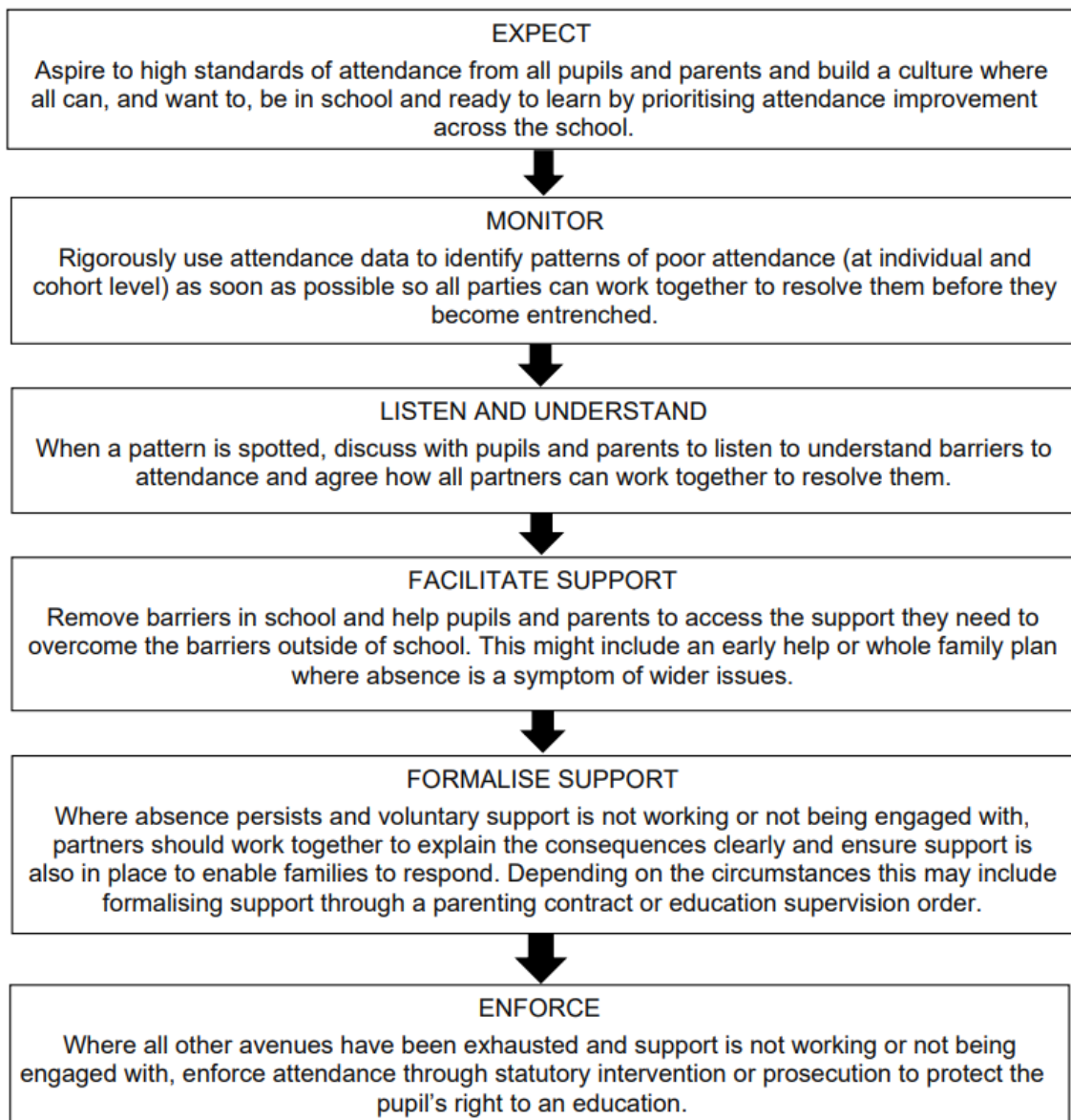




Pupil Attendance Strategy

Introduction

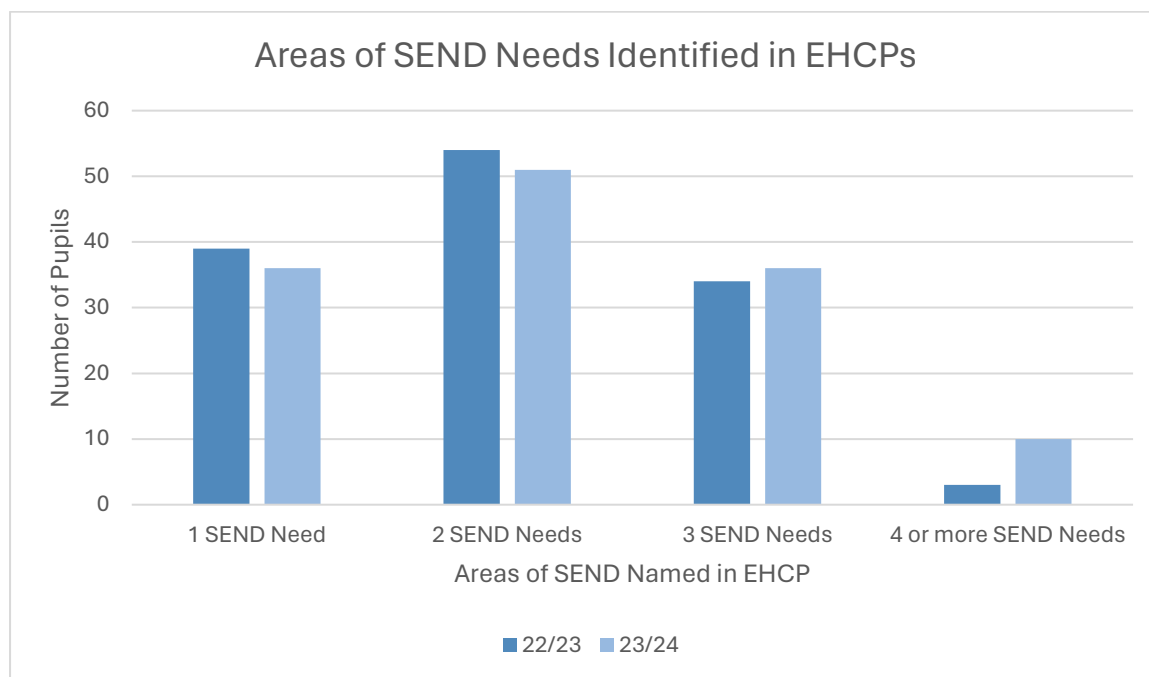
Consistent attendance at school leads to beneficial outcomes for pupils including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances, and we firmly recognise that every child has the right to a full-time education; as a result, we are committed to ensuring the very highest levels of attendance for pupils at Bedelsford school. Whilst we recognise that there are significant challenges for some Bedelsford pupils attending school consistently, we believe that working collaboratively with families and local partners is essential and adopt the following framework when promoting pupil attendance:



