School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions																
<p>1. Breda Academy 797 pupils (Attendance 2011/12: School formed in September 2015 following an amalgamation of Knockbreda High School 85.3% and Newtownbreda High School 86.1% 2012/13: Knockbreda High School 87.9% and Newtownbreda High School 87.3% 2013/14: Knockbreda High School 86.6% and Newtownbreda High School 89.6% 2014/15: N/A 2015/16: 86.1% 2016/17: 86.5%) Key Issues: Low whole school attendance FSME: 48.8%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As used in other schools, we take the traffic light system used in form classes and send out the message to parents more regularly. Nudge letters sent at the end of each half term (first ones to go out week beginning 5 February) with the child's attendance percentage and traffic light key. Pre and post letter data comparisons at group and individual level. Parents given a reply slip if they wish to come into school to discuss their child's attendance – response rate recorded). 	<p>Comparison pre and post issue of nudge letters with traffic light key at Year X level: Classes in green (+) showed an improvement in attendance after the letters were sent:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>% pt Diff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>X1</td> <td>0.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X2</td> <td>+0.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X3</td> <td>+4.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X4</td> <td>+0.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X5</td> <td>-0.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>X6</td> <td>+2.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>+1.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	% pt Diff	X1	0.0	X2	+0.4	X3	+4.0	X4	+0.7	X5	-0.5	X6	+2.6	Total	+1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send out the letters separately, not as part of a mailshot with reports, other letters, etc as the impact of the nudge letter can be lessened. Letters to parents regarding attendance were issued to two specific year groups along with their reports and safeguarding materials. The impact was minimal, perhaps due to the letter being 'lost' amongst the other material and its importance was not as pronounced (only two classes improved this time). Changes to nudge letters for next year – Year A/ Year B – contextualise number of hours missed in GCSE classes eg How many hours English and Maths per week. Beginning of year A, year B and C – Send out a letter with their attendance for last year, with details of the school target, the DENI attendance table and links between attendance and qualifications. 	<p>The one intervention which showed an improvement was the nudge letter, but only when sent on its own (not in an envelope with other letters, reports, etc).</p>
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X6	+2.6																			
Total	+1.1																			

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
2. Brownlow College 285 pupils Attendance 2011/12: 90.5% 2012/13: 89.2% 2013/14: 89.3% 2014/15: 88.7% 2015/16: 89.8% Attendance 2016/17 – 88.5% Key Issues: Newcomers Mental Health FSME: 51.2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chase up letters of absence by form teachers/Office. • Telephone parents about absences. • Weekly meetings between EWO/VP to discuss absences. • 4-6 Audits of under 85% attendees per year. • Letters sent home highlighting attendance. • Warning letters. • Parent meetings with VP/EWO. • Referrals to EWO. • Phased return to school. • Designated teachers for time out. • Counselling services. • Youth work intervention. • Visits to the home. • One to one tuition. • Proximity teaching. • Referrals to GP/CAHMS/YPP. • Incentives through a rewards system. • Attendance linked to participation in key events such as a Formal. • Mentoring Programme. 	New interventions with outcomes to be confirmed 2018/19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding is required to support mental health. • Courts need to be more robust when dealing with families to send a stronger message to the community. 	Regular meetings with the EWO. In Craigavon we are blessed that we have a very proactive service and I would discuss cases on a weekly basis. We would interview targeted pupils to identify reasons that prevent attendance and act accordingly. Letters to parents when attendance reaches key thresholds in the first case to offer support but later as warnings if no valid reasons are provided. Form teachers and office staff chasing up letters for absence and ringing the home if required.

