

Appendix 1 - Case Study: Improving Attendance for Pupils at Risk of Persistent Absence

This case study explores a pilot initiative targeting pupils with **85–95% attendance** a group close to becoming persistently absent (below 90%). Evidence shows that timely, supportive communication with parents can help improve attendance and prevent further decline.

Pilot

From January to March 2025, Camden Council piloted a parental messaging intervention in three primary schools (Rhyl Community, Fleet, and Primrose Hill), with further testing underway at Haverstock secondary. The approach centred on sending empathetic, personalised text messages to parents of pupils at risk of persistent absence.

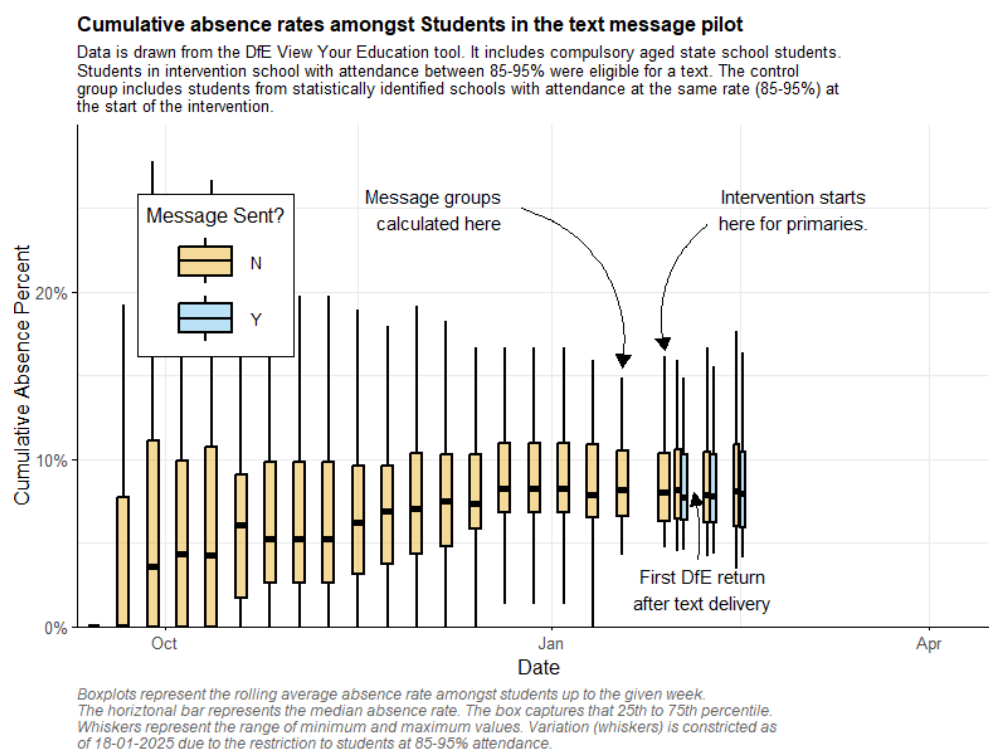
Messages were informed by interviews with staff and families, focusing on barriers that prevent parents from seeking help and exploring how schools can engage more effectively.

Approach

1. Personalised Messaging - use the child's name and reflect family context.
2. Empathetic Tone – recognise barriers like health, housing, or cultural factors.
3. Relatable Framing – visualise impact of absence (e.g., “days missed = books not read”).
4. Trust-building – present the school as a partner, not an enforcer.

Outcomes

- Pupils whose parents received messages had a 1% higher attendance over three weeks.
- The biggest gains were seen in the first week, suggesting strong impact when timed around dips.
- Attendance gains were isolated to those receiving messages, not part of a wider trend.



Conclusion

This low-cost, scalable intervention shows early signs of success in improving attendance. Personalised and empathetic messaging can reconnect schools and families—helping to address issues before they lead to persistent absence.