Source: *Working together to improve school attendance*

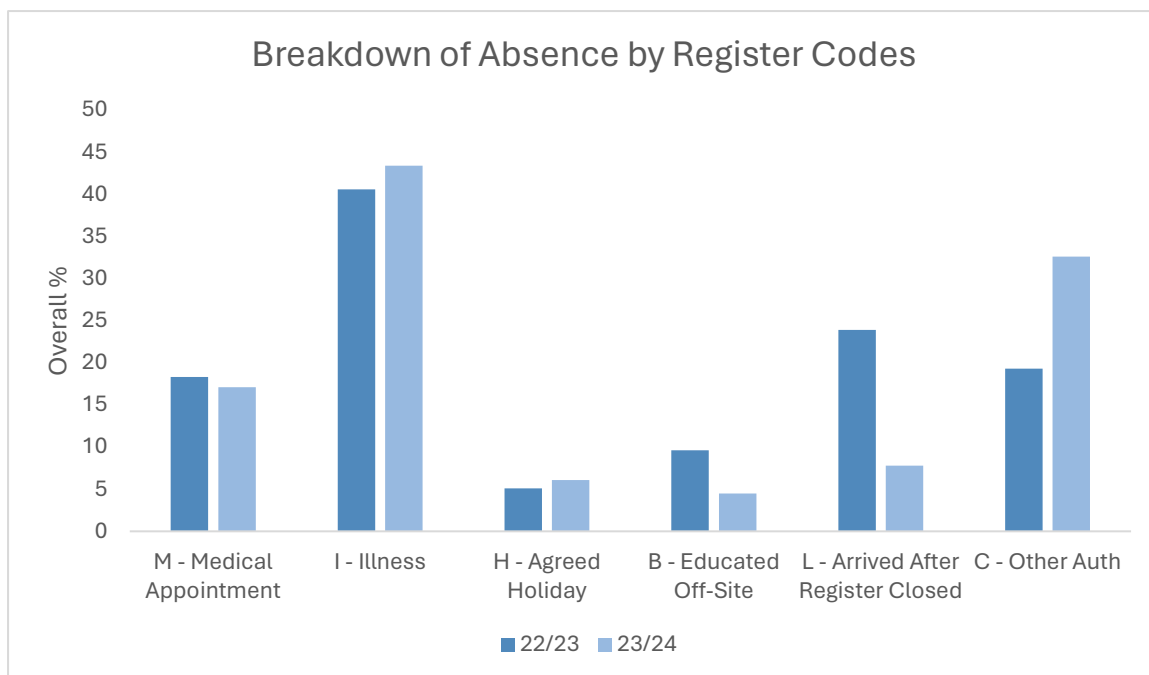
School Context

As of January 2024, overall attendance at Bedelsford was lower across the school than attendance from the previous academic year (82% YTD versus 85% 22/23 overall). One contributory factor behind this change is increased complexity in the profile of pupil need. We have seen an increase in the number of pupils with recognised medical conditions as well as a greater proportion of pupils who have multiple areas of SEND named in their EHCP:



Attendance for different groups of pupils is broadly commensurate with the whole school average. 2023/2024 has seen an increase in the number of pupils classes as severely absent which is explained by changes to register codes being used for pupils accessing the *Hybrid* curriculum (see below). Attendance by groups of pupils for the current academic year (to Feb Half-Term 2024) and for the whole of the 2022/2023 academic year is as follows:

	2022/2023	2023/2024 (to Feb ½ Term)
Overall	85%	82%
Persistent Absence	68 pupils	66 pupils
Severe Absence	6 pupils	14 pupils
Boys	86.4%	81.5%
Girls	82.8%	82%
Disadvantaged	85.3%	85.6%
EMA	85.7%	80.8%
EAL	84.7%	83.1%

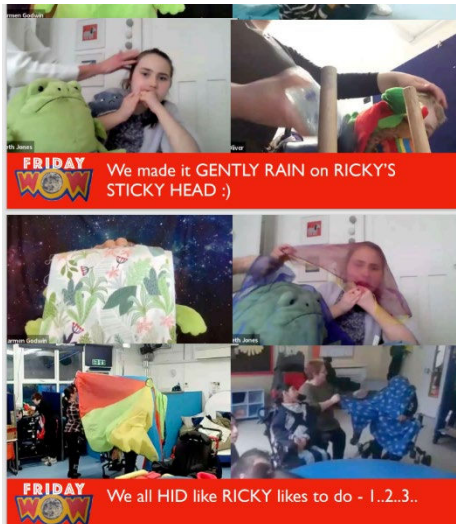


The three biggest reasons for pupil absence across 22/23 and 23/24 are illness, late arrival, and medical appointments. The single biggest area of absence – illness – has seen an increase of approx. 3% in absence between 22/23 and 23/24 (to Feb half-term) and we are in the process of reviewing all toilets and personal care facilities across the school to ensure that they consistently clean and hygienic throughout the day to try and reduce risks associated with these areas.

