

Identifying and supporting Key Stage 3 pupils at risk of becoming not in education, employment, or training (NEET)

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Executive Summary

Risk indicators and their identification

This qualitative study has identified a wide range of demographic, environmental, educational, and behavioural indicators that school staff associate with an increased risk of pupils disengaging or becoming NEET. These indicators can support schools in developing targeted interventions and support strategies to identify and assist at-risk pupils effectively.

Demographic indicators	Educational indicators	Environmental indicators	Behavioural indicators
• Mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression	• Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)	• IT/technological influences: use of smartphones and social media	• Low attendance/absence
• Family circumstances: low-income households, unemployed parents, parents holding negative attitudes towards education Caring for parents, siblings, or their children	• Safeguarding concerns that occasionally limiting [CN1] the pupil's access to education [CN1] Feel free to ignore these changes. Just keeps the table consistently in the gerund rather than jumping between present continuous and past tenses	• Local deprivation: deprived areas with limited opportunities and higher crime rates, including risks of involvement in gang-related activities	• Poor behaviour in school, anti-social behaviour or involvement in offending/criminal/gang activities
• Family circumstances: low-income households, unemployed parents, parents holding negative attitudes towards education Caring for parents, siblings, or their children	• Poor attainment or attitudes to learning	• Impact of COVID: negatively affecting pupils' mental health, living standards, and normalising homeschooling	• Behavioural issues occasionally impacting the pupil's attainment and attitudes to learning
	• Poor literacy and numeracy skills		

Schools monitored these indicators through a combination of formal and informal practices:

- **Formal monitoring.** Schools identified and recorded pupils' needs during the transition from primary school. They also tracked family circumstances, educational needs, attendance, behaviour, and safeguarding concerns. Additionally, schools measured pupils' attitudes toward learning through surveys and held regular staff meetings to discuss pupils' needs and any changes in their circumstances.
- **Informal monitoring.** School staff also relied on day-to-day observations, identifying concerning behaviours or attitudes, such as reduced participation in lessons, diminished interest in learning, or a lack of career aspirations.

Crucially, school staff noted that not everyone presenting these indicators will also experience school disengagement or be at risk of becoming NEET. This highlights the importance of considering individual resilience, support networks, and personal/individual circumstances when assessing risk. Whilst certain demographic, environmental, educational, and behavioural indicators are associated with increased risk, they do not determine a pupil's future in isolation.

Promising practice

Various interventions provided to Key Stage 3 pupils by participating schools, can be broadly categorised into two main types: career-related and pastoral. Career-related interventions focused on fostering pupils' aspirations and future planning, whilst pastoral interventions aimed to provide immediate support for personal and social challenges.

- **Careers interventions:** Schools provided a range of career-related activities for Key Stage 3 pupils, including school-based programs integrated into the curriculum and visits to universities and colleges. Whilst some career interventions, such as advice and guidance interviews, were primarily targeting Key Stage 4 pupils, those at higher risk of disengagement in Key Stage 3 were sometimes encouraged to access these opportunities earlier.
- **Pastoral interventions:** These interventions were fully open to Key Stage 3 pupils and addressed issues such as poor attendance, behavioural concerns, emotional and mental health struggles, difficulty accessing full-time education, and challenging family circumstances.

Principles of promising practice

The findings also indicate key principles of promising practice for supporting Key Stage 3 pupils at risk of disengagement or becoming NEET. These include early identification, targeted interventions, holistic support, and flexible approaches. The table below details these principles and their perceived impact on pupil engagement and success.

Early identification and targeted interventions	One-to-one support was described as particularly effective, especially in cases where the pupil would benefit from the full attention of a professional. Positive attitudes, offering ongoing praise and encouragement to pupils, were emphasised as facilitating the desired outcomes of interventions. Efficient and quick communication between professionals to respond to changes in a pupil's circumstances, connected to professionals having good knowledge of each pupil, is crucial. Regular monitoring of pupil progress and engagement, with adjustments made as needed, is critical to ensuring the effectiveness of interventions.
Holistic support	Promising practices involve addressing not only educational needs but also providing emotional, mental health, and familial support. Working closely with external agencies allows for comprehensive care.
Engagement with families	Engaging with families, especially those with negative perceptions of education, helps to align home with school expectations and support systems. Schools' focus on consistent communication and parental involvement.
Flexible and inclusive educational approaches	Offer flexible learning environments and inclusive practices for pupils with SEND or those who are disengaged. Adjustments to educational provision, such as smaller classes or individualised learning plans, are essential.
Career guidance and "real-world" connections	Promising practices include providing career guidance early (in Key Stage 3), involving pupils in real-world career experiences, and offering positive role models and mentors. Interactive activities, such as visits to worksites, received positive engagement and feedback from pupils. Ensuring that pupils are aware of post-16 options and providing support through transitions to further education or employment is vital.

1. Introduction

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) was commissioned by Lancashire County Council (LCC), with funding from The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), to identify and share best practice in early identification of Key Stage 3 (KS3) pupils at risk of disengaging from education and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

This research was undertaken to address the following questions:

- How are schools currently identifying KS3 pupils who are at risk of disengaging and becoming NEET?
- How are the NEET risk factors identified by schools taken into consideration and used to inform interventions, including those related to careers?
- What interventions are being delivered by schools that are perceived to be positively impacting (re)engaging young people and contributing to positive EET outcomes?

This guide consists of seven chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Risk factors for disengaging from education or becoming NEET.** This chapter provides an overview of the various risk factors for disengaging from education or becoming NEET identified by school staff who took part in the research.
- **Chapter 3: How do secondary schools identify KS3 pupils at risk of NEET?** This chapter focuses on the specific indicators schools considered to determine if a pupil was at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET.
- **Chapter 4: Careers interventions.** This chapter outlines three types of career interventions used by schools: one-to-one information and advice; visits and activities on the site of colleges, universities and employers; and school-based curriculum and careers activities.
- **Chapter 5: Pastoral interventions.** This chapter outlines schools' strategies to incentivise and reward attendance for all pupils and demonstrates how schools address poor attendance, including the use of home visits and one-on-one check-ins for pupils who struggle with attendance.

Data was collected through qualitative case study research with five schools in Lancashire, which included 16 in-depth interviews (individual and paired interviews) with 21 staff members, as well as an interim workshop with six staff from five Lancashire schools, four of which were also part of the case studies.

The interviews were conducted with various school staff involved in identifying at-risk pupils or developing promising practices to reengage them, including heads of attendance and careers, heads of year groups, and in-school SEND/mental health specialists. The data collection took place from the 6th of June to the 11th of July 2024.

