



Connecting



**CST Annual
Conference 26**

15 & 16 October, ICC, Birmingham

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Connecting attendance, belonging and support:

What attendance mentoring is teaching us.

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What is mentoring teaching us?

- Framing the Challenge – Why mentoring matters
- AMPE – What has been learned?
- AMPE – Why does it work? What are children, families and mentors telling us?
- What can be used and applied in school?



What has been learned?

What is AMPE?

- National Programme – 10 regions
- 43 schools and 54 mentors
- 12 week programme working 1:1 with 25-28 students weekly
- Identifying and removing barriers to attendance
- Family engagement



What has been learned?

AMPE is supporting schools effectively

- A dedicated attendance mentor is providing personalised 12 week 1:1 support
- Tailored intervention is designed around mentee's needs
- Etio is managing delivery, training and QA
- AMPE is strengthening school capacity through collaboration, data insights and AL engagement



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What has been learned?

AMPE is supporting young people's attendance

- Mentee voice is shaping support
- Relentless curiosity helps uncover root causes
- A clear 12 week structure supports ownership and accountability
- Light touch follow up sustains improvements
- Family relationships strengthen outcomes



What has been learned?

How can AMPE learning improve attendance in my school/trust?

Identify

- Do we truly understand what is driving absence?
- Who faces the greatest barriers and how do we know?
- Are we treating symptoms or addressing causes?
- Are we making any assumptions about attendance barriers?



What has been learned?

Common barriers to attendance in ETIO AMPE Wave 1-4

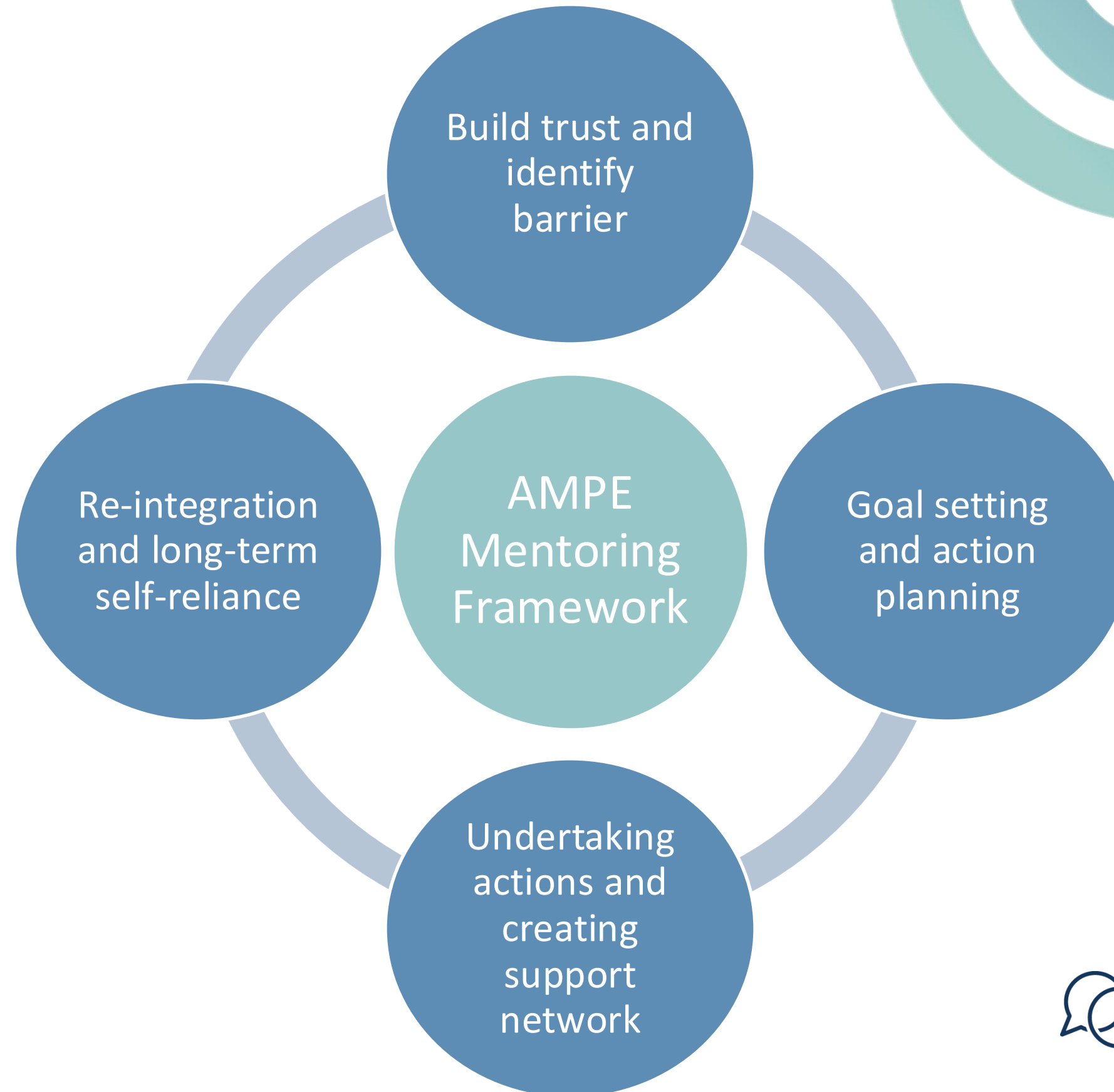
1. Sleep Hygiene/Morning Routines
2. Illness - short term and ongoing
3. Punctuality/Lateness
4. Behaviour