Hybrid Curriculum

In September 2022, we launched the *Hybrid* curriculum. This ensures that pupils who are not attending school due to significant medical needs / vulnerabilities are able to maintain some level of educational offer. The *Hybrid* curriculum typically comprises of learning packs supplied by the class team, as well as regular online sessions.

Sessions can include lessons delivered by the pupil's class team, a daily singing / signing session – the *Wownow club* – which is led by specialist providers with a theatrical background. Pupils at home join pupils in school to participate in singing / signing activities together which is then followed up by a newsletter emailed to staff and families. Below is a screenshot from one such newsletter:



Pupils accessing the *Hybrid* curriculum can also join in with communal events such as assemblies. We regularly include pupils who are based at home in the school's weekly *Star of the Week* assembly, where families join using an online link and staff use an Ipad to show the pupil at home what is happening in the assembly hall.

Currently, there are seven pupils on roll at Bedelsford who access the Hybrid curriculum:

Pupil 1	1 day per week remote learning (Pupil attends school for the other four days each week)
Pupil 2	4 days per week remote learning (Pupil attends school for the remaining one day each week)
Pupil 3	5 days each week remote learning
Pupil 4	5 days each week remote learning, including two sessions delivered in person
Pupil 5	5 days each week remote learning, including one session delivered in person every second week
Pupil 6	5 days each week remote learning, including one session delivered in person
Pupil 7	5 days each week remote learning

The school employs a full-time teacher to oversee the delivery of the *Hybrid* curriculum who liaises closely with families, class staff as well as members of the transdisciplinary team to ensure that each pupil package of support is providing the best education and care for that pupil. Following advice from the Education Welfare service, we have recently revised the register codes being used for pupils accessing the *Hybrid* curriculum and this is the main reason why there has been an increase in the number of pupils classed as severely absent in 2023-2024.

Working with Families to Promote Attendance

Whilst the school has always valued and emphasised the value of strong relationships with families, this philosophy was formalised in July 2023 when Bedelsford secured the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The award provided us with a structured process to ensure that there was increased parental participation in the life of the school, including for those families that had previously been seen as hard to engage with. Following this work, we have developed several small case studies of improved pupil attendance following work with families

Case Study 1		
KS2	22/23 Attendance: 60.7%	23/24 Attendance: 83%
Background:	<p>Pupil A is a pupil in KS2. Pupil A has high sensory sensitivity, resulting in emotional distress and impacting negatively on Pupil A's day to day activities. Pupil A was in a class during the 2021-2022 where two of her peers died.</p> <p>Pupil A's Mother reports concerns with her health which can impact on her attendance. Pupil A is seen by the PACE clinic in Kingston Hospital. Pupil A's Mother expressed concerns about Pupil A's day in school and what school were doing to support her to access the toilet regularly. This impacted on how often she was attending school due to pain.</p> <p>During the academic year 2022/23, Pupil A's attendance was 60.7%. In February 2023, Pupil A was living in temporary accommodation with her Mother and sibling.</p>	
Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>We submitted a family support referral for the family. A social worker now supports the family.</p> <p>We held regular meetings with Pupil A's Mother, Social Worker and school team (including therapists) to put in place solutions to problems being raised.</p> <p>Occupational Therapy reviewed the toilet seat being used in the class' bathroom. The toilet seat was swapped out for a softer one to allow Pupil A more time to facilitate a bowel movement. The class team put in communication strategies between home and school so that Pupil A's fluid intake could be recorded. SALT and the class team developed</p> <p>Pupil A received a block of group Music Therapy with her peers to support with their bereavement. Pupil A engaged well with the sessions.</p>	
Impact:	<p>Following the support provided by school, Pupil A's attendance has improved. Her attendance between September 2023 and January 2024 has now increased to 83%.</p> <p>Pupil A is settled in school with no concerns raised from the class team about her health or emotional wellbeing. Pupil A's Mother engages with the school positively.</p>	