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
<p>3. Malone Integrated College 485 pupils Attendance 2011/12: 89.1% 2012/13: 85.8% 2013/14: 87.5% 2014/15: 89.6% 2015/16: 89.8% Attendance 2016/17 – 88.9% Key Issues: 11.5% Roma pupils 25.1% EAL pupils FSME: 69.28%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance is a standing item on agenda at BoG meetings. • School Attendance Policy highlighting the importance of good attendance at Malone College. • Attendance targets in school development plan. • A whole school focus on attendance & late-coming matters – keeping all staff aware of the importance of good attendance. • Action structure in place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - >95%: ok - 90-95% action by form teacher - 85-90% action by head of year - <85% referred to EWO. • Full-time dedicated Home/School Worker focussing on attendance issues – phones & visits homes – building relationships & trust with pupils & parents. There is a particular focus on Roma & EAL students. • School Attendance Co-ordinator liaises with Home/School Worker on a daily basis. • Warning letters sent home at first indication of persistent poor attendance. • Referral to EWO for all students below 85% without good reason/genuine illness. • Monthly attendance audit with EWO discussing all students below 85%. • Staffroom noticeboard dedicated to attendance & late-coming with data updated monthly keeping all staff informed about whole school, form & year groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attendance %: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2012-13: 85.8% - 2013-14: 87.5% - 2014-15: 89.6% - 2015-16: 89.8% • + 4% pts in 3 years • During 2015-16 we noted the impact of the increasing % of Roma students on our figures. • C2k issued a new report for isolating Roma attendance. Internally we now also track a figure for attendance excluding Roma students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016-17 88.9%/92.3% excl Roma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A whole-school focus is required where all staff play a part in promoting good attendance. 	<p>The school employing its own full-time Home/School Worker has been the single biggest factor leading to an improvement in attendance %.</p>

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY			
School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on attendance for each form/year groups shared monthly with form teachers and year heads keeping all informed with up-to-date stats. Agenda item for attendance at pastoral meetings to highlight concerns & discuss action required. Automated daily 'truancy call' for non-attenders informing parents their child is not in school. Corridor posters updated monthly highlighting to pupils best performing form & year groups for attendance & late-coming. Phone calls home (By Home/School Worker, on the day) if pupil is absent without a reason provided. 'Traffic light' posters highlighting names of students in red/amber/green displayed in form rooms and updated ½ termly. Year group assemblies highlighting students with good attendance and punctuality. Certificates given to students recognising 100% attendance for that month. Attendance rewards for pupils with attendance >95%. 		
			Key Interventions

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
<p>4. Crumlin Integrated College 157 pupils Attendance 2011/12: 87.9% 2012/13: 89.3% 2013/14: 90.6% 2014/15: 91.4% 2015/16: 90.6% (Attendance 2016/17 - 90.4%) Key Issues: Persistent low attendance over a number of years FSME: 38.89%</p>	<p>Implemented 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the SLT was appointed as an Attendance Coordinator and with help of a CASS officer completed an Attendance Plan; • More contact with parents; • More communication with EWS; • Local businesses provide donations for monthly rewards; • Annual reward trip; • Attendance workshop. <p>Action Plan 2018/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance is seen as a high priority in the Schools Action Plan. • Attendance data is evaluated in relation to educational performance. 61% of Year 12 Leavers achieved 5 A*-C grades as a result of good attendance. • Attendance is monitored regularly by the SLT and reported to the BOG. • Attendance is evaluated along with Pastoral concerns including medical and SEN issues. • Greater awareness of the importance of good attendance is promoted in Assembly on a monthly basis and pupils are rewarded for full attendance. • ETI Inspection Report of March 2014 identified that "There are significant improvements in Pupil's readiness to learn as evidenced by major reductions in detentions and suspensions and in improved rates of attendance". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With close monthly monitoring there have been some individual improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attendance leads to greater academic achievement. • Parental contact and support is vital. • In some cases school is unable to achieve improvements and therefore it is vital that links are made with outside agencies for support and that this is productive and consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with EWS. • Attendance badges for yearly top attenders.