With participants' permission, interviews and the interim workshop were recorded and transcribed verbatim to enable detailed thematic analysis. Chapters 2 to 5 of this report present the range and diversity of participant views and experiences, drawn from both spontaneous responses and follow-up prompts from the research team.

The limitations of this project are as follows:

- Due to the limited scope of inquiry, which focused on three areas in Lancashire and five schools, the data cannot be considered representative of experiences across all schools in the region.
- Promising interventions were documented from the perspectives of school staff only.
- The project did not measure the impact of these interventions on pupils, which would be a valuable area for future research.

Despite these limitations, the information in this guidance, along with the highlighted strategies, provides valuable insights into the work done by the schools. It serves as a resource and motivation for future best practices in this area.

2. Risk factors for disengaging from education or becoming NEET

This chapter provides an overview of the various risk factors for disengaging from education or becoming NEET identified by school staff who took part in the research. The risk factors are categorised into five main groups: individual circumstances, family circumstances, local circumstances, technological influences, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Individual circumstances

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and/or mental health needs

Some schools reported a growing number of KS3 pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET because of unaddressed and unsupported mental health needs (such as anxiety and depression) and/or SEND.

Participating schools described pupils not getting the support needed for their SEND and/or mental health needs. This included long waiting times for pupils wanting to access external support (such as medical assessments, appointments, or referrals to services), as well as schools not having the resources available to accommodate pupils' increasingly varied and complex needs, such as through one-to-one support. Participants described that the lack of support compromised school engagement, leading to increased reliance on home-schooling as a temporary or long-term measure for pupils with SEND and mental health needs. Furthermore, absence and home schooling were noted as limiting pupils' access to support from school.

Due to compromised school engagement, pupils with SEND and/or mental health needs were also described as often unaware or unable to access information about post-16 education and training options. To help address this, participants recommended that post-16 education and training providers accommodate the needs of pupils with SEND and/or mental health needs at introductory or taster events. The risk of disengagement among pupils with SEND needs was also, in part, attributed to the removal of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) during transitions to further education or internships. This made it more challenging for these pupils to secure workplace training, employment, or further educational placements:

“I've seen some people who've got, had EHCPs in school. Once they go on to further education, these EHCPs are being removed, [...] for example they take an internship with a company, the EHCP cannot go with them. It's actually removed, so that's a barrier, then, for them moving on.”

Additionally, post-16 education and training providers were perceived as lacking positive role models for pupils with SEND and/or mental health needs. By better accommodating these pupils, providers could significantly enhance engagement in education, employment, or training after the age of 16.

Poor literacy or numeracy skills

Poor literacy or numeracy skills or falling behind in specific subjects such as English or Maths, were also described as a disengagement/NEET risk factor. Staff reported that pupils with poor literacy or numeracy skills were often reluctant to attend school, and exhibited behavioural issues that could result in in-school sanctions and contribute to their disengagement.

“[T]he children who aren't able to read at expected levels, those are the children who are saying, 'I don't want to come into school.' It's not because of staff or lack of support or anything; it's purely because they are so far behind.”

Poor literacy and numeracy skills were described as becoming more prevalent, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Family circumstances

Pupils with families, or households, in the following circumstances were reported as having a higher risk of school disengagement:

Low-income households: Pupils from low-income households were identified as at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET, as this group often faced challenges getting to and from school or obtaining necessary equipment or uniforms. Additionally, some pupils struggled to access online resources, which meant that they were unable to complete homework, leading to underperformance or behavioural issues:

“... Sometimes we have students that maybe haven't been able to access the app for homework because of whatever reason at home, and they'll be scared to come into school because they think they're going to get in trouble, so then we have them skipping more and more days, telling their parents they've just got headaches and things.”

Parents with negative attitudes towards school/education: Parents' behaviour and attitudes towards education significantly influenced their children's risk of disengagement or becoming NEET. Negative attitudes shaped how pupils viewed education, contributed to disruptive behaviour, and negatively impacted attendance and engagement.

Another risk factor was negative parental attitudes toward the school. Some parents were not encouraging or supportive of their child's education and lacked career aspirations for them. Pupils with parents who had negative past or present experiences with schools were less likely to engage with school-based interventions, often due to their parents' stigma associated with these interventions.

Additionally, pupils whose parents did not provide consistent discipline or who lacked stable home routines were reported to be more likely to disengage.

“There's only so much we can do as schools, and we try our best. For us, for me personally, the biggest barrier is that parental consistency matching the school consistency.”

Influence of parental employment status: Pupils with at least one unemployed parent were noted to be at higher risk of disengagement or becoming NEET, partly due to the lack of positive role models. Families with a history of economic disadvantage across multiple generations were described as particularly vulnerable; these pupils often missed out on routines and practices of school life that should be reinforced at home. Local circumstances may also play a role, as discussed in Section 2.3. Furthermore, pupils with parents in low-paying jobs were perceived to be less aware of career opportunities with higher earning potential.

Caring responsibilities: Formal and informal caring responsibilities were identified as a high-risk factor for pupils. When pupils were responsible for caring for parents, siblings, or their own children, they often missed the beginning and/or end of the school day, which significantly impacted their attendance and engagement.

Participants also reported that some pupils with caring responsibilities needed to take substantial time off school, particularly if they had a child of their own. Schools have also reported an increasing trend of pupils taking on caring roles due to the ill health of parents, especially mental health issues.

Caring responsibilities due to parents' ill mental health was described as having a compounding adverse impact on pupils. Some participants suggested that pupils may experience anxiety from leaving a struggling parent at home. In cases where parents with mental health issues preferred their children to stay home due to loneliness or were inclined to let them skip school to avoid conflicts, this negatively affected both attendance and engagement, ultimately leading to pupil disengagement.

“[A] lot of pupils want to stay at home to be the carer and look after their parents [...]. Then, obviously, when they've had such a gap in there, they find it difficult to come back in and then their anxiety starts and then it kind of just goes from there. It's like a vicious circle.”

Additionally, school staff reported that pupils often continued to have care responsibilities when they left school, making it challenging to access post-16 provisions.

2.3 Local circumstances

Local circumstances, such as deprivation, economic opportunities (such as the job market), and crime rates, were described as influencing pupils' risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. This was through both pupils' own perceptions of local opportunities, as well as that of their parents. Different areas within Lancashire presented varying risks, or opportunities, for pupils' educational and career prospects.