Case Study 2		
KS1	22/23 Attendance: 79.1%	23/24 Attendance: 92.3%
Background:	<p>Pupil B is a pupil in KS1. During the academic year 2022/23, Pupil B's attendance was 79.1%.</p> <p>Pupil B's Father reported difficulty in getting Pupil B into school on time due to needing to drop Pupil B's siblings at different schools at the same time. Pupil B's Mother has her own health concerns and was unable to support with picking up/dropping off Pupil B in the school day.</p> <p>We had referred into Family Support before but Pupil B did not meet the threshold for intervention.</p>	

Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>We challenged this social care decision and submitted another family support referral for the family. Following extensive discussions with the social care team triaging referrals it was accepted and passed for assessment.</p> <p>A social worker now supports the family. CIN meetings were held to facilitate opportunities where support could be offered to the family where needed. School and the social team supported the family with a transport application as soon as Pupil B was eligible for transport.</p>
Impact:	<p>Following the support provided by school, Pupil B's attendance has improved. Her attendance from September to January has now increased to 92.3%. Pupil B is happy to be in school and her social worker remains in place to support the family and regular CIN meetings are held.</p>

Case Study 3		
KS3	22/23 Attendance: 86%	23/24 Attendance: 95.5%
Background:	<p>Pupil C is a pupil in KS3. His attendance was 86.0% in 2022-2023 due to significant parental anxiety around his health as well as Mum's own mother suffering a severe fall when at home.</p> <p>Mum was struggling to manage to look after her Mum as well as manage school attendance, she called the school to report that Pupil C was unwell and unable to attend school. She would email to say, 'I'm having difficulty coping with terrible anxiety again, have not been well.' and asked to keep him home all week</p>	
Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>We informed Pupil C's social worker and decided to offer additional therapy sessions for Pupil C to develop his stamina and skills to show Mum that he is progressing and is safe within the school environment even though Mum felt anxious about him being in school. This process was slow but we worked carefully with Mum, allocating her a single point of contact from the school, to build her trust and gradually Pupil C attended school more regularly.</p> <p>We also supported Mum to seek a GP appointment and referral for her own mental health needs.</p>	
Impact:	<p>Pupil C's attendance has risen to 95.5%. He recently attended a neurological music therapy session with his physiotherapist and received music therapy to support him in achieving his MOVE goals. He achieved his goal of walking most confidently when holding hoops and is continuing to excel in school.</p>	

Case Study 4		
EYFS	22/23 Attendance: 83.5%	23/24 Attendance: 99.3%
Background:	<p>Pupil D is a pupil in EYFS. At the beginning of 2022-2023, he began attending Bedelsford School Nursery and was initially brought to school by both of his Parents, and he found the transition process of saying goodbye to his Parents extremely challenging. e.g. he would hold on tight to his Dad's neck, cry loudly, and turn away from the approaching staff member, causing him and his parents considerable distress every day.</p> <p>At the same time, we became aware that Parents were having difficulty in obtaining support for the family from Social Services due to the language barrier (they both speak Cantonese and some English) due to the type of visa they held.</p> <p>Class staff reported a safeguarding concern that Pupil D was absent from school more than expected due to anxiety as well as parents' worries that he was not settling well into the school's routines. His attendance was 83.5% in 2022-2023.</p>	
Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>We organised a meeting with parents in a safe and supportive atmosphere to assess Parents' concerns and discuss planned support. Parents were concerned that engaging with the school regarding their child's attendance issues could negatively impact their visa. As a result, they have agreed to meet informally with the class teacher and head of the primary department, as well as a Bedelsford School teaching assistant whom they trust to convey their visa worries and anxiety about an official meeting.</p> <p>During a low-key and supportive meeting, it was discovered that Mum suffers from a long-term genetic complex medical condition. The parents expressed concern that Pupil D was developing negative feelings about attending school and were convinced that their visa conditions were preventing them from obtaining support from Social Care, leaving them exhausted from caring for Pupil D as they felt very isolated in the local community and did not have any family members to rely on for help.</p> <p>We spoke extensively to colleagues in social care who informed us that the family were eligible for social care support. Following a referral to RBK SPA, Pupil D was allocated a Family Support Worker who organises regular TAC meetings. The class Teacher, Head of Primary and Parents have agreed on strategic points regarding Pupil D's Positive Behaviour Plan where he would be walked by his Dad into his classroom every morning and greeted by the class teacher instead of being met at the busy Reception School area. The Teaching Assistant would continue having supportive conversations with Parents to reduce their anxiety regarding his settling process and reduce Parents' anxiety when engaging with Senior Leaders in school.</p>	