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY			
School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIC is now part of the Target Programme for Improving School Attendance in the Post Primary Sector as led by The Education Welfare Service. • Attendance is linked to the recently rejuvenated House System where pupils gain points for their respective Houses. • In November 2015 the ETI chose the school as a Case Study within a wider attendance document as an example of good practice. • Attendance has now been given a high profile in school marketing. Pictures and articles now appear in the school magazine, website, Prospectus, Induction booklet and local press. 		
			Key Interventions

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY				
School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
<p>5. Edmund Rice College</p> <p>600 Pupils</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>2011/12: 92.2%</p> <p>2012/13: 91.8%</p> <p>2013/14: 91.9%</p> <p>2014/15: 90.5%</p> <p>2015/16: 90.0%</p> <p>(Attendance 2016/17 - 89.2%)</p> <p>Key Issues: Greater than 50% FSME</p> <p>FSME: 52.11%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "SIMs Discover" is used to alert heads of year to poor attendance. • Phone calls made when a pupil is absent. • Letters sent every two months. • Pupil self-monitoring books. • Good attendance rewarded as part of school reward system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On an individual basis the majority of pupils responded well to the interventions with any increase in their attendance. • At present we are on target to achieve a whole school attendance figure of 92% (increased from 89.2% 2016/17). • +2.8% points increase in 1 year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of attendance along with a whole school approach to improving attendance works. 	<p>Attendance is closely monitored and monthly audits which are discussed with SBCT (School Based Care Team).</p>

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
<p>6. Corpus Christi College 233 Pupils Attendance 2011/12: 89.6% 2012/13: 85.3% 2013/14: 87.0% 2014/15: 89.4% 2015/16: 88.4% (Attendance 2016/17 - 89.4%)</p> <p>Key Issues: Persistent low attendance over a number of years</p> <p>FSME: 72.53%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Parent/Pupil – this intervention will usually have necessary impact. • Interview with Parent/Guardian when attendance falls below 95% during which support offered, eg issues with particular subjects. • Further interview with Parent/Guardian if no improvement usually through Home Visit. Support offered and advice provided around issues such as sleeping patterns, energy drinks, online gaming. • Home Visit by Attendance Improvement Officer when attendance 86% – 90%. Support offered. • EWO alerted when pupil attendance 86%-87%. • EWO Referral when attendance 85% and below. • School representation at EWS Family Support meetings. • Regular rewards for pupils achieving excellent attendance rates. • In addition, parents/guardians receive notification several times throughout the year promoting and emphasising the importance of positive school attendance and the negative impact of poor/non-attendance. • Parents/guardians are also discouraged from booking family holidays during term time and making medical/dental appointments during the school day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes vary for each individual strategy and indeed for each targeted pupil. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All strategies are designed to improve pupil attendance through enhanced relationships with home. • Interventions are implemented in a supportive capacity to ensure pupils and parents feel valued members of school community. • Should an initiative prove unsuccessful then it will be necessary to employ a further approach to address the issue/s. • This process has allowed for an evaluation and review of all attendance interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visit by Attendance Improvement Officer. • Regular awards for excellent attendance.

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY				
School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nag card system in place in last 2 months (as at April 2018) at KS3-5. • Attendance Improvement Officer appointed and shared with St Roses for a set number of days per week. • Each Head of Year has identified 3 boys each = 9 boys to work with (85% to 95% attendance). 			