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Why does it work?



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Access and Connection

Trusted relationships build engagement

- Relational safety – able to talk openly
- Authentic expression – safe space to be oneself
- **Mattering** – continuity, curiosity and remembering
- Increased participation and connection – renewed aspiration and engagement

“Having someone to talk to really helped me...I feel more positive about keeping my attendance up.”



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Knowing is not the destination

From insight into action

What mentoring supports:

- **Meaning** – understanding the “why”
- **Capacity** – regulation and action planning
- **Connection** –strengthen support network
- **Voice** - Self-advocacy and long-term self-management

“I now understand how attendance affects my future, know strategies that help me stay calm, and know who my trusted adults are.”

“My sleep schedule has changed how I manage my time... I feel a clear sense of progress.”



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Action that supports belonging

Show that they matter

"They still have wobble moments but they don't seem to have as much of an impact on them getting up and ready for school. The mentor has been an advocate to ensure they feel included and a part of the school community.

- **Embed belonging** – reinforce it

"I now feel more confident in school due to making more friends and having another staff member to talk to when I need it. I feel safer at school and that is why my attendance has risen."



What has been learned?

How does AMPE learning help improve attendance in my school/trust?

Investigate - Learning from students

- How do students currently tell us how they are feeling and why?
- How confident are we that every voice is being heard?
- What helps students feel safe enough to be honest about their experience?
- How do we know we're hearing the full story, not just the part that's easy to share?



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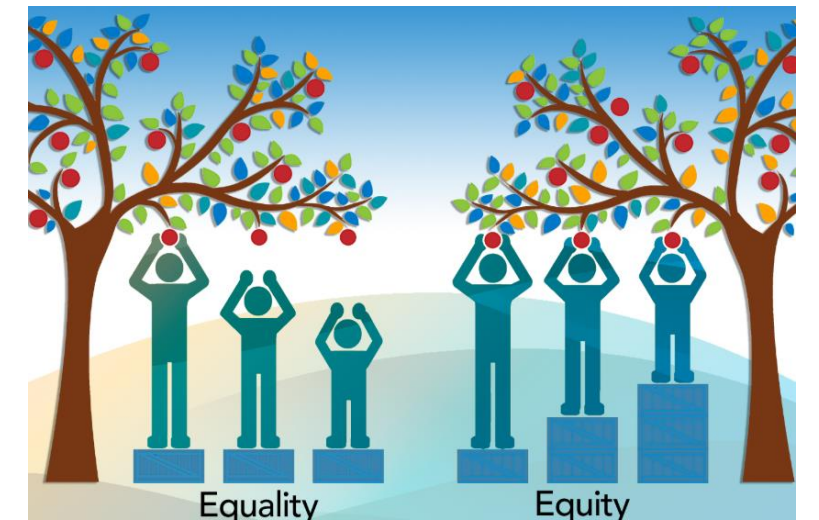
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What has been learned?

How does AMPE learning help improve attendance in my school/trust?

Intervene

- How well positioned are we to act on what attendance is telling us?
- Are the right people and systems in place to uncover attendance barriers?
- What happens when a student shares a barrier?
- How quickly can they be addressed?



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What has been learned?

What can be sustained beyond mentoring?

- Structured time to listen to students
- Root cause attendance conversations
- Trusted adult approaches
- Cross team/school attendance planning
- Family engagement practices
- Clear pathways from identification to support

= mattering
and belonging

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Connecting attendance, belonging and support.