Impact:	<p>Following the support provided by the school, Pupil D's attendance has improved to 99.3%. Pupil D is settled in school and is making good progress. The Family Support Worker has been working closely with the family and provides ongoing support with organising short breaks and respite. Parents are now much happier to engage with Bedelsford School staff and SLT without any concerns regarding their visa.</p> <p>Pupil D has made remarkable progress in his confidence and independence. He has progressed from walking into his classroom to being met at the school's reception area in the same way as the rest of the pupils do. Since September 2023, he has been using the school bus to arrive at school, and he seems to enjoy it, arriving at school with a big grin!</p>
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Case Study 5		
KS3	22/23 Attendance: 84%	23/24 Attendance: 91.6%
Background:	<p>In 2022-2023 Pupil E's attendance was 84% due to him experiencing ongoing seizures throughout the night as well during the school day. He was under specialist care at Great Ormand Street but they were struggling to manage his seizures. He was put on increased anti-epileptic drugs, which, in turn, made him sleepy and significantly reduced his appetite.</p> <p>Pupil E's weight started falling dramatically, and he was referred to the Gastro Team to discuss gastrostomy. Pupil E was having long naps in the morning after broken nights, and his Parents were grateful that he could recuperate his strength through sleep. However, it meant that his attendance was falling for this reason as well as because his Parents were struggling for a time slot between his seizures and sleep to offer him food. Pupil E himself was either too sleepy or too tired to eat properly.</p>	
Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>We approached Mum during her late drop-offs at school and offered a supportive conversation regarding Pupil E's attendance. It was established that Mum was struggling between feeling guilty that his seizures were not managed by appropriate medication and knowing how much he enjoyed being at school that he was now missing daily.</p> <p>Mum was concerned that should Pupil E move class next year, his new team would not be as aware of his needs as the current one, and he might lose even more weight. We discussed these concerns with Mum and with Pupil E's social worker and agreed that the Class Team will be more than happy to provide Pupil E with ongoing access to food so he can eat throughout the day.</p> <p>We also involved the School Nurse and SALT have been in being aware that although Pupil E developed an interest in 'beige food only,' it will be appropriate for him to eat whatever he wants as long as his calorie intake is increased. The school Nurse has been working closely with the Consultant on trialling a new anti-epilepsy medicine regime that would reduce seizures.</p>	
Impact:	<p>Following the enhanced package of support, Pupil E's attendance has increased to 91.6%. His epilepsy is now managed a lot more effectively meaning that he is now able to eat and sleep properly. There are no longer concerns around his weight and Mum has built strong and positive relationships with all members of his class team this year.</p>	