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions																																																																
<p>7. St Joseph's College (Belfast)</p> <p>658 Pupils Attendance</p> <p>2011/12: 87.1%</p> <p>2012/13: 88.3%</p> <p>2013/14: 87.9%</p> <p>2014/15: 89.0%</p> <p>2015/16: 89.9%</p> <p>(Attendance 2016/17 - 92.3%)</p> <p>Key Issues:</p> <p>FSME: 48.94%</p>	<p>Implemented Sept 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline data is provided at the beginning of the year for Heads of Year and Form Teachers to set relevant targets. Monthly data is provided to enable tracking and MER of Year Group target, Form Class target and Individual target setting. Meet with 5 pupils from each year group every month with 86%-92% attendance and set targets which are reviewed the next month. Meet Traian (Roma EWS) and Brigid Spiers monthly to allow me to have a more in-depth overview of individual pupil attendance. Heads of year meet EWS fortnightly. Delivered Staff Inset 'Attendance Matters' in August 2017. All teaching staff were issued with procedures for pupils returning to school after absence and procedures for dealing with poor attendance. Attendance Policy was reviewed disseminated to all teaching staff in September 2017 and roles and responsibilities were highlighted (one-to-one support for new staff when needed). The attendance information given by the Head of year 8 on the new intake of pupils was analysed and intervention was early when needed with support put in place. 	<p>Using end of May 2018 data we are doing even better than this time last year.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Overall Attendance</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>May 2017</th> <th>May 2018</th> <th>% pt Diff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>94.21</td> <td>94.03</td> <td>-0.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>92.6</td> <td>95.38</td> <td>+2.78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>93.26</td> <td>92.98</td> <td>-0.28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>90.77</td> <td>92.7</td> <td>+1.93</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>91.07</td> <td>92.32</td> <td>+1.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whole school %</td> <td>92.38%</td> <td>93.48 (up 0.97% since Jan 2018)</td> <td>+1.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Unauthorised Attendance</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>May 2017</th> <th>May 2018</th> <th>% pt Diff</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>1.75</td> <td>1.76</td> <td>+1.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>1.91</td> <td>0.86</td> <td>-1.05</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>1.55</td> <td>1.77</td> <td>-0.22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>4.96</td> <td>1.68</td> <td>-3.28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>4.24</td> <td>4.13</td> <td>-0.11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whole school %</td> <td>2.88%</td> <td>2.04% (down 0.74% since Jan 2018)</td> <td>-0.84</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Overall Attendance				Year	May 2017	May 2018	% pt Diff	8	94.21	94.03	-0.18	9	92.6	95.38	+2.78	10	93.26	92.98	-0.28	11	90.77	92.7	+1.93	12	91.07	92.32	+1.25	Whole school %	92.38%	93.48 (up 0.97% since Jan 2018)	+1.1	Unauthorised Attendance				Year	May 2017	May 2018	% pt Diff	8	1.75	1.76	+1.01	9	1.91	0.86	-1.05	10	1.55	1.77	-0.22	11	4.96	1.68	-3.28	12	4.24	4.13	-0.11	Whole school %	2.88%	2.04% (down 0.74% since Jan 2018)	-0.84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hope to use interventions in 2018/19 that have been utilised by other groups, eg truancy call, report cards etc. 	<p>Pupil Voice questionnaire has given me a great insight into what needs to be improved next year and what is working well.</p> <p>Pupil Homework Diaries have a section called 'Monitoring My Attendance' where the pupils set individual monthly targets.</p> <p>The Attendance Board on display in a main foyer is kept up-to-date, with the best class and most improved class.</p> <p>I delivered Staff Inset 'Attendance Matters' in August 2017.</p> <p>Monthly data is provided to enable tracking and MER of Whole School, Year Group target, Form Class target and Individual target setting.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Certificates were always prepared in advance and available for Heads of Year to award in monthly assemblies. TWITTER is used to celebrate attendance achievements. • Diamond (100% attendance for a term), Platinum (97-99.99%) and Gold (95-96.99%) awards were introduced and presented termly by me. • The registers are evidence that teachers are more aware of the attendance codes issued by DE and are now using them appropriately and accurately. When a form teacher or Head of Year are unsure supported provided. • Pupil Homework Diaries have a section called 'Monitoring My Attendance' where the pupils set individual monthly targets. • The Attendance Board on display in a main foyer is kept be up-to-date, with the best class and most improved class. • The Attendance Wall Display is used effectively in Form rooms to set form class monthly targets. • A 'Reasons for Absence' slip was created and is now in the back of the pupil homework diary for parents to use. • The letter to collectively gather reasons for absence in the past has been welcomed. 			

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter of praise was introduced for pupils who had improved their attendance by 10%. • Report Comments in regard to attendance and the golden figure of 95% have been streamlined for parents. • Pupil Voice strategy was implemented through a pupil questionnaire created on google docs. The pupils had the opportunity to share their views on tackling poor attendance and celebrating excellent attendance. This proved to be an invaluable insight for me. 		
			Key Interventions

