

# Understanding the impact of school choices for improving attendance and reducing exclusions

## Project Information Sheet for Case-Study Schools

### 1. Why are you receiving this information?

You have been contacted by the [National Foundation for Educational Research](#) (NFER), or our partner on the project, [The Difference](#), to take part in this study as a school case-study and this information sheet provides you with further details about what this involves.

By participating in the study, you will contribute to an understanding of the different approaches used by publicly-funded mainstream secondary schools in England to improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

### 2. What is the purpose of this research?

[Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) and the [Youth Endowment Fund](#) (YEF) have commissioned and funded NFER and The Difference to carry out this study. In this phase of the research we are investigating school's approaches to internal alternative provision (AP) (including having no internal AP) to gain an understanding of their impact on suspensions, exclusions, unexplained school exits<sup>1</sup> and persistent absence.

### 3. What does being a case-study school involve?

A researcher will liaise with a key contact at the school to arrange a visit. The visit will last up to two days and take place on a convenient date between November 2024 and January 2025.

The visit will involve:

- **Interviews with three school staff** – including the staff member with responsibility for leading the internal AP/support for pupils at risk of persistent absence/exclusion (Duration: 45 minutes) and two other members of school staff, likely to include those responsible for the delivery of support and/or for referring students for support (Duration: 30 minutes per interview). We will liaise with the key contact to identify school staff to take part.

Interviews with selected staff members involved in the leadership and in the delivery of support to pupils at risk of persistent absence/exclusion will enable a detailed understanding of the school's approach.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. students who move between schools or who leave their school to an unknown destination that cannot reasonably explained through family reasons (such as a change of geographic area or parents in military service).

- **Interviews with four students** at risk of persistent absence/exclusion (Duration: 30 minutes per interview)

Interviews with students are important to understand their views and experiences of the support provided. Our researchers are experienced at working with children and young people and have the relevant background checks in place. To ensure students are able to speak freely to researchers, while minimising any safeguarding risks, we plan to interview students individually in semi-supervised environments, such as the corner of an otherwise empty classroom while a member of school staff is available to allow visual supervision but cannot hear what is being said. Schools will be asked to nominate students in two broad categories: those whom they consider have benefited most and least from their experiences of school support. We will ask the school to provide the parents/carers of nominated students with an information sheet about the study and a form to complete to confirm they agree to their child taking part.

- **Observation of support** provided to students at risk of persistent absence/exclusion (Duration: 60-90mins)

We will seek to undertake observations in school where appropriate. These will provide insights into what students at risk of exclusion/persistent absence experience when they participate in internal AP/receive support. They will also provide opportunities for the researcher to build rapport with students and staff prior to carrying out interviews.

- **Interviews with two parent/carers** of students at risk of persistent absence/exclusion - conducted by phone/video call after the visit (Duration: 30 minutes per interview)

Our preference is to interview parents/carers of students selected for interview. During the student interviews we will explain the purpose of the parent/carer interviews and ask permission to contact their parents/carers to take part. However, if the selected students do not wish their parents/carers to be involved, or if selected parents/carers themselves, once contacted, do not wish to be interviewed, we would look to invite parents/carers of other students to take part in the interviews instead. We will ask the school to facilitate interviews with parents/carers (e.g. by providing information about the study and or/sharing contact details with their permission). Parent/carer interviews will take place online/by telephone at a date and time that is convenient for them.

- **Completion of costs data form**

We are interested in finding out about the costs for schools associated with supporting students at risk of persistent absence/exclusion. We want to understand the amount of staff time spent on supporting these students (time costs) as well as any financial costs incurred by the school. The costs data form will be sent to schools electronically in advance to allow time for completion and to liaise with staff such as the school finance officer, if necessary. We can discuss any points of clarification during the visit.

#### 4. Recognition for contributing to the study

In appreciation of the time involved in hosting case-study visits, each case study school will receive £300. School staff and parents/carers who take part in interviews will be provided with an Amazon

voucher to the value of £30 for shorter interviews and £45 for more in-depth interviews. In the case of student interviews, schools will be allocated £30 per pupil interview. We will liaise with individual schools to identify an appropriate way of distributing these funds for students that aligns with their school policies. This could include, for example, contributing to a school trip/activity or resources for students to the equivalent value.

### 5. Keeping school staff, students and parents/carers involved in the study safe

The safety and wellbeing of school staff, students and parents/carers involved in this study are very important to the research team. The team are aware of the sensitivity of the topic. We do not anticipate any harm to individuals taking part in this study. NFER has robust safeguarding protocols in place to protect individuals during the visit. All researchers undertaking the interviews and case-study visits have Enhanced DBS certificates.

### 6. How will NFER and The Difference use and protect the data collected?

With permission, interviews will be recorded using an encrypted audio-recorder when done in-person or using Google Meet, Microsoft Teams or Zoom when done remotely. This will enable us to produce accurate interview transcripts.

All personal data gathered during this study will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR 2021, stored securely and treated in the strictest confidence by NFER and The Difference. We will not name individuals or schools in any report arising from this work. Interview data will be analysed and presented at individual and school level.

Further information about how your data will be processed and who to contact if you wish to withdraw from data processing can be found in the [privacy notice for school staff](#) for the study.

### 7. How will the findings be reported?

A final report will be produced from the project and will be published on the EEF website in autumn 2025 (planned date).

### 8. Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any queries about the project, please contact the NFER project team at: [pupilsupport@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:pupilsupport@nfer.ac.uk).