Case Study 6		
KS2	22/23 Attendance: 68.4%	23/24 Attendance: 78.5%
Background:	<p>Pupil F's attendance was affected due to epilepsy and, therefore, a broken sleep pattern.</p> <p>Additionally, Pupil F refuses to eat in new environments, resulting in only a few mouthfuls of his lunch at school. In conversations that staff held with parents we felt that they lacked the confidence and the strategies needed to enforce consistent routines at home around bedtime in particular which could potentially enhance his sleep patterns. Pupil F's attendance in 2022-2023 was 68.4%</p>	
Input provided by Bedelsford:	<p>During his EHCP meeting, we discussed with parents the importance of bringing Pupil F to school regularly. Despite his epilepsy and disturbed sleep patterns, he had been making expected progress in his studies. His parents were thrilled to see him doing well in school, and it was agreed that they would bring him to school regularly to encourage a more normalised sleep pattern development and help him settle into a school routine so he could make even more progress in his learning.</p> <p>We liaised with the school nurse and they referred Pupil F to a dietitian at Kingston Hospital to explore food alternatives for him at school and encourage him to try new tastes and textures. As part of this process, parents were asked to focus on a variety of textures and tastes. In addition, a social worker visited their home twice to support the family with implementing consistent routines at home.</p> <p>It was agreed with the Class Teacher that to promote Pupil F's educational progress, both Parents would be able to access the school's learning platform called Evidence for Learning, where they would be able to watch videos of his day in school as well as ongoing assessments against his EHCP targets. It was felt that seeing him have great days at school would motivate parents to prioritise nighttime routines as well as attendance in school.</p>	
Impact:	<p>As an outcome of the above, Pupil F's attendance increased to 78.5%. His eating remains a concern and we are continuing to work with the health professionals, his social worker, and with his parents to overcome these as well as to continue to improve his attendance at school.</p>	

Actions

Since September 2023, we have implemented several additional interventions to boost pupil attendance:

- Increased the package of support being provided by the local authority Education Welfare service and now meet with them every half-term. The Education Welfare service support the school by looking at whole-school attendance strategy and by looking at individual case studies of severely absent pupils.
- Updated the school's attendance policy to better reflect the changing needs of the school cohort.
- Commenced the silver level *Attachment Aware Award for Schools*. Bedelsford secured the bronze level award in 2022 and our current work towards the silver level is being led by the Vice Principal, working in partnership with the local authority. We are implementing an enhanced attachment aware approach to pupil mental health and wellbeing which research has shown in other settings can lead to significant increases in pupil attendance as well as improved pupil wellbeing outcomes.
- We have expanded the number of pupils who access the *Hybrid* curriculum to ensure that, where pupils are not able to consistently attend school due to their health / medical needs, there is a regular educational offer that is challenging and well-matched to their needs available. We are currently liaising with our Finance and HR teams with a view to expanding the overall capacity of the 'Hybrid' curriculum so that greater support can be provided to those pupils who are severely absent and struggle to regularly attend school.
- Reviewed the register codes being used, particularly for those pupils who are in receipt of remote / home learning through the school's *Hybrid* curriculum.
- Revamped the process for families to request planned term-time leave from school. The process is now much more robust and transparent. The previous system required a request form to be completed which was then either approved or declined, we now hold an individual face to face meeting with the family and discuss the need for the planned absence in relation to the school's criteria for 'exceptional circumstances'. Planned absence lasting greater than one week is subject to regular video call welfare checks, evidence of therapy / educational provision, and all planned absence outside of the UK requires evidence of return flights to the UK.
- In consultation with the Education Welfare team, we have reviewed the time at which a small number of pupils are marked as late to ensure that we are setting realistic and achievable expectations for those pupils and their families. Where a pupil has a documented medical condition which makes it harder for them to attend, we have amended the time to set a specific time for each pupil before they are marked as 'late' that is personal to that pupil and their individual circumstances.
- We are currently undertaking a full review of all changing / toileting facilities across the school for both pupils and staff to ensure that facilities are clean and hygienic and are helping to reduce the transmission of viruses / bugs etc. This review includes ensuring that facilities are in good working order, that supplies are regularly replenished, and that the areas are cleaned effectively on a regular basis.