The Challenge of Improving Attendance – Interventions Identified in 2017/18 AY

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<p>8. Abbey Community College</p> <p>643 Attendance</p> <p>2011/12: School formed in September 2014 following an amalgamation of Monkstown Community School – 88.3%</p> <p>Newtownabbey Community High School – 88.1%</p> <p>2012/13 Monkstown Community School – 88.4%</p> <p>Newtownabbey Community High School – 90.1%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register taken in every class. • Use of student planners to record attendance – keep parents and students informed. • A standing item on the Pastoral Council agenda. • Parent app used for parent up-date on attendance (and access to data and reports). Now provided 4 times per year. • Letter sent home highlights the number of lessons missed in English, Maths, Science etc and effect on outcomes if poor attendance continues. (Key Stage 4). • Assemblies to show the link between attendance and success. • Focus assemblies – (monthly assemblies reference attendance performance). • Incentives & rewards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of Class of the month (in each year group)/Class of the year. Celebrated in assembly - Individual rewards - League tables • Breakfast club from 8.15am each morning. • Before school sport programme. • Parent Engagement Worker (Barnardos) linking with parents prior to the need for EWS involvement. (Continuity between feeder primary schools and Abbey Community College for students of concern). 	<p>New interventions with outcomes to be confirmed 2018/19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key factor: Parents and their relationship with child and school. • Parents limited in their understanding of the amount of support they could provide. • Students present with lack of motivation for school (apathy). • Parents not understanding the importance of education and misunderstanding the effects of absenteeism on attainment/performance. • Parents lack strategies to deal with a student who is unwilling to go to school. • Significant waiting lists for students requiring Educational Psychology assessment to support their learning needs. • Child apathy or feeling 'I am going to fail anyway'. • Financial hardship (priorities). • How parents view EWS and social services. • Neglect. • Pupil low self-esteem/finding it hard to make friends/feeling left out. 	<p>SIMS app</p> <p>Early Intervention.</p> <p>Rewards system.</p> <p>Student Mentoring/Pastoral Support/Extra – curricular activities.</p> <p>Contact letter.</p> <p>Scheduled parental interviews.</p> <p>Targeted parental interviews.</p> <p>Where possible – Additional External Agencies, eg Start 360/Barnardos/MVI.</p> <p>Relevant Curriculum for Success.</p> <p>Consideration given to uniform/PE costs.</p> <p>School emphasis on the supportive nature of EWO Services.</p> <p>Pastoral support/school counsellor/internal and external mentoring.</p>

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School	Interventions	Outcomes	Lessons Learnt	Key Interventions
2013/14: Monkstown Community School – 89.7% Newtownabbey Community High School – 89.1% 2014/15: N/A: Data lost during amalgamation. C2k access removed. 2015/16: 89.1% Attendance 2016/17 – 90% 2017/18 – 91% Key Issues: Mental Health Lack of motivation/apathy FSME: 46.8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building positive relationships with parents and child, support with routines and linking families to other family support services. Scheduled Pastoral interviews for year 8 especially in August and November. • At 95% attendance, if no note is provided class tutors call home. • At 90-94% attendance – letter sent home by HOY. • At 85-89 % attendance – a second letter sent home. • 84% attendance – EWO. 			

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<p>9. Hazelwood Integrated College</p> <p>954 Pupils</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>2011/12: 89.9%</p> <p>2012/13: 89.2%</p> <p>2013/14: 89.0%</p> <p>2014/15: 87.9%</p> <p>2015/16: 89.7%</p> <p>(Attendance 2016/17:89%)</p> <p>Key Issues:</p> <p>Attendance of Stage 5 SEN children – 88%</p> <p>attendance – huge issue</p> <p>572 FSM</p> <p>32 Newcomers</p> <p>103 Medical Conditions</p>	<p>Student Services Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of non-teaching staff. 1st Day contact system. Truancy Call Before Break & After Lunch. Communication 95%/92%/85%/82%. Monitoring interview. <p>Raise the Profile of Attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Line Agreement EWS. Attendance Policy. Pastoral Standards. Unity of Purpose Assemblies (Miss School Miss Out) Linked to qualifications & earnings. Dispel myth of 90% attendance. Punctuality. Standardised Form Tutor notice boards: Attendance Triangle/Monthly Class Printout (Where was I this time last year)/Attendance Codes Poster Traffic Light Poster. Staff Attendance Codes Flyer for every room. Social Media. Attendance Boards throughout school. Interim Reports/End of Year Reports Attendance Triangle Every School Day Counts. EWO Assemblies. KS4 Home visits. VP or HOY Weekly attendance conversations with students with a decrease in % from previous week. 	<p>Attendance Outcome not achieved.</p> <p>Educational outcomes improvement achieved.</p>	<p>Without parental engagement there is minimum positive/sustained improvement.</p>	<p>Teaching assistants are encouraged to take on a pastoral role for development purposes and to flag up attendance issues at regular reviews.</p> <p>TAs undertake action based research projects.</p> <p>Data drops to parents issued 4 times per year.</p> <p>Student Services Office (SSO) role.</p> <p>Weekly Post Assembly Attendance Conversations.</p>

