

Behaviour and Attendance Review

John Spence
Community High School

3 February 2026

John Spence Community High School: Behaviour and Attendance Review

School Context

John Spence Community High School is an average-sized secondary school in North Tyneside with over 850 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupil premium students is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEN support is close to the national average, whereas those with an EHCP is above average.

Over half of the school population is identified as living in IDACI bands 1 and 2, areas that are more deprived than most areas in England.

Review team:

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This review forms part of the commitment of Pele Trust to review behaviour and attendance principles and practices in all schools each academic year. The review comprised a comprehensive range of activities, including:

1. An online behaviour survey was made available to all staff before the review day, which was completed by 38 staff members (teaching and support staff)
2. Observation of pupils' entrance and punctuality to school
3. Meetings with the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Lead
4. Staff voice meeting with 5 staff members (teaching and support staff)
5. Observation of break and lunchtime
6. Pupil voice meeting with Year 8 pupils
7. Pupil voice meeting with Year 10 pupils
8. Lesson visits (sample across KS3 and 4)

Summary of review findings

Leaders have thought carefully about the culture and approach to behaviour at John Spence Community High School. The school's approach to behaviour has had a notable impact on the overall culture, where staff know, support and care for pupils. Strong relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of this. Consequently, pupils report feeling happy and secure. The school environment is typically calm and lessons are settled and purposeful. Leaders frequently analyse data and respond to emerging needs.

Leaders are relentless in their approach to ensure more pupils attend school more often. Pupils understand why attendance is important. As a result, there has been a demonstrable improvement in attendance rates.

Behaviour

Leaders have systematically developed the behaviour approach through clear policies and comprehensive engagement with staff, pupils, and parents/carers. Staff are well-trained in the school's behaviour approach. Pupils know and understand the rules and expectations. As a result of leaders' actions, the approach is embedded across the school. There is clarity and simplicity in the routines for behaviour management, enabling both staff and pupils to focus on learning in classrooms. Praise is used effectively to motivate and reward pupils. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about receiving praise, positive Class Charts points and certificates.

Pupils and staff agree that most pupils behave well. Where this is not the case, staff apply the school's behaviour policy. While the majority of pupils and staff agree that rules are applied clearly and consistently, Year 8 pupils were less convinced that this was the case. This may require some further analysis by school leaders. Staff believe the behaviour system is now embedded but welcome refinements to address emerging needs when they arise.

Staff are appreciative of the information and communication they receive from pastoral staff and senior leaders. They say this helps them to understand how best to support pupils in their classrooms and tutor groups. Staff agree that the majority of pupils behave well. They note that there remains a core of pupils who are harder to reach and who continue to disrupt learning for others. Staff generally feel well supported by leaders; they understand that sometimes leaders may need to make different decisions in the best interests of children. They appreciate it when this is communicated to them. Leaders and staff reflected that there has been an increase in behaviour sanctions this half term.

Staff recognise the changing context in school over the last few years. For example, a shift in pupil demographic, the increase of 50 pupils joining the school in year 9 and 10 this year, and the increase in SEND needs. Staff noted the impact of this on behaviour and classroom practice, and are conscious of balancing support and making reasonable adjustments while maintaining consistency of the behaviour system. With this in mind, staff would welcome further CPD to share best practice around this and to develop their classroom practice further.

During the review, 12 lessons were visited on a 'drop-in' basis. The lessons had a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils responded well to their teachers and followed the behaviour expectations. No lessons were interrupted by low-level disruption or behaviour incidents. Relationships between teachers and pupils were positive. Pupils generally had positive attitudes to learning.

The 'fundamental five' approach to lessons is a key focus for teachers. Leaders regularly undertake quality assurance activities focusing on these five aspects. Anecdotally, they report that the behaviour for learning strand is always one of the strongest areas identified. It may be useful for leaders to consider including this information, alongside the wealth of behaviour data they have, to develop a holistic picture of behaviour and attitudes to learning, to identify and share best practice and target any areas for further development.

Pupils recognise and appreciate the positive relationships they have with the staff. Interactions throughout the school are warm and respectful. This creates a supportive and caring environment where pupils feel safe and supported; they know who to speak to about concerns. They all have a trusted adult whom they would go to if they had any worries. One pupil stated that the school is 'a place where everyone is welcomed'. Pupils can articulate the distinction between bullying and friendship issues; they do not view bullying as a significant problem and are confident that discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated. Records show that staff act appropriately when concerns are raised.

Leaders maintain a rigorous focus on analysing behaviour data to identify trends and refine systems, and to inform actions and interventions. For those pupils who do not meet the school's high expectations, an effective approach to understanding their behaviour, along with support to reflect and adapt this, is in place. Pupils spoken to during the review emphasised the importance of positive teacher relationships, noting that a supportive yet firm approach encourages their engagement.

Pupils receive timely help when they exhibit behaviour that falls short of the expectations or is challenging. Staff use various strategies to help pupils to succeed in school. The triage meeting is now ensuring a more robust, holistic approach to support and intervention for individuals (SEN, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and well-being). It is also ensuring a more integrated approach to support and intervention. Targeted small-group interventions, including, for example, Boys to Men (mountain walking) and the This Life programmes, are effective. Pupils who had received this type of intervention confirmed that this had made a difference to them. Furthermore, the internal SEC provision provides successful short-term support for some pupils with barriers to attendance or who struggle to meet expectations, with evidence of impact. Data suggests that some pupils who have accessed short-term off-site direction return successfully to school with appropriate support in place.