A key risk factor identified by staff was deprivation in a local area. Pupils who lived in highly deprived small localities, rather than cities or counties, were reported to be at a higher risk. Some participants suggested that the absence of safe or engaging social spaces in these areas led to increased engagement in antisocial, or gang-related behaviour, further putting them at risk of disengaging in school or becoming NEET.

The employment opportunities of a pupil's local area were found to have changed over time and put more pupils at risk of disengaging. Both the furlough scheme and redundancies from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as unemployment as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, were noted to have shifted pupils' views on work.

Additionally, the level of crime in the local area was viewed as increasing risk of disengagement. Higher crime rates were believed to increase the likelihood of pupils being involved in offending or being exploited, such as through involvement in county lines. This was highlighted as a significant concern for some schools leading to increased disengagement. Respondents noted that the risk of crime and exploitation was particularly prevalent in certain localities in Lancashire, such as coastal towns.

2.4 Technological influences

Smartphones and social media use have been recognized by participants as negatively affecting pupils' engagement in school and their future employability skills. Examples of how these issues contribute to the risk of pupils disengaging or becoming NEET include:

Physical and mental health, especially when compounded by SEND and/or mental health needs e.g., lack of sleep: Participants described phone use compromising pupils' basic physical and mental health needs, for example, through a lack of sleep. Some participants suggested that smartphone use could magnify existing issues for pupils with SEND and/or mental health needs, further increasing their risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. Mental health was noted as impacting pupils from all backgrounds due to social media use.

Mental wellbeing, e.g., reduced self-esteem and increased peer pressure: Participants also discussed the impact of social media on pupils' school engagement, noting its effects on self-esteem and the facilitation of peer pressure. They observed that pupils' online social lives are making them less accustomed to face-to-face communication, which increases the risk of disengagement from school.

Poor communication and employability skills: Smartphone use was perceived as a risk factor in relation to pupils' language and communication skills, as staff reported that pupils struggled to write letters and CVs, and that writing often contained slang or shortened words, as well as poor grammar. This was described as affecting pupils' communication and basic employment skills, which could lead to future issues and disengagement.

2.5 The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated various risk factors for pupils, increasing their likelihood of disengagement. The impacts of the pandemic included:

Negative impacts on mental health: Respondents detailed the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on pupils' mental health, for example, anxiety around leaving their home or going to school.

Normalisation of home-schooling and flexible schoolwork: Participants reported an increase in pupils being home-schooled or staying home due to ill mental health and highlighted the risks associated with the normalisation of working from home post-pandemic. Participants recognised that pupils who spent more time at home rather than in school were more likely to disengage, due to the lack of support available to them, and to fall behind in their schoolwork. These pupils were also less likely to be aware of the post-16 options available to them:

“[I]t's just the parents, obviously, trying to put the wellbeing of their child first, not realising that actually, they're doing them a disservice by removing all of the support that we can offer them in school.”

Additionally, participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic affected parental behaviour and attitudes. Staff reported that, in the aftermath of the pandemic, some parents became more lenient allowing their children to stay home from school or to attend online lessons more frequently.

Staff also noted that some parents had grown accustomed to the flexibility offered by schools during the pandemic and expected accommodations to continue. When schools were unable to meet these expectations, increased tension resulted between parents and schools, contributing to drops in attendance and straining relationships.

Respondents also observed that in some cases the pandemic has affected the quality-of-care parents could provide their children.

The cost-of-living crisis: The ongoing cost-of-living crisis has made it more difficult for parents to provide basic necessities like food, heating, and school supplies. Participants noted that financial struggles, along with shifting parental attitudes toward education, have resulted in more families opting for low-cost term-time holidays. Many parents don't view missed school days as a problem, which further heightens the risk of students disengaging or becoming NEET:

3. How do secondary schools identify at-risk KS3 pupils?

This chapter focuses on the specific indicators schools considered to determine if a pupil was at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. These indicators included knowledge of individual circumstances, as well as signs of disengagement from school, such as attendance, behaviour, and exclusion.

3.1 Vulnerability and family circumstances as indicators

Specific Vulnerabilities as Key Indicators

- **Mental health:** Particularly during periods of transition, such as moving from primary to secondary school.
- **Family circumstances:** Including low-income status, receipt of pupil premium, and lack of parental investment or interest in education.

3.1.1. Mental health

Participants identified specific vulnerabilities related to individual characteristics as risk factors for pupils disengaging or becoming NEET. Changes in behaviour, such as shifts in mood, alterations in friendship groups and reduced participation and interest in lessons, often signalled underlying issues, including mental health or safeguarding concerns. Mental health challenges caused some pupils to find it more difficult to attend lessons and engage in learning, increasing their risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. These changes were particularly noticeable during times of transition, such as the move from primary to secondary school. Year 7 pupils often found it challenging to adapt to secondary school, which could affect their adjustment and increase the risk of them disengaging or becoming NEET.

“Any member of staff in school can log a safeguarding concern. Any member of staff can go on to CPOMS which is our logging system, and we have regular safeguarding training to say if you see a slight change in that person’s mood you literally log it, it is assigned, and the DSL will assign it to the right person.”

3.1.2. Family circumstances

Schools monitored specific aspects of family circumstances that might require additional support to ensure the pupil's wellbeing and involvement in education. For example, pupils from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those receiving pupil premium funding, and pupils with safeguarding concerns were considered more vulnerable, including at higher risk of disengaging, or becoming NEET.

“[P]upil premium students do tend to have a higher risk factor when it comes to poor behaviour, poor attitudes to learning, and poor attendance. That's usually because their home is, obviously, requires extra support [...].”

Participants noted they could often determine a parent's interest and involvement in their child's education informally, by their responsiveness to phone calls or home visits from staff when their child missed school. Parents' behaviours and attitudes towards education often assisted the school to identify children at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET, as these behaviours might indicate a lack of parental support towards education and learning. Additionally, if an older sibling had been at risk of or had become disengaged or NEET, schools were able to anticipate that a younger sibling might also be at risk.

3.2 Indicators of behaviour relating to school disengagement

Participants observed a strong connection between a pupil's behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning and their risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. Poor attendance was a major indicator of disengagement and the potential of becoming NEET, whether it involved missing specific lessons or school overall. This issue was closely linked with changes in the attitude towards learning, as poor attendance resulted in missed educational opportunities leading to gaps in learning and hindering academic achievement and progress.

“If they're not in school, then they're not receiving the careers education, never mind the rest of their education, so that's the big one. The problem is with attendance as a risk factor is that that in itself is made up of other different categories, so yes, attendance is definitely one.”