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<p>215 Students below 85% school attendance</p> <p>FSME: 58.39%</p>	<p>Rewards and Incentives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOY Termly Trips/Treats 100%. • 100%/Improved Attendance Postcards. • Positively reintegrate absentees. • School Nurse SIMS. • Family Support Hub. <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral recruitment eg HOY interview questions. <p>Criteria for Success – This year = 88.8%/This time last year = 89.9%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance rate increases. • Authorised absence rate decreases. • Unauthorised absence rate decreases. • Improvement in individuals' attendance. • The profile of good attendance within the school community. 			

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<p>10. St Joseph's College, Coalisland</p> <p>362 Pupils</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>2011/12: 85.7%</p> <p>2012/13: 85.2%</p> <p>2013/14: 84.9%</p> <p>2014/15: 86.4%</p> <p>2015/16: 89.6%</p> <p>(Attendance 2016/17: 88.2%)</p> <p>Key Issues:</p> <p>FSME: 51.66%</p>	<p>Parental Guide to Attendance</p> <p>A "Parental Guide to Attendance" was sent out to all parents at the beginning of the school year to make them aware of our school's expectations of whole school attendance. It offered a brief synopsis of the whole school Attendance Policy in a simple brochure which can be kept at hand.</p> <p>Traffic Light System</p> <p>As part of our attendance strategy, we have been monitoring and addressing patterns of school attendance through a new "Traffic Lights" System. Each class received a certificate with their overall class percentage attendance. From this they are aware of which of the three Traffic Light Zones they are in as a class and then they are given a target percentage to try and achieve. The three different attendance zones are:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="925 772 1204 1243"> <thead> <tr> <th>Colour Zones</th> <th>Attendance Threshold</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Green Zone</td> <td>Attendance of 96% and above</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Amber Zone</td> <td>Attendance between 90% and 95.