

MAT RISK AND ASSURANCE BRIEFING

Without belonging data, the Trust is managing risk through the rear-view mirror

Belonging as an early-warning key performance indicator for
Trust Leadership and Governance

WHAT BELONGING MEANS

Belonging is the answer to six student questions

A student belongs when they feel safe, accepted, respected, understood and able to engage to succeed.

It is built through everyday relationships, routines, teaching, support and response rather than a one-off wellbeing initiative.

01 Do adults know and care about me?

02 Am I safe here?

03 Am I treated fairly?

04 Can I be myself here?

05 Will someone notice if I struggle?

06 Can I participate and succeed?

The national warning signs are already visible

1 in 4

**or more begin to disengage
during Year 7**

The first year of secondary school

20

**point fall in secondary pupils'
sense of belonging**

OECD, England, 2014 to 2022, in percentage points

3×

**more likely to be
persistently absent**

Secondary pupils with low engagement scores

By 2029, the DfE expects every school to monitor belonging and engagement.



WHY KPIS ARE INCOMPLETE

Most KPIs tell Trust leaders what has already happened with lagging indicators

KPI	WHAT IT TELLS YOU	BY THEN...
Attendance	Who stopped coming	Learning and routine have been lost
Behaviour	Who reached sanction	Trust or regulation may have broken down
Exclusions	Who could not remain	The relationship is severely strained
Attainment	Who underperformed	The opportunity to recover is smaller
Complaints	Which families escalated	Confidence has already deteriorated



Lagging data records the consequence. Belonging data reveals the developing risk.

This is not a survey problem, it is a visibility problem.

WHAT THE TRUST SEES

- ✓ Attendance has fallen
- ✓ Suspensions have increased
- ✓ Attainment gaps have widened
- ✓ Complaints have escalated

WHAT MAY HAVE STARTED MONTHS EARLIER

- SEND students feel that they are not safe
- Trust in adults weakened for a year group
- Particular academy struggling with parental engagement
- Disconnection with school becomes normal



Belonging asks a different question: who is beginning to disconnect and why?

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

The KPI data was strong, the signals were not.

STUDENT LEVEL

A student joins the school with strong attendance and no recorded behaviour concerns.

OCTOBER

96% attendance



No incidents but they feel alone at lunch.

JANUARY

Monday absences



Headaches and anxiety become absence.

EASTER

87% attendance



The problem is now visible in Trust data.

The October belonging signal created a five month opportunity to intervene.

SCHOOL LEVEL

Two academies report

94% attendance

KPI looks identical.

ACADEMY A

82%
feel known, safe, valued

LOWER FUTURE RISK

ACADEMY B

55%
feel known, safe, valued

HIGHER FUTURE RISK

Belonging data helps the Trust see risk before attendance separates.

THE TRUST RISK CHAIN

One weak signal can spread across the Trust

STUDENT RISK

Safety and inclusion

A student feels unknown, unsafe and/or unfairly treated.

SCHOOL RISK

Attendance and outcomes

Disengagement becomes absence, behaviour and/or lost learning.

TRUST RISK

Assurance and reputation

Eroding trust, inspection risk and rising costs across every academy.



Early signal creates greater opportunities for timely, effective intervention - supporting better outcomes for students and reducing longer-term costs.

Belonging is an early-warning and improvement cycle

One Trust-wide belonging score is not enough.

01

Measure

- Safety
- Fairness
- Trusted adults

02

Segment

- Academy
- Year group
- Inclusion groups

03

Respond

- Named owner
- Interventions
- Review date

04

Assure

- Evidence of impact
- Trend over time
- Trustee report



The belonging data creates value only when it triggers curiosity, intervention and follow-up.

What strong belonging looks like across a Trust

- ✓ **Attendance**
Students want to be in school. Persistent absence falls because students feel missed when they're away, not just monitored.
- ✓ **Attainment & engagement**
Students take part, ask questions and put in effort, because they feel able to contribute without fear of judgement.
- ✓ **Behaviour**
Fewer behavioural incidents and exclusions, as students who feel understood are less likely to disengage or act out.
- ✓ **Wellbeing & safeguarding**
Stronger student mental health and safeguarding concerns raised earlier before reaching crisis point.
- ✓ **Staff workload & retention**
Less pastoral firefighting for staff, and stronger retention as teachers feel part of a supportive culture too.
- ✓ **Reputation & inspection**
A strong reputation with families, healthy demand for places, and positive outcomes on personal development and behaviour.

Belonging data does not eliminate risk.

It gives leaders time to manage it.

DETECT EARLY | INTERVENE QUICKLY | ASSURE THE BOARD



Belonging data shows you where the risk is starting to build, while there's still time to act.
Arrange a time to talk with us to explore what this could look like across your Trust.