Leaders demonstrate that actions taken to tackle issues have an impact. For example, the Year 7 cohort was exhibiting physical behaviours early in the first half term. After targeted work with key groups and clear expectations set, leading to an initial rise in suspensions, this was reduced significantly in half-term 2. Despite these successes, leaders continue to navigate emerging challenges. Data indicates an increase in referrals to the Behaviour Centre and suspensions, particularly during Half Term 3, with Years 8 and 9 remaining the cohorts of most concern. There remains a core group of 18 pupils (2.5% of the school population) in a cycle of repeated suspensions. Leaders are currently reviewing this group in order to refine their systems and individualised strategies to break this cycle in order to support these hard-to-reach pupils.

Leaders have reduced the number of pupils attending off-site or alternative education this academic year. Where it is used, leaders have a clear rationale for the use of alternative provision, used only where it is deemed appropriate, carefully considering both the pupil and the provision for suitability.

Attendance

Leaders place a high priority on attendance and have developed several strategies to improve the rigour around attendance and to tackle issues of poor attendance. Daily procedures are in place to rigorously follow up on any absence. When absence increases and the persistent absence threshold is reached, the school works collaboratively with families to understand the individual barriers to good attendance. Working with parents and carers to identify the barriers for pupils through focus groups has been particularly effective.

These supportive conversations aim to ensure that families understand the importance of good attendance for their child's future success. If attendance continues to be a concern, the case may be referred to the LA Education Welfare Officer or other external agencies to support and challenge these families. Careful analysis of attendance data ensures leaders monitor the effectiveness of their actions for individual pupils or pupil groups.

The attendance team provides form tutors and year heads with their group's weekly attendance records and these reports help inform weekly tutor and Head of Year conversations with key individuals. The improvement in attendance has been, in part, developed through the promotion of strong relationships in school, a clear focus on key individuals and cohorts, and the combined efforts of all staff throughout the school to ensure that good attendance is promoted and valued.

Pupils understand that attendance is important and the link to achievement. They say that school leaders take this very seriously and 'talk about it all the time'. Some of the pupils spoken to could articulate clearly issues they had previously experienced and how school helped them to improve their attendance through a variety of actions and support.

Leaders' actions have resulted in demonstrable improvements in how regularly pupils attend. There has been a sustained improvement in attendance over the last two academic years. Attendance rose 2% from academic year 2023-24 to 2024-25. The school's work has also led to a significant reduction in rates of persistent absence, from 31% to 24.4% in the previous two academic years. The schools' PA rate in 2024-25 broadly matched the national PA rate. Furthermore, this PA rate was better than all 20 of the DfE-matched 'similar schools' in 2024-25. The proportion of severely absent pupils has also declined from 2023-24 from 54 pupils (6%) to 20 pupils in 2024-25 (2.5%). Appropriate checks, referrals and support from both school and external agencies are in place for these pupils.

Attendance of FSM pupils has steadily improved over this time, too. In 2024-25, their attendance was better than that of FSM pupils nationally. The rate of persistent absenteeism for FSM pupils was also below the national rate for FSM nationally. SEND pupils' attendance and PA rate compare favourably with the SEND national figures.

Current year-to-date attendance (at the time of the review) is slightly lower (0.3%) when compared to the same point in time last academic year. Leaders have identified that this is primarily driven by the impact of illness in November / December; this follows the impact of illness nationally. It may be helpful for leaders to extract this data to ensure they have a precise view of how this impacted their overall attendance figures compared to other absences during this period and how it compared to national and local averages at the same time.

Pupils who have joined the school this academic year have also had an impact. For example, the current Year 10 cohort had previously good attendance in the preceding academic year. However, with the addition of 23 pupils to this year group, there has been a notable impact with overall attendance figures declining. Leaders are analysing and tracking the attendance of these 23 pupils carefully, and ensuring intervention and support where appropriate. Leaders should consider showing the impact of this group on the overall data for year 10 to clearly evidence the difference this has made.

Leaders are not complacent; they continue to refine their strategy to ensure that all pupils attend well, they understand that there remains much work to do to raise attendance rates further. The team has a good knowledge of pupils and their families, and at fortnightly triage meetings, discuss strategies to use with families to ensure targeted pupils attend school more regularly. The next step is for leaders to consider how they can use data even more effectively, to intervene at an even earlier stage of absence and acting immediately with occasional absence and when attendance rates dip, well before children fall into persistent absenteeism.

Areas for consideration

Suggestions	Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create opportunities for staff training and sharing of best practice on effective behaviour management strategies to reflect increasing SEND needs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Leaders may wish to consider undertaking further staff voice to understand in more detail the specific areas of need to ensure that pupils are well supported whilst maintaining the integrity of the effective behaviour system 2. Attendance monitoring - data analysis for early, preemptive intervention <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider how data systems and analysis can be refined further to allow leaders to take earlier, pre-emptive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is quality assurance information from lesson visits summarised and used to drive further improvements? 2. How can class teachers support the attendance strategy further, for example, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Through deliberate positive interactions when children return from absence? b. Considering learning gaps following a period of absence?

action.	
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