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Red Zone</td> <td>Attendance below 90%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>As a school, we want our pupils to take some ownership of their attendance and work together as a class to try and improve it. With continued help from their Form Teachers and support from classmates, we want to encourage each class and pupil to get into, or stay in the GREEN ZONE.</p>	Colour Zones	Attendance Threshold	Green Zone	Attendance of 96% and above	Amber Zone	Attendance between 90% and 95.9%	Red Zone	Attendance below 90%	<p>Parental Guide – Received guide.</p> <p>Traffic Lights System – Pupils actively asked about their percentage of attendance to see if it had improved. Three classes improved their attendance percentage and a number of individual students also. Some classes stayed the same and some percentages decreased. This intervention has worked for some and maybe due to the late introduction in the school year it didn't reach its full potential but the students and classes that made improvement will be rewarded in September and we will reignite the programme to run termly.</p>	<p>It is important to follow up on these activities on a regular basis and to make changes when necessary. Starting towards the end of a school year/last term is not a good time to start an attendance intervention. A fresh start in September may reap more reward.</p>	<p>New Traffic Lights System.</p>
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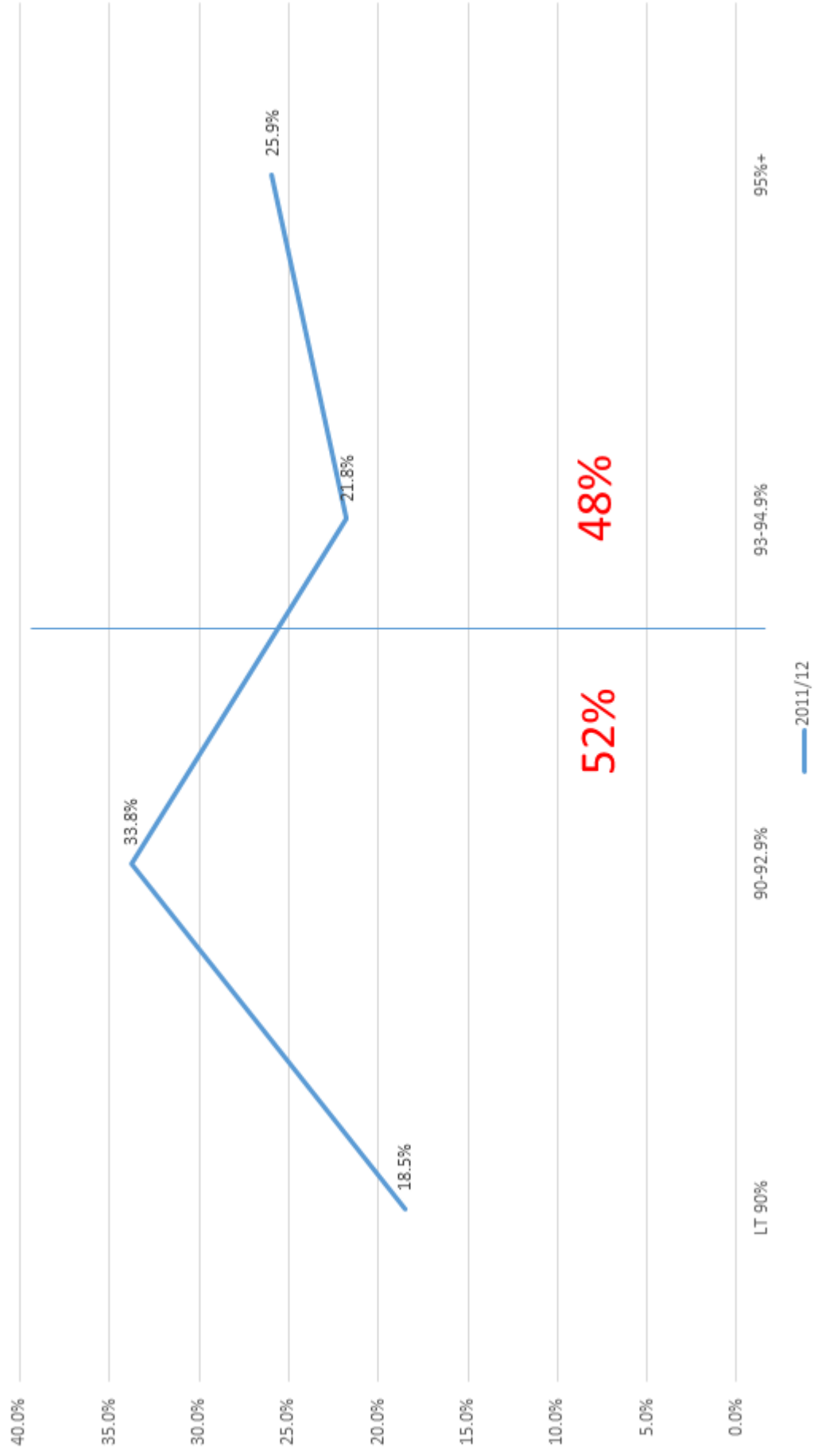
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	<p>Traffic Light Zones Each "Attendance Zone" represents different levels of pupil absence.</p> <p>Green Zone All classes who are in the "GREEN ZONE" have an attendance level of 96% or more. This zone recognises patterns of good to excellent school attendance. Classes who fall within this band are more likely to do well at school and achieve good results.</p> <p>Amber Zone All classes who are in the "Amber Zone" have an attendance level of between 90% and 95.9%. Classes with this level of attendance are a cause for concern and are at risk of under achieving at school.</p> <p>Red Zone All classes who are in the "Red Zone" have an attendance level of below 90%. Classes who fall within this zone have pupils who are regularly absent from school and are significantly less likely to achieve their potential. These classes will be closely monitored.</p>			

