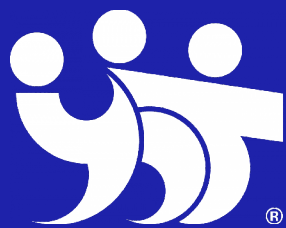


August 2025



**YOUTH
SPORT
TRUST**

Key facts about...

school absenteeism & the role of sport and physical activity



For more facts, please visit [here](#) to access the Youth Sport Trust's Knowledge Bank, and [here](#) for another factsheet about the mental health benefits of sport and physical activity.

A sense of belonging to school is a key driver of attendance ([ImpactEd Evaluation, 2024](#)).

Adult-youth mentoring programmes (that pair youth with non-parental adults as 'mentors') can significantly improve schooling outcomes including attendance, engagement and attainment ([Raposa et al., 2019](#)).

The House of Lords identifies a role for sports-based interventions to improve attendance. They recommended additional government investment and research to ascertain the link between sports-based interventions and improved attendance ([House of Commons Education Committee, 2023](#)).

Youth work (that promotes young people's personal and social development, through non-formal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge and learning) is shown support young people to develop a positive relationship with their school and help address barriers to attendance ([National Youth Agency, 2023](#)).

32% of parents believe that sport and play help with increased attendance and engagement with school ([Youth Sport Trust and YouGov, 2025](#)).

Participating in sport in school is associated with higher levels of wellbeing, including belonging ([Denovan and Dagnall, 2023](#)).

77% of young people experienced at least a moderate improvement in their sense of belonging as a result of YST programmes; Barclays Game Changers, Set for Success and Whistlers saw the greatest improvements (Youth Sport Trust, 2023; internal analysis).

82% of practitioners report improvements to young people's engagement with school as a result of a YST programme ([Youth Sport Trust, 2023](#)).

37% of teachers believe that sport and play help with increased attendance and engagement with school ([Youth Sport Trust and Teacher Tapp, 2025](#)).

Teachers report pupils who attend after school or breakfast clubs feel a greater sense of belonging to school ([Callanan et al., 2016](#)).

Continuation (from age 8-11 to age 16-17) in sport participation was associated with lower odds of being absent from school. Team sport participation was also associated with reduced absenteeism ([Owen et al., 2023](#)).

A school-based intervention to improve schools' health and wellbeing policies and procedures was found to reap benefits beyond health, including reduced incidence of bullying, improved behaviour and improved attendance ([NIHR CLAHRC North Thames, 2016](#)).