Participants also observed that changes in behaviour could indicate a pupil's risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. Behavioural changes often reflected an unmet need, such as an educational, safeguarding, or mental health concern, leading to poor behaviour and increased risk of disengagement. Initially, behavioural issues might manifest as disruptive behaviour in class, which could result in the pupil being removed from lessons, placed in isolation, or excluded.

The reduced learning time/time in the classroom hindered academic progress, negatively impacting future academic and career opportunities:

“At every stage of that, learning is lost, either because they've been removed from a classroom or because they're in isolation [...] obviously, work is sent to them but it's not the same as being in a room with your subject-expert teacher and completing your work [...] with an increase of behaviour incidents, you get a reduction in learning time and that then affects longer-term attainment.”

Other examples of behaviour might include a pupil exhibiting antisocial behaviour or having encounters with the police.

Additionally, attitudes to learning and declining attainment could also indicate risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. For example, Year 9 pupils showing disinterest in their course choices or lacking career aspirations, or pupils whose performance in assessments dropped, might be identified by schools as requiring additional support, including careers guidance (see Chapter 4).

3.3 Processes and practices

Schools reported procedures in place to monitor pupils' circumstances, vulnerabilities and needs. These procedures included formal practices, such as tracking pupils' attendance, behaviour, and safeguarding. Informal monitoring practices were also reported, such as teachers being vigilant in noticing changes in pupils' behaviour and attitude.

3.3.1. Identifications during transition from KS2 to KS3

Key Practices

- **Transition meetings:** Secondary school staff held meetings with primary school staff to identify pupils' needs, including any indicators of a higher risk of disengaging.
- **Record sharing:** Primary schools provided secondary schools with records related to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, and family circumstances.
- **Parental input:** Parents could submit additional information about their child through an online form.
- **School visits:** Secondary schools organised visits for primary school children and hosted welcome evenings for parents, to offer insight into secondary school life. Additional visits were arranged for pupils who needed more time to adjust.

The process of identifying pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET began before the transition from primary to secondary school in Year 7. Secondary schools collected records and liaised with primary schools to assess pupils' vulnerabilities and needs.

Key steps in the process:

- **Pre-transition preparation:** Secondary school staff, including behavioural managers and transition officers, visited primary schools to identify pupils who might struggle with the transition, which might indicate an increased risk of disengaging or becoming NEET.
- **Transition meetings:** These meetings involved discussions between secondary school staff and primary school staff to address concerns and share essential records related to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, and family circumstances. Receiving this information in advance allows secondary schools to implement appropriate interventions for when the pupil starts Year 7.
- **Parental input:** Parents completed an online form providing basic details, such as the child's date of birth, as well as any medical, SEN, or other relevant information. This form helped secondary schools collect information on potential risk factors and prepare for the pupil's needs.

“So, already we’ve got a spreadsheet of all of those pupils coming into school in September and we know if they fall under the radar of SEN, if [they] fall under the radar of safeguarding, if they fall under the radar of attendance.”

- **School visits and welcome evenings:** Secondary schools organised visits and welcome evenings for primary school pupils and their parents to familiarise them with secondary school. Additional visits were arranged for pupils who might need extra support to adjust when starting Year 7. These proactive measures aimed to prevent higher risk of disengaging or becoming NEET caused by struggling with the transition.

Support programs: Some support programmes collaborated with primary and secondary schools to offer targeted support for pupils at risk of school exclusion. For example, specialists worked with primary school children, and prepared reports that were shared with secondary school staff at the point of transition. As a result, secondary schools were more aware of any concerns, and more able to provide the necessary support.

3.3.2. Formal monitoring systems in place during KS3

Key Monitoring Systems:

- **Weekly traffic light and tracking systems:** Staff used traffic light systems to categorise risk factors, such as pupil premium and SEND, helping to identify pupils at higher risk.
- **Shadow lists:** These lists tracked pupils at risk of academic underachievement, enabling targeted interventions.
- **Weekly panel programmes:** Staff met weekly to discuss pupils of concern, review their progress and determine the necessary support.
- **Daily debriefs and discussions:** Pastoral care teams conducted daily debriefs, engaging in discussions with trusted adults and mental health leads to address any emerging issues.
- **Attendance monitoring:** Attendance was recorded in the morning and hourly throughout the school day. Inclusion and attendance teams reviewed reports and contacted parents if a pupil was absent.
- **Behavioural and exclusion logs:** Pastoral logs tracked behaviour, while separate logs documented exclusions, removals from lessons, and external occurrences like antisocial behaviour or police encounters.
- **Attitudinal surveys:** Surveys were conducted with pupils to monitor and assess their attitudes towards learning, providing insights into potential disengagement.

Schools established formal systems designed to pinpoint pupils who were more vulnerable due to their specific circumstances, which might be used to identify pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET during Key Stage 3.

For example, a **traffic light system** helped staff to categorise factors that increased a pupil's risk, prioritising those with SEND and pupil premium status for additional support. Additionally, a **tracking system** flagged the most vulnerable pupils from each year group based on their circumstances and behaviours, with weekly monitoring to ensure they receive appropriate support. Schools also used **shadow lists**, to identify and closely monitor pupils who were at high risk of underachieving, providing targeted assistance to help them succeed.

Additional practices included regular discussions amongst staff about vulnerable pupils. This involved a **weekly panel programme** where staff reviewed pupils of concern to determine the support they require. **Daily debriefs** within pastoral care teams and conversations with trusted adults and mental health leads were another approach to supporting this effort.

Attendance was monitored through morning and hourly registers to track pupils' presence and participation in lessons. Reports from these registers were reviewed by the inclusion and attendance teams. If attendance fell below a set threshold or a pupil was absent, the inclusion and attendance teams reached out to the parents via phone or conduct home visits to understand the reasons for the absence(s).

Schools used **behavioural and exclusion pastoral logs** to record and track pupil behaviour, recording instances of disengagement due to poor effort and behaviour. When behaviour and effort fell below acceptable levels, schools set up a pastoral action plan to reengage the pupil.

Additional logs recorded external behaviour, such as antisocial conduct or interactions with police. Behaviour was also monitored through removal lists, which tracked pupils frequently removed from class, highlighting patterns of disengagement over time. Schools also maintained lists of exclusions, which were reviewed by governors to determine appropriate support and interventions.

To gauge pupils' attitudes towards learning, schools conducted **attitudinal surveys**, especially during transition points, to understand their views on learning and future aspirations. This information assisted the school in identifying pupils who might be losing interest or struggle with their aspirations.

