



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

17th August 2023

Jean Contilheut

RE: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about school absence. I have read your comments with interest.

School absence rates are significantly higher than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the autumn term of 2019, persistent absence rates (where pupils were missing from school for at least ten percent of sessions) stood at 13.1 percent. By the same term of 2022, the figure had risen to 24.2 percent.

These statistics are very concerning. Absence clearly affects pupil attainment and achievement, and often puts children at significant risk of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation. The reasons behind this seismic change range from post-lockdown parent attitudes towards school attendance, to pupil anxiety and medical issues.

The Government plans to increase school attendance rates by expanding the sector-led attendance hubs programme (with nine new lead hub schools supporting up to 600 schools in England) and attendance mentors in areas of the country with the highest levels of pupil absence. Practice shared by hubs may include automatic text messaging to parents and using data effectively to identify children at risk of poor attendance and trigger early intervention.

These new measures build on the Government's existing attendance strategy: new expectations set out in guidance for schools, trusts and local authorities; a national attendance data dashboard providing more up-to-date attendance data, so schools can target the most vulnerable; and the work of the national Attendance Action Alliance.


The Department for Education also recently launched a call for evidence on 'Improving Support for Children Missing Education' in England. The consultation is now closed; and I look forward to reading the findings of the consultation in due course.

Whilst I note your concerns, I believe that they are misplaced. The vast majority of home education is already done well, but particularly in light of the pandemic contributing to a rise in children not being educated in school, the Government is looking to take steps to support local authorities to make sure they know where every child is being educated, that it is of the right quality, and that support is offered to home educating families.

My ministerial colleagues and I are committed to ensuring that all children, especially the most vulnerable in our society, are safe and have access to an excellent education.



Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**