

Kent PRU & Attendance Service (KPAS)

Targeting Support Meetings (TSMs)

Terms of Reference

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1. Targeting Support Meeting (TSM) - Core purpose

The Department for Education's [Working together to improve school attendance](#) statutory guidance published in August 2024 and revised in July 2026 places an expectation on all School Attendance Support Teams across England's local authorities to organise termly conversations with each school in their area, known as TSMs (Targeting Support Meetings). KPAS (Kent PRU and Attendance Service) is the name of Kent County Council's formal School Attendance Support Team, and aims to support schools of all types through:

*Building strong relationships and working collaboratively with the school's attendance leads (Senior Attendance Champions) to identify, discuss, and agree joint targeted actions for pupils who are **persistently or severely absent** or those at risk of becoming so.*

*Agreeing what **support the local authority will provide** and which (if any) other statutory or voluntary services should become involved.*

*Identifying more **general areas of focus** (if schools request this and time allows). This may include looking at the school's attendance policy for example.*

*Helping schools to **analyse their data**, comparing themselves to other schools in the geographical area or considering how they may learn from or work with other schools who have faced similar patterns or trends (if schools request this and time allows).*

2. Statutory requirement for TSMs

KPAS has a statutory duty to offer TSMs to schools of all types, including primary, secondary, special as well as pupil referral units.

3. Membership of TSMs

To ensure TSMs are as effective as possible, the DfE prescribes the following representatives as essential to participate in the whole process:

Local authority: The KPAS Officer linked to the school.

School: The attendance lead (most likely the senior leader who has strategic responsibility for attendance at the school, such as the Headteacher, Deputy Head or Assistant Head).

Additional representatives may include (at some or all TSMs):

School: A member of staff responsible for day-to-day duties around attendance, such as an Attendance Officer, Family Liaison Officer, Pastoral Manager, Office Manager etc. There is no limit to how many school staff attend and will be decision of the individual school.

Governing board: A member of the governing board (or trustee in the case of an academy) who has a lead responsibility for school attendance may wish to attend a TSM to contribute to the discussions in line with the DfE's expectations for governing boards/academy trustees.

Traded services: For schools who buy in services from an external company to monitor and improve attendance may wish to involve this representative in a TSM.

Multi-agency partners: On occasion, and with agreement from the school, it may be good practice for partners from multi-agency services to participate in TSMs following greater emphasis in DfE guidance around a multi-agency approach to improving attendance.

Contact details for each KPAS Officer and the school to which they are linked with can be found on the Kelsi website [here](#). Please note that whilst occasionally referrals may be allocated to other KPAS Officers to help manage caseloads, the official link KPAS Officer will remain the same.

4. Arranging a TSM

It is advised that a date for a TSM in the following term is arranged at the end of each meeting to try to secure availability of all participants in advance.

5. Leading TSMs

All TSMs should ultimately be a conversation between the school and the link KPAS Officer. TSMs are not an audit, assessment or inspection of the school's performance and the process should be based on equal partnerships.

6. TSM frequency

For schools with attendance levels below the national average for their phase or the median attendance of similar schools, TSMs should be held at least termly in all cases (three times per academic year). For schools with attendance levels above the national average for their phase and median attendance of similar schools, the frequency may be reduced to one Targeting Support Meeting per school year where school and local authority agree. There is no expectation for a meeting for schools with the very strongest attendance (where there are no cases to be discussed requiring local authority involvement), but ongoing engagement should happen through the school's link KPAS Officer.

7. TSM venue

TSMs may be held on site in a school, however it may be more effective for them to be held virtually, for example on Microsoft Teams. Decisions on face to face or virtual TSMs will be made between the school and link KPAS Officer.

8. TSM duration

This will be determined on an individual basis between the school and link KPAS Officer. The DfE is clear that TSM should not be an exhaustive discussion about every pupil on the school roll and should not have a negative impact on the resources of both the school and local authority in terms of preparation and the TSM itself. Schools may wish to notify their link KPAS Officer in advance of any key themes they would like to discuss, and an estimation of how many pupils they have who are persistently or severely absent to enable the KPAS Officer to prepare. Reports or lists of pupil names must not be sent (please see section 12 - *Data sharing at TSMs*).

9. TSM parameters

The DfE states that termly conversations are not designed to be:

- ✗ A discussion about the attendance of **every pupil on the school roll**, cases where joint action is not needed because school or local authority support is already in place for those pupils, or cases of individual pupils are already being discussed at other multi-agency meetings.
- ✗ The **local authority taking responsibility for leading all cases** discussed or acting as lead practitioner in every case.

- ✗ An **inspection or audit** of the register and use of attendance codes (unless linked to statutory or fixed penalty notice cases).
- ✗ The **only conversation** between the school's attendance leads and KPAS.
- ✗ A reason for lots of **preparation** by school and/or KPAS, or cause of additional data recording.
- ✗ A **one size fits all** process for every school in terms of participants from school, duration of the TSM and the conversations which take place.

TSMs should not trigger a surge of referrals to KPAS, however some may be suitable and should preferably be agreed in advance with the school's link KPAS Officer.

10. TSM preparation and structure

It is good practice for schools to run any relevant reports with overall whole school data, cohort specific data (persistent absence and severe absence as well as groups of pupils such as those with SEND, medical needs etc) and names of individual pupils to discuss ready for the meeting.

The DfE recommends the following meeting structure as a broad guide to ensure it is focussed, with the allocated time prioritised in a way that benefits both school and KPAS. There is further information in the DfE fact sheet embedded below. Some ideas from KPAS are also included:

Review of actions from any previous TSM (where applicable).

Discussion of overall trends in the school's data and any emerging patterns or issues to identify support require at an early stage.

Agreeing joint approaches for all severely absent (SA) pupils and examining the overall position for SA pupil and trends for the reasons for absence within this group.

Agreeing joint actions for persistently absent (PA) pupils where they have barriers to attendance that require a multi-agency response to overcome them and looking at the overall position for PA pupils, trends for reasons for absence and identifying cases where support may be needed from the local authority or other partners.

Summarising any key actions moving forward.

11. Recording TSMs

The DfE has not published a formal document to record termly conversations between the local authority and schools, and there is no legal duty to keep a record of them. KPAS originally created a *TSM Record of Consultation* form when the Working together guidance became statutory in August 2024, although there is no duty for schools to use it and they may wish to use their own version. The Record of Consultation form intentionally does not include any sections for the recording and identification of the names of individual pupils as KPAS does not have a location to store this information securely other than individual details for pupils who are open referrals. KPAS Officers will however be able to store a copy of the Record of Consultation form on internal systems if it contains only general information and not information which enables identification of individual pupils.

12. Data sharing at TSMs

Schools reserve the right not to share any information with KPAS at TSMs about pupils or their families which is highly confidential and where there is no justified rationale to do so. The KPAS Officer is likely only to specifically request the sharing of information for pupils who are current referrals open to KPAS, which may include a copy of the pupil's registration certificate, or updates

on any significant events which may impact on any next steps required as part of a child missing education (CME) referral or statutory attendance intervention referral.

13. Cancellation of a TSM

Schools should inform their link KPAS Officer as soon as possible in advance of the TSM if they need to cancel. Due to the high number of TSMs that each KPAS Officer is required to attend, it may not be possible to reschedule the TSM for the same term in which it was originally due to take place. However KPAS Officers will always try to accommodate the needs of the school where possible. In some cases the KPAS Officer may need to cancel the TSM due to illness or exceptional circumstances and this will be done at the earliest opportunity. In cases where the KPAS Officer has left their post, the KPAS Area Manager will arrange for another KPAS Officer to act as a substitute until a new link is identified.

14. Costs for TSMs

There are no associated costs to schools for support offered by KPAS at TSMs as they make up one of the four core functions which local authorities are legally expected to provide to all schools.

15. Evaluation of TSMs

To continuously improve the quality of TSMs, from time to time KPAS may contact schools to complete a survey to request feedback on their experience.

16. Related TSM guidance

Information about TSMs can be found in the Department for Education's [Working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance in Chapter 4, paragraphs 93 to 98.