What Trusts can take away and adapt in their own context.

Rebekah Iiyambo

Co-CEO, Compass Eko Trust



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The context we're working in



- **Diverse communities, uneven starting points.**
- **High need in many of our schools.**
- **Barriers beyond the school gate.**
- **A trust still growing**



Start with a whole-trust system



One policy, no ambiguity. A single trust-wide attendance policy applied consistently across every school removes room for interpretation.



Leadership at both levels. Every school has a named Attendance Lead; a trust-wide lead meets school leads at least three times a year with ongoing support.



An early, non-negotiable trigger. Attendance below 96% prompts intervention immediately; concerns are identified before they become patterns.



Partnerships beyond the school gate. Strong links with local authorities, CAMHS, school nurses and housing support extend what any one school can do alone.



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Make it relational, not just procedural

- ☐ **Apply the policy with compassion.**
- ☐ **Understand the root cause.**
- ☐ **Build it into everyday language.**
- ☐ **Train everyone, not just attendance leads.**



An intentional, phased strategy

- **Not bolted on.**
- **Phased, not rushed.**
- **From transactional to relational.**
- **Tested, not assumed.**



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Build belonging across every community you serve

**Expect diversity across
your trust**

**Remove language
as a barrier**

**Meet families where they
already gather**

**Celebrate the
whole effort**

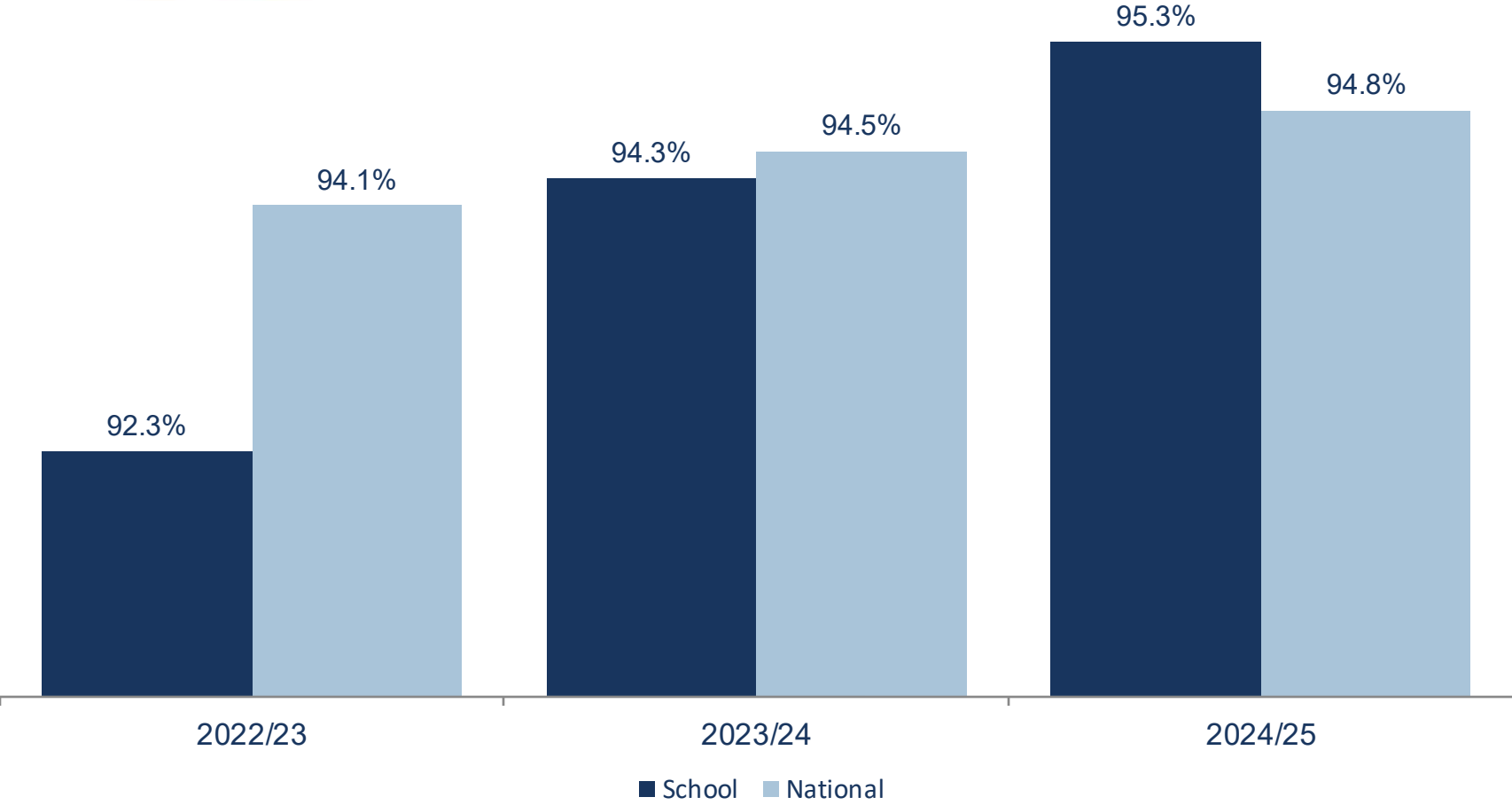
**Say it out loud,
everywhere**



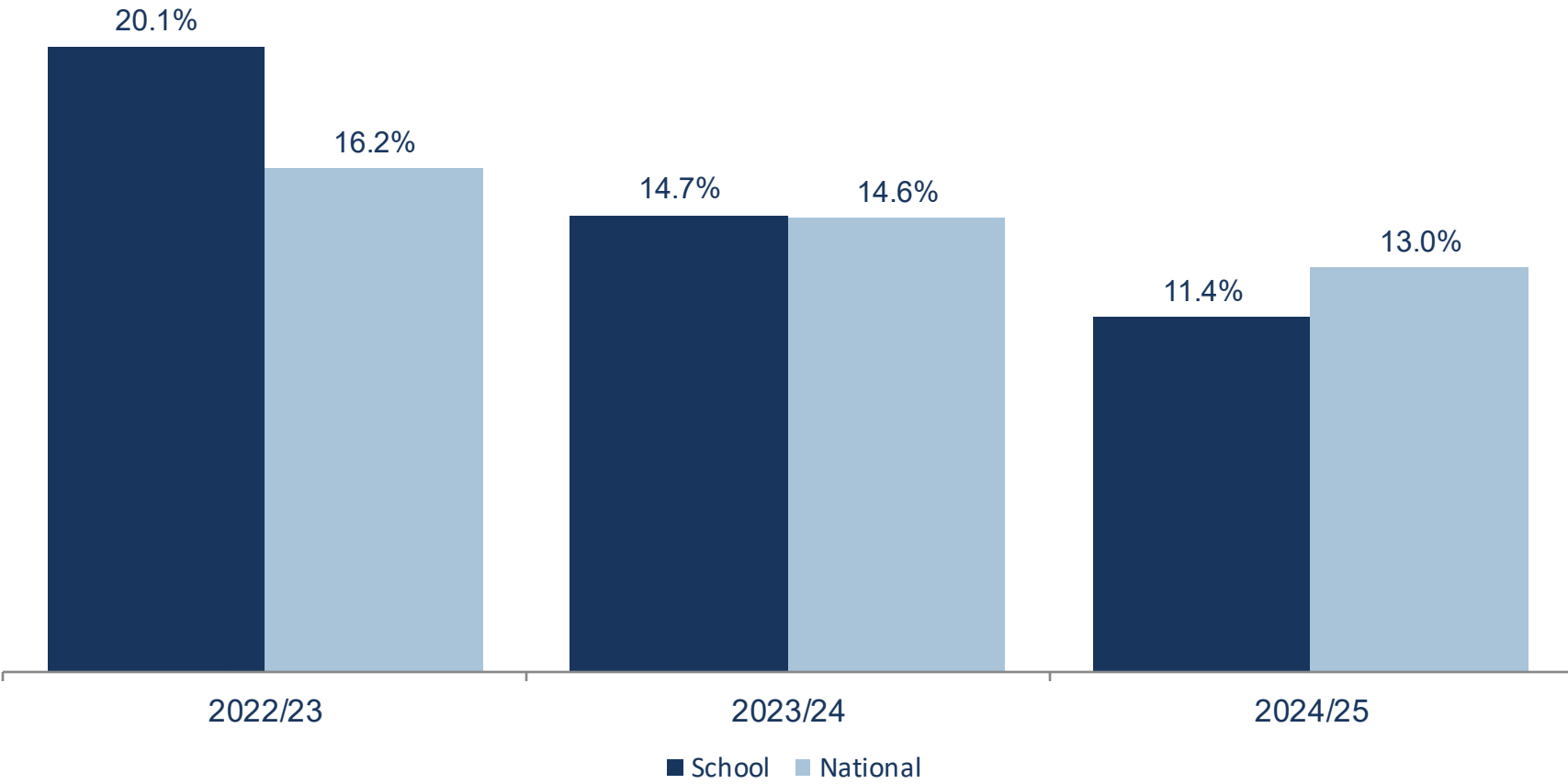
It's working, it's visible



All pupils – Attendance (%)