Annex B

Attendance Data 2011/12 Compared with 2016/2017

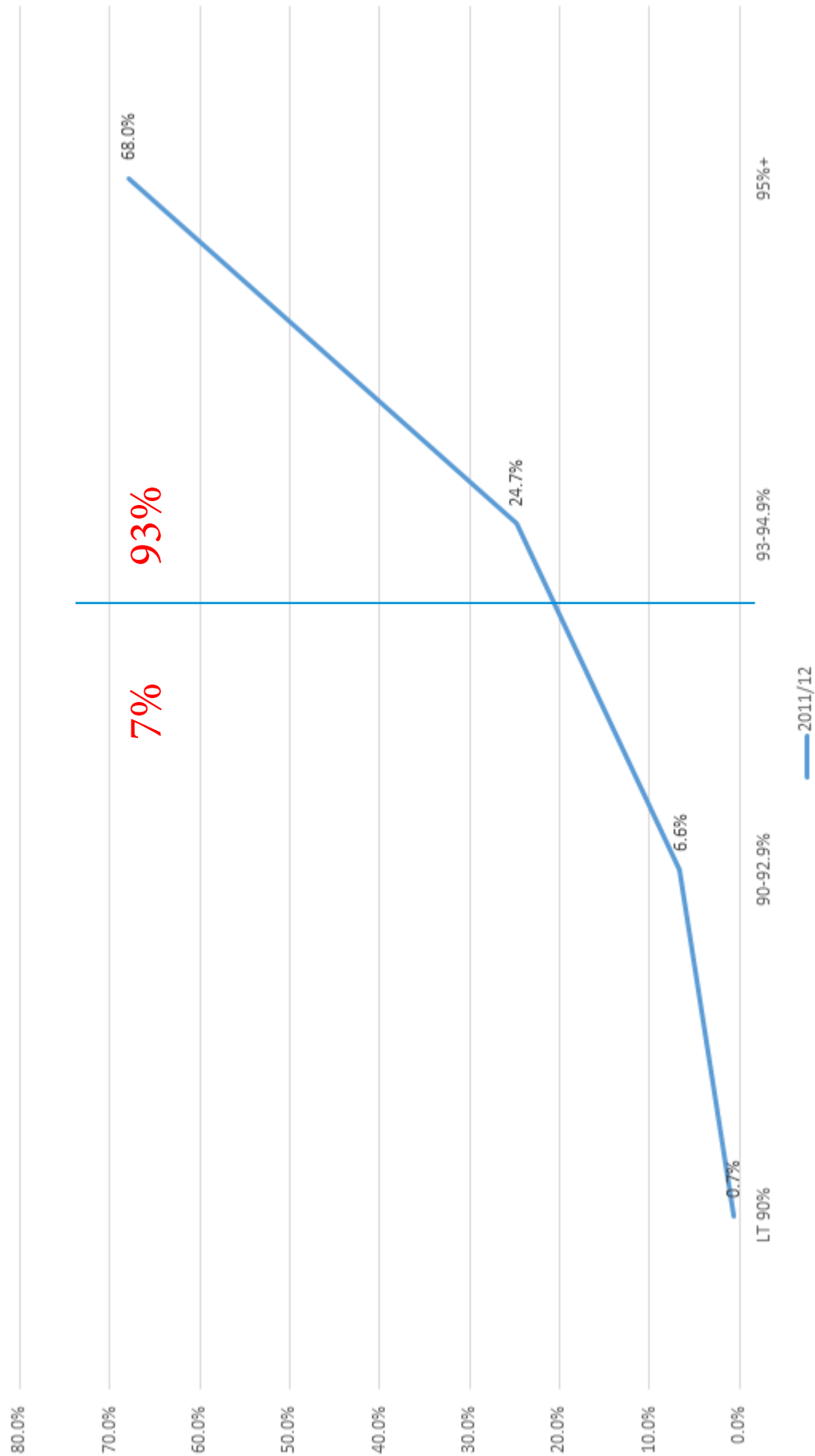
Percentage of Post-Primary Schools by attendance Band – 2011/12



Percentage of Post-Primary Schools by attendance Band - 2011/12 and 2016/17



Percentage of Primary Schools by attendance Band - 2011/12



Percentage of Primary Schools by attendance Band - 2011/12 to 2016/17