Safeguarding concerns were also used to identify pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET, with schools participating in external and multi-agency safeguarding meetings to address these risks.

3.3.3. Informal monitoring during KS3 and KS4

Participants shared informal methods for identifying KS3 pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET. Typically, this involved a staff member noticing a change in behaviour and talking to the pupil to understand what had occurred. Staff may also identify when issues arise and inform the relevant team or staff member, such as the pastoral team or the Head of Year.

The approach to identify Key Stage 4 (KS4) pupils at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET largely mirrored the methods used for KS3, with a few key differences. In KS4 the focus shifted towards attendance rather than behavioural issues, as older pupils were generally less responsive to parental advice compared to younger pupils. Additionally, there was a heightened emphasis on assisting pupils with course selection and career planning during KS4. This was particularly crucial for pupils with additional needs who might face greater challenges in these areas. This allowed the school to understand their preferences and provide targeted support for their course choices.

4. Careers interventions

This chapter outlines three types of careers interventions used by schools: school-based curriculum and careers activities; visits, activities and encounters on the site of colleges, universities, employers, and independent training providers and one-to-one information, advice and guidance (IAG). For each of these interventions, the chapter discusses their aims, school approaches to delivery (including examples of promising practice), and challenges faced by schools in their delivery. However, the careers activities were often not targeted at KS3 pupils at risk of disengagement, being instead delivered to pupils as a group.

4.1 School-based careers activities for KS3 pupils

School-based careers activities included a variety of approaches, from regular teaching to interactive sessions, activities and talks, including celebrating the National Careers Week and the National Apprenticeship Week. These activities aimed to raise pupils' aspirations, showcase diverse opportunities, spark curiosity about future paths, and link school subjects to real-world careers.

Schools integrated careers-related information into form-time, across subjects, and specifically as part of lessons on life skills, citizenship and PSHE education. Participants emphasised that careers education should be a shared responsibility among all staff. Since careers advisors do not teach these lessons, participants recommended that schools periodically review and update the curriculum to reflect changes in the labour market and educational opportunities.

Example of promising practice: Coordinated careers activities for each year group

One school implemented a strategic approach to careers activities, tailoring them for each year group and increasing their complexity as pupils advanced. For example, Year 7 completed form-time activities aimed to challenge career stereotypes, such as matching jobs to individuals based on their appearance.

In addition, each subject (e.g. history or computing), incorporated content that linked theoretical learning to the industry, future opportunities and career paths. With parental consent, pupils in each year group participated in external activities, such as interactive science sessions at a local university or trips to the Science Museum.

A staff member explained the rationale for this approach:

"[T]he reason that we did that was to catch pupils as they're coming in rather than waiting until they get to Year 10, and it might be too late by that point. So, we have quite a number of careers interventions that happen on a whole school level, whole year group level."

The National Careers Week and National Apprenticeship Week provided valuable opportunities to engage KS3 pupils with future career pathways. These events were seen as particularly exciting and beneficial for KS3 pupils, who typically had less access to careers activities throughout the year compared to their older peers (see section 4.3).

“Yes, so there’s a buzz because every day we have an assembly and kids know that they’re going to have assemblies all week careers related, so they’re told in advance. It’s in the newsletter. It’s on the website. It’s National Careers Week.”

School-based activities (sometimes linked to National Careers Week and the National Apprenticeship Week) included careers fairs with employers, visits from university and college representatives, STEM events, full days focused on careers exploration, lunchtime information sessions, and assembly talks from professionals – such as uniformed services, NHS workers and former pupils.

4.2 Barriers that limit school-based careers activities

Participants highlighted that some school-based careers activities, for example talks with external speakers, were a promising practice that sometimes required significant time and planning. Expectedly, one view was that additional resources would help schools expand the provision.

In addition, some in-school events, such as careers fairs with universities and colleges, were often aimed at older pupils. Where possible, KS3 pupils were given opportunities to attend as well. However, staff highlighted that non-attendance sometimes prevented those at risk of disengaging or becoming NEET from benefiting from interventions.

“[E]ven if you do organise it, if the child's not there that day or they're late, they don't get it, so that just compounds what they're missing. For me, that attendance bit is the fundamental bit. If they're not in school, we can't do anything to help them.”

4.3 Promising careers activities outside the school

As part of their careers support interventions, school staff facilitated various activities with universities, colleges and employers, all aimed to inspire pupils by exposing them to a range of experiences and choices.

These activities typically organised outside the school included visits to and workshops at universities, colleges, or worksites. Whilst these opportunities generally targeted KS4 pupils (see section 4.4), there were instances where KS3 pupils were also able to participate – either at the time of the interview or in previous years.

Example of promising practice: Programmes supporting Year 9 pupils at risk of disengaging

One school benefited from a partnership with multiple local stakeholders to organise an interactive visit for Year 9 pupils eligible for Pupil Premium. These pupils visited a local worksite and college, after being selected based on their risk of disengagement, behaviour challenges or attendance issues. Staff noted positive outcomes on this group of pupils that "thrived and they loved it".

Another school had previously partnered with the local university to support Year 9 pupils at risk of disengagement or unsure about their future career paths. These pupils attended four in-school workshops on topics such as revision strategies and future planning. After completing the workshops, they spent a day at the university, engaging in activities and campus tours. However, the programme was only available in years when the university could recruit pupil ambassadors.

4.4 Barriers to organising activities for KS3 pupils outside the school

Participants expressed concerns that universities have recently been less able to include KS3 pupils in on-site activities and visits. This was attributed to resources being prioritised toward engaging older pupils at the point of transitioning.

One barrier to participating in these activities was the potentially limited number of available spaces on trips and external visits. Staff also noted the importance of schools facilitating participation by removing financial barriers and ensuring that activities do not conflict with religious and cultural festivals.

Individual- and family-level barriers included pupil non-attendance on the day of the activity, reluctance to select pupils with poor behaviour, and parental refusal

4.5 Individual careers discussions with KS3 pupils

Staff members noted that the aim of individual careers discussions with KS3 pupils was to explore pupils' interests and skills, and to map their aspirations and options for the future.

Engaging, light-hearted advice was found to work well, particularly since younger pupils might find future planning daunting.

“I think when you're in Year 7 careers is not about careers. It's about you. What skills do you have? That works really well just identifying what the young person enjoys, likes, what their strengths are [...].”

For Years 7 and 8, careers support included one-on-one meetings with the careers advisor/careers leader in a non-teaching role, sometimes resulting in action plans focused on attendance, behaviour, and learning attitudes. Referrals for these sessions typically came from educational staff or through self-referrals by pupils seeking guidance. Careers staff often introduced themselves during Year 7 assemblies to encourage self-referrals, and it was recommended that form teachers reminded pupils of this option.