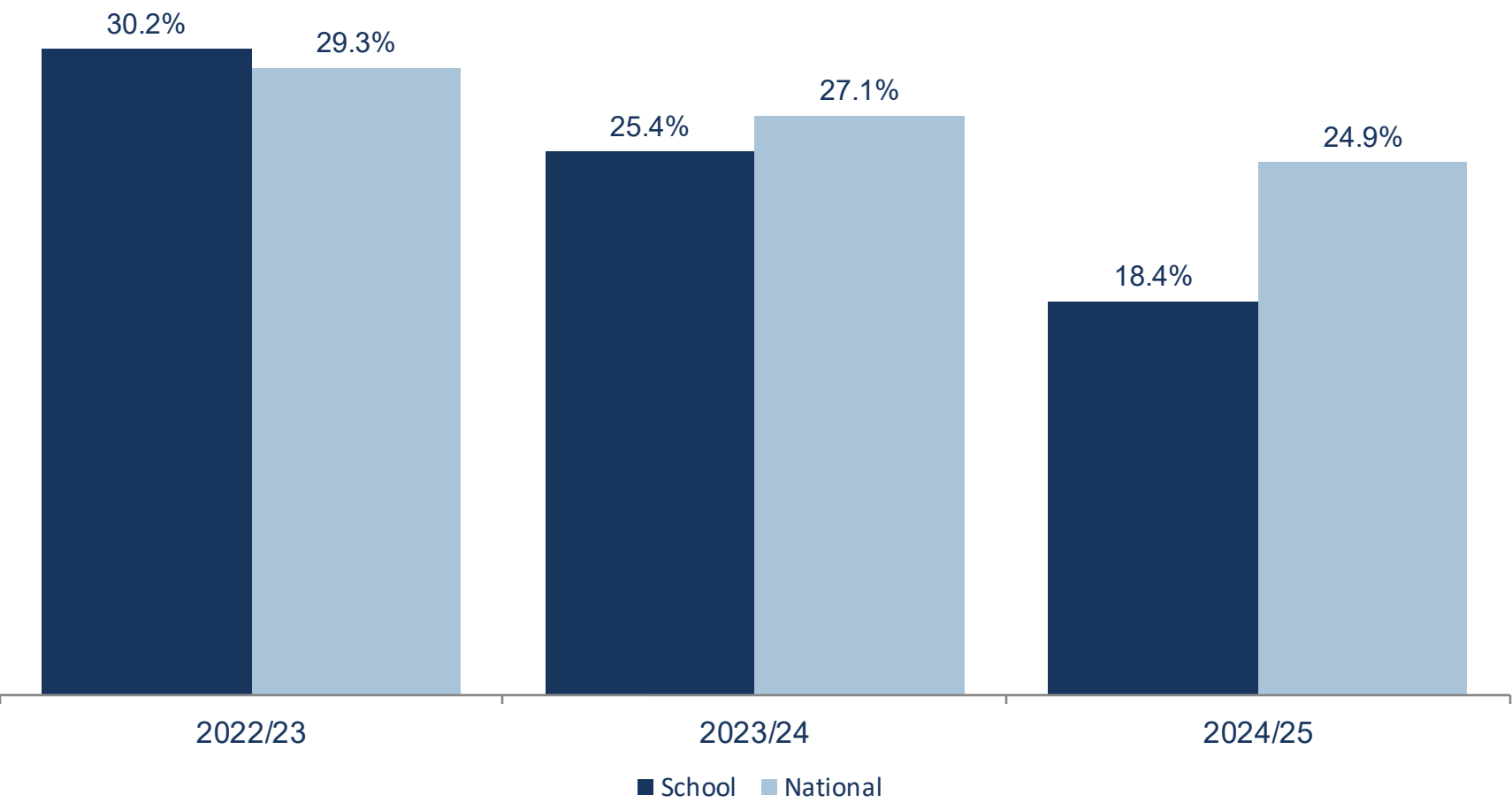
All pupils – Persistent absence (%)



