Attendance, EBSA & Belonging in Schools UK schools Briefing

Week of 14–20 October 2026

Good morning — here's this week's updated MHWB briefing.

Autumn Attendance Framework and Register Compliance

As early-term data settles, schools and trusts face heightened scrutiny around uniform register duties under updated attendance and behaviour inspection criteria. Local authorities are actively challenging code drift during phased returns, emphasizing that time-limited adjustments must feature clear reintegration targets rather than informal part-time arrangements.

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Browne Jacobson: School Attendance Guidance 2026 Analysis
- DfE: Working Together to Improve School Attendance Framework

EBSA Guidance and Medical Gatekeeping Shift

Pastoral leads are adapting to updated statutory guidance instructing schools to avoid defaulting to medical evidence requests when addressing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). The "listen and understand first" sequence requires early intervention and environmental reasonable adjustments before escalating to formal enforcement pathways.

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- SEN Parent Support Group: DfE Attendance Communication Guidance

Local Authority Oversight under Wellbeing Legislation

Local authority teams are expanding register oversight for children missing education under powers established by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act. Multi-agency targeting support meetings are prioritizing pupils on reduced timetables or facing acute EBSA to prevent unrecorded absences and persistent disconnection.

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- DfE: Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act Policy Summary Notes
- Virtual College: Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 Overview

MAT Strategies for Secondary Transition Belonging

Multi-Academy Trusts are embedding dedicated inclusion hubs and peer-mentoring frameworks following analysis of early Year 7 attendance data. Trust leaders emphasize that building relational belonging during the first month of secondary transition significantly mitigates October attendance dips among vulnerable SEND and neurodivergent cohorts.

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Barnet Local Offer: SEN Transition & Secondary Guidance