Formal IAG typically began in Year 9, especially for pupils at risk of disengaging or struggling with subject choices. In these cases, one-on-one support helped pupils think through their options and complete their application forms. For some schools, Year 9 was also when they identified pupils that might benefit from alternative provision in KS4.

“Obviously, they can access careers guidance at any, in any year, but we start to actually see them formally from Year 9.”

Whilst early support in Years 7 and 8 was perceived as beneficial, some staff felt formal guidance might be best timed for Year 9 when pupils choose their options.

4.6 Individual careers advice was mostly provided in KS4

Participants described that formal one-to-one career advice particularly targeted KS4 pupils, as was also the case with other careers support discussed in this chapter (see section 4.4). However, staff believed individual careers support to be effective and suggested it should be provided as early as possible.

“So, in a perfect world, I would love to intervene more with Key Stage 3, but they probably don't get as much bespoke provision and intervention as Key Stage 4 get because we've still got a few years left.”

Participants also shared pupils typically completed their IAG one-to-one careers interviews in Year 11. However, staff aimed to schedule earlier interview for those at risk of disengaging, pupils with SEND, and those eligible for pupil premium. This approach was intended to offer additional time for advice and any necessary follow-up interviews to pupils who might have been less aware of available options.

4.7 Monitoring of careers interventions using Compass+

Staff members explained that Compass+ was a free tool developed by the Careers and Enterprise Company. Across schools, Compass+ was used for:

- **Logging careers interventions** for each pupil, alongside other extracurricular activities, individual circumstances (e.g., attendance, English as a second language), and destination data.
- **The Future Skills Questionnaire**, to identify pupils that lacked certain skills or were unsure of future pathways.
- **Self-Assessing Careers Provision against the Gatsby Benchmarks of best practice in Careers Education**. This information facilitated self-evaluation and strategic conversation with(in) the Senior Leadership Team.

It was reported that not every school used Compass+ for all its functionalities. Schools also used other products on the market (to access specific functionalities, or to coordinate with non-careers colleagues), which sometimes duplicated staff's administrative work.

5. Pastoral interventions

This chapter outlines schools' strategies to incentivise and reward attendance for all pupils and demonstrates how schools address poor attendance, including the use of home visits and one-on-one check-ins for pupils who struggle with attendance. The remainder of the chapter explores support provision to overcome barriers to attending and school engagement. These pastoral interventions ranged from addressing poor behaviour, to emotional and mental health support, referrals to other agencies, and adjustments to the educational provision. The last section discusses two main barriers to effective pastoral interventions: tight resources and disengaged or hard to engage parents.

5.1 Incentivising and rewarding school attendance

Across schools, participants described various incentives and rewards designed to promote and recognise good attendance. These included:

- **Daily breakfast:** Offering free breakfast each morning to encourage attendance, particularly for pupils who face disadvantages but do not qualify for free school meals.
- **Weekly group rewards:** Providing celebratory refreshments to groups with the best attendance each week.
- **End-of-term or end-of-year group rewards:** Offering larger rewards, such as treats from popular fast-food restaurants, cinema trips, amusement park visits, or bowling experiences to groups with the best attendance over a longer period.
- **End-of-term individual rewards:** Awarding certificates and prizes at assemblies for pupils with perfect attendance. Some participants suggested offering these rewards at the end of each term rather than the end of the year to maintain pupil interest and motivation.
- **Attendance lotteries:** Entering pupils with high attendance into lotteries for prizes, such as £20 vouchers or chocolate bars.

5.2 Responding to poor attendance

Participants described various procedures and interventions designed to monitor and address absences, uncover reasons for non-attendance, and reinforce the importance of regular school attendance.

Promising practice: The work of Attendance and Inclusion Officers

Before pupils transitioned into KS3, the school collected attendance, SEND and behaviour data from primary schools, including details on pupils with attendance below 90%. This information was used by Attendance and Inclusion Officers and other key staff to research reasons for absence, plan interventions in advance, and monitor these pupils closely upon starting secondary school.

If a pupil is absent without an explanation from the family or safeguarding team, Attendance and Inclusion Officers would first call the pupil's home. If there was no response, they would visit the home on the same day. If contact was not made by the second day, a second visit would be attempted. On the morning of the third day, Attendance and Inclusion Officers contacted the family and stopped by the child's home before coming into work – to prevent further absences. A safeguarding response is initiated if the pupil was absent for three consecutive days without an explanation.

On a day-to-day basis, Heads of Year supported pupils with attendance around 90%, while Attendance and Inclusion Officers focused on those with lower attendance. Their duties included daily check-ins, conducting "back-to-work" interviews after absences, addressing barriers to attendance (e.g., providing transport or support for self-esteem), and acting as a key contact point for families.

Staff from schools that conducted home visits to increase attendance¹ and encourage pupils back into school considered this approach to have positive impacts on the pupils, in part because it reinforced the school's commitment to good attendance.

Participants recommended assigning a dedicated staff member to each family to foster strong, trusting relationships. They suggested this could be implemented by having each Head of Year handle visits for their own year group or having Attendance and Inclusion Officers responsible for specific year groups.

¹ There were small differences in how home visits were implemented across schools – such as some schools only offering home visits on the fifth day of absence, unless there was a known need for support.

If this arrangement is not feasible, staff stressed the importance of being well-informed about the pupil's circumstances and potential triggers before conducting a home visit.

“What works really well is that they're designated to certain families because then the families build up a good relationship with them and they feel comfortable telling them if they do need some support.”

School staff also suggested that home visits should be clearly announced in advance and well timed. Morning visits were sometimes reported to encourage pupils to come to school in the afternoon. As well as promoting attendance, home visits were also considered important because of the potential to reveal safeguarding risks.

“It creates a really good picture so that we can go, ‘Actually we need to get this service in or that service in’ because you’re seeing that. It’s very different a child coming in the same uniform as everyone else looking half smart, to seeing a family dynamic at home.”

Once a pupil with attendance issues returned to school, participants described regular check-ins from staff, including the Attendance and Inclusion Officer, Head of Year, or a designated attendance mentor – a staff member who has a good rapport with the pupil and volunteers to support their improved attendance. Participants consistently recommended that school staff, including teachers, engage with the pupil positively, using encouragement and praise upon their return. They also advised praising parents for their child's return to school.

5.3 Behaviour interventions

Participants discussed various interventions for managing pupil behaviour following incidents such as poor in-class behaviour, isolation room exclusions, suspensions, or conflicts with peers. When behaviour was a concern, schools collaborated with parents to identify underlying causes or triggers. Trusted adults, including mentors, worked to build positive relationships with pupils, helping them develop resilience and social skills to mitigate the impact of their behaviour on their own and others' education, for example, to reduce instances of removal from lessons. In some cases, involving the pupil in sport activities was also used to support them managing their behaviour.

“[W]e have to get a parent in and discuss what's going wrong. Where the behaviour issues are coming from. Are they coming from a particular lesson, a particular teacher, a particular set of pupils? Identifying where these hotspots are and then looking at how we can intervene to prevent these from progressing.”

Promising practice: Ex-military personnel mentoring

In several schools, ex-military personnel were employed as mentors to support pupils with behavioural or attendance issues. These mentors worked to uncover the root causes of the pupils' problems and provided guidance and techniques to modify their behaviour. They sometimes accompanied school staff on home visits.

One staff member noted:

"[H]e's big on the discipline side of things with the students. [...] He emphasises how their actions can lead to specific consequences and helps them understand the impact of their behaviour. He provides targeted advice to address issues and improve organisation and behaviour."

This approach was found to be particularly effective for pupils who struggle to build trust or positive relationships with school staff, offering them a relatable role model and a new perspective on their actions

As noted in Chapter 3, schools also monitored pupils' progress improving their behaviour, and regularly discussed at-risk pupils at staff meetings and debriefed.

5.4 Emotional and mental health interventions

School aimed to reduce some of the barriers to attendance and learning by providing pupils:

- **Emotional support**, for example, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or small-group workshops on personal wellbeing, improve confidence, healthy relationships, supporting self-regulation and expression, and anger management.
- **Mental health support**, for example, CBT or small-group workshops on anxiety and low mood, counselling (e.g. for bereavement, witnessing abuse), and psychotherapy. Outside term-time, pupils were signposted to online sources of support².

² [Kooth](#) is an online platform offering free and anonymous support for children and young people.

[NSPCC](#) is a children's charity, offering advice and support on a range of topics, including mental health.

National Centre for Social Research

Identifying and supporting KS3 pupils at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Promising practice: Interventions to tackle emotionally- based school avoidance (EBSA)

One school employed the EBSA framework and follow-up discussions to comprehensively address the needs of pupils struggling with attendance or behaviour. After assessing each pupil's situation, the mental health practitioner suggested tailored strategies and coping mechanisms, including adjusted timetables and small-group workshops on topics like self-esteem, anxiety, and growth mindset.

The small-group workshops were described as effective in addressing the root causes of school avoidance: "They're worried about what people think of them when they come to school, they don't like the way they show up. In relation to that, we need to start putting them together and hear that other people feel the same and do group work."

5.5 Referrals for the family

Schools repeatedly reported referring families to the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, a team of professionals within Lancashire County Council that worked with the family and the child.

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service were able to work on the underlying causes of non-attendance or poor behaviour (such as domestic abuse or finances) due to their links to support organisation, and internal team of professionals – that included specialist ESBA workers. They also organised cross-agency meetings, that school representatives would attend.

"So, it provides a professional that is not in school for them and for the family and they're well connected to stuff in the community, so if the parents are struggling with housing, they won't deal with it, but they're better advised to direct them to someone that can."

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service also had links to external agencies, and could themselves link the family to other professionals, such as Citizens Advice or legal support. In some cases, the schools themselves also referred families to Children's Social Care.

5.6 Adjustments to the educational provision

Schools employed temporary interventions like **amended or reduced timetables** and **nurture provision** to support pupils struggling with classes. Amended or reduced timetables were used for pupils facing significant barriers to full-time education, for reasons such as physical or mental health needs, including severe anxieties.

For example, some pupils attended school for a reduced number of hours each day and worked with a designated staff member. Others were permitted to enter or leave school at different times to avoid peak periods.

“It's better that they're here on a timetable that they can cope with than they just don't turn up at all. Sometimes, it's used as a way to reintegrate students into mainstream again, [...] sometimes, it's a way of more bespoke intensive intervention taking place, so lots of different ways that that happens!”

Some members of staff noted that amended or reduced timetables were both an indicator of risk of disengagement, and an interim intervention delivered alongside enhanced support to prevent complete school absence. Similarly, there were concerns that pupils on amended or reduced timelines may become NEET later in their life, if high levels of support do not continue once they leave secondary school.

Additionally, several schools reported using nurture provision, where pupils could spend part of their school day, including lunchtime, one-on-one with a staff member or in a supervised small group. Nurture provision was utilised (sometimes after a period of absence) for pupils who felt overwhelmed by a specific lesson or teacher, or who struggled with confidence around their peers. In some cases, pupils used nurture to discuss problems they may be facing with a member of staff, before going into lessons.

“There was a language barrier so we needed to break down that, and then suddenly we can get them into the wider community. So, sometimes we might need a bridge rather than them putting them straight into a whole school life, so that they feel safe and secure.”

Participants indicated that additional resources would allow for more professionals being able to provide the support required by pupils and their families. For example, some schools could only afford external mentors a couple of days each week – and would have benefited from a full-time mentor. Other schools would have benefited from staff having the time to volunteer as attendance mentors or employing additional staff to work on attendance.

“[W]e've never had five inclusion officers for each year group, so there's always one that has to share two-year groups. So, I think it would be good if each year had someone dedicated to them.”

Furthermore, staff members tended to report difficulties engaging some parents or families. To illustrate, some parents were identified as needing more support to adopt consistent parenting strategies that tackle their children's poor behaviour in school.

Crucially, school staff noted that not everyone presenting these indicators will also experience school disengagement or be at risk of becoming NEET. This highlights the importance of considering individual resilience, support networks, and personal/individual circumstances when assessing risk. Whilst certain demographic, environmental, educational, and behavioural indicators are associated with increased risk, they do not determine a pupil's future in isolation.

This understanding highlights the need for schools to adopt a nuanced approach, recognising that each pupil's experience is unique. Interventions should therefore be personalised and adaptable, taking into account the varied responses pupils may have to similar challenges. This approach ensures that support is not only targeted but also responsive to the individual needs and strengths of each pupil, providing them with the best possible chance to remain engaged and mitigate risk of NEET status.

Promising practice: Learning mentor

One school used learning mentoring to support pupils in more vulnerable circumstances (including poor attendance, behaviour, or home issues) to access learning. The learning mentor assessed each referred pupil individually, and worked to identify the barriers they faced that were preventing them from coping in mainstream lessons.

The mentor then provided one-to-one lessons and support with homework for subjects such as Maths, English, and PHSE, and group workshops. They also supported pupils with their social skills and emotions, and provided pupils opportunities to play games, create art, and enjoy music.

Pupils were praised for their skills and were encouraged to think about the support they needed to return to the classroom: "Look, you've come in, you've sat down. I know it's a small room. You've let me mark you in, then we've got activity going. If you can do that with me, this is how we want you to do it in the classroom."

6. Conclusion

The findings suggest that the challenge of preventing KS3 pupils from becoming NEET was a shared goal for all schools that participated in this research. The variety of support options implemented reflects a strong commitment to creating environments where pupils can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Range and nature of promising interventions

Interventions for KS 3 pupils at risk of becoming NEET can be broadly divided into two main categories: career-related and pastoral. Career-related initiatives aimed to integrate career education into the curriculum, with schools organising workshops, industry visits, and professional interactions to help pupils explore different career paths and set realistic goals. This early guidance aimed to ignite interest and provide pupils with the tools to make informed career choices.

Meanwhile, pastoral interventions focused on addressing immediate personal and social challenges, offering tailored mentoring, targeted support, and extracurricular activities to engage pupils, boost their confidence, and develop their skills. Pastoral interventions often included one-on-one tutoring and adapted coursework to meet individual needs, with dedicated staff such as counsellors and mentors providing crucial emotional support.

Furthermore, participating schools actively involved parents in addressing both engagement and risk factors. This included regular communication about their child's progress and collaboration to provide additional support. Feedback from participants indicated that engaging parents could create a more comprehensive support system for pupils, ultimately enhancing their chances of remaining engaged in education.

Barriers in supporting pupils at risk

A major barrier to supporting at-risk pupils is the lack of resources. Limited funding and staffing challenges made it difficult to implement certain interventions that could benefit pupils. For example, the role of Attendance and Inclusion Officers, which was designed to identify and support at-risk pupils, was described as a valuable investment in pupil welfare. However, these roles were often constrained by practical challenges and resource limitations, reducing their overall impact.

Another key factor in effective support was active parental engagement. Participants' reflections suggested that in many cases, successfully addressing the needs of at-risk pupils depended on collaboration with their families. However, participants' experiences suggest some parents were not as involved in their child's education, and some expressed concerns or resistance when issues were brought up. This lack of engagement sometimes undermined interventions, making it harder to provide the necessary support and prevent pupils from becoming NEET.

Findings also suggest participating schools often relied on informal methods to identify at-risk pupils, such as observing changes in mood, behaviour, and academic performance. Whilst these methods enabled early detection of potential issues, they may lack the structure of more systematic approaches, and therefore not capture all pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET.

External factors

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges that have worsened existing issues for pupils. Prolonged disruptions to education and shifts in parental employment have placed additional strain on pupil engagement and well-being.

This is further compounded by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, which has put low-income households under increased pressure, affecting both pupils' and their families' mental health and, in some cases, contributing to higher crime rates. These socio-economic stressors have added or strengthened existing risk factors for at-risk pupils.

Additionally, the heightened reliance on technology, particularly the increasing influence of social media, has further impacted pupils' self-esteem and well-being. Participants also noted that social interaction is now more likely to occur online than in person, which has implications for academic skills development. For pupils with existing mental health issues and/or SEND, these challenges have been even more pronounced, exacerbating disengagement and negatively impacting their performance.

Need for evaluated approaches

Whilst some schools reported receiving positive feedback from pupils, particularly regarding interactive events like university visits, a major gap identified by the report is the lack of solid, evidence-based evaluations of these strategies.

Without comprehensive evaluation frameworks, schools may struggle to determine which interventions are most effective and where support needs to be strengthened. Developing a formal, evidence-based framework to assess the impact of different interventions is crucial for ensuring that schools can rely on proven practices and address gaps in support.

Robust evaluation would provide schools with the data needed to adopt evidence-based practices, ensuring that interventions are refined and continuously improved. As schools face changing circumstances and external pressures, a commitment to evidence-based approaches and continuous improvement will be essential for preventing NEET and supporting the future success of all pupils.

7. NEET Risk Management Checklist for educational staff

This checklist is based on the key findings of this report and designed to guide teachers through a series of key steps in identifying and addressing pupils at risk of NEET.

This checklist covers six essential steps:

1. **Pre-transition planning (KS2 to KS3):** Gathering critical information from primary schools.
2. **Early KS3 monitoring:** Tracking engagement, behaviour, and progress.
3. **Support strategy development:** Identifying risk factors and planning interventions.
4. **Targeted intervention/s:** Implementing tailored support and educational strategies.
5. **Parental/family engagement:** Involving parents or carers in the process.
6. **Ongoing monitoring of impact:** Continuously evaluating and adjusting support based on pupil progress.

Checklist flowchart



Checklist

1. Pre-transition planning (KS2 to KS3)

- a. Information sharing with primary schools: Gather details from primary schools on individual pupil circumstances (e.g., demographics, educational and behavioural indicators, etc)
- b. Discussions with KS2 schools: Meet with KS2 teachers to identify pupils who may struggle with the transition to secondary school.

2. Early KS3 monitoring

- a. Academic and behavioural monitoring: Implement informal monitoring of pupil engagement and behaviour
- b. Progress monitoring: Track academic performance and identify potential concerns early.
- c. One-to-one meetings with the pupil: Conduct individual support sessions to assess each pupil's needs.

3. Support strategy development

- a. Identify risk factors: Pinpoint pupils at risk based on e.g., demographics, educational and behavioural indicators, etc.
- b. Assess existing support networks: Understand the pupil's current support structures (e.g., family involvement, external services).
- c. Plan intervention/s: Develop tailored intervention strategies (individual or group).

4. Targeted intervention/s

- a. Pastoral support: Engage in specific pastoral interventions to address individual emotional and social needs.
- b. Educational approaches: Consider alternative and/or tailored education methods like separate lessons or tailored curricula.
- c. External careers provision: External careers provision: Deliver one to one IAG sessions earlier and organise and tailor encounters with employers and visits to workplaces, colleges and independent training providers

5. Parental/family engagement

- a. Involve families (where appropriate): Engage parents or carers in discussions about their child's progress and support plans.

6. Ongoing monitoring of impact

- a. Holistic monitoring: Continuously monitor the impact of interventions, collect feedback and adjust strategies accordingly.
- b. Further support: Reassess and plan additional or alternative support if needed.