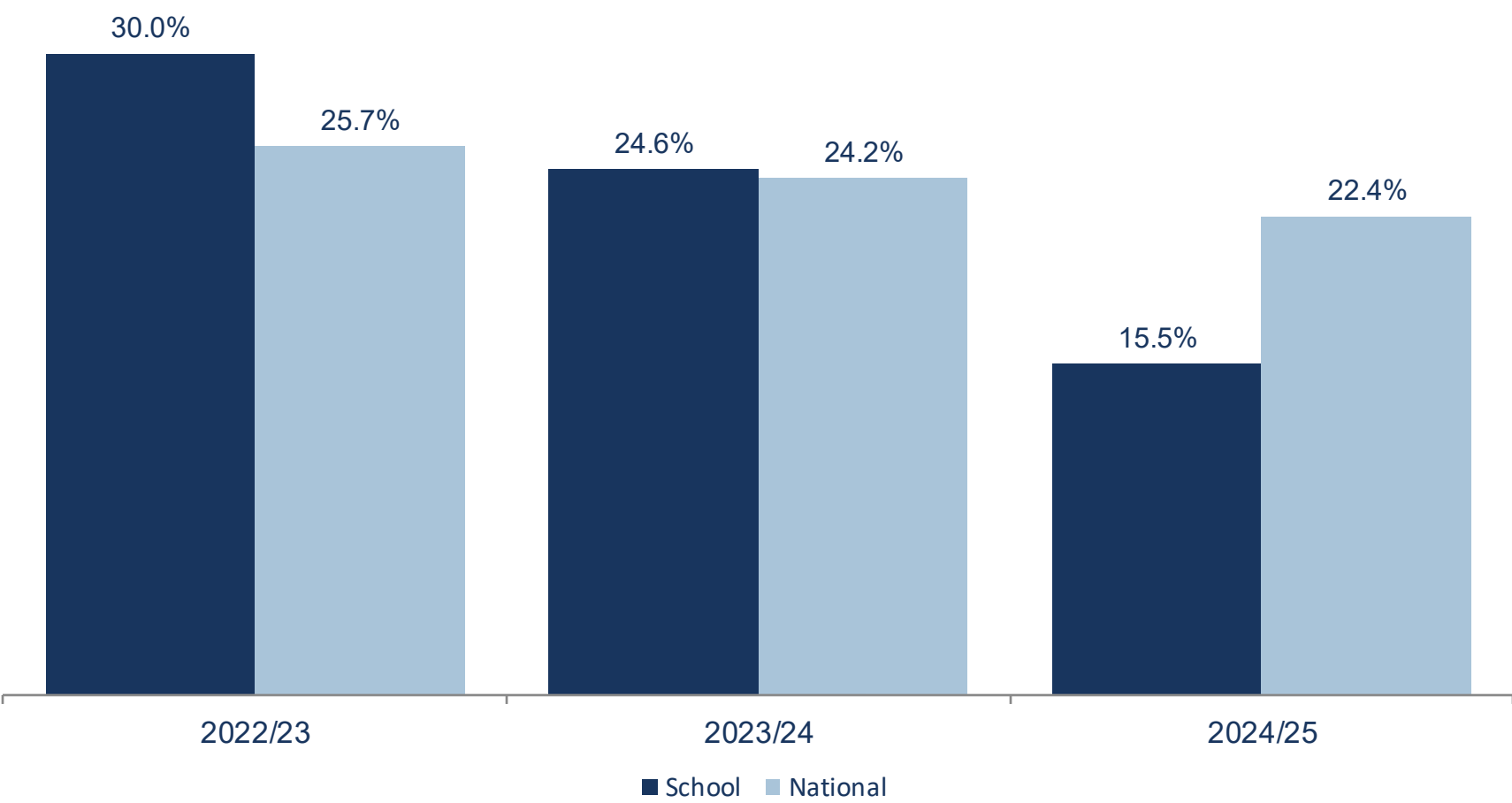
And it's working for the pupils who need it most



FSM6 – Persistent absence (%)



SEN – Persistent absence (%)



Take Aways



- 1. Name accountability at two levels.** A trust-wide lead and a named lead in every school, meeting regularly – not attendance held by one person alone.
- 2. Set an early, shared trigger point.** Agree a single threshold across the trust so intervention starts before absence becomes persistent.
- 3. Invest in relationships before enforcement.** Train all staff to understand root causes and use consistent, welcoming language – policy and compassion are not in tension.
- 4. Build translation and interpretation into routine communication.** Don't treat it as an add-on for a single event – make it part of how the trust always communicates.
- 5. Track it, share it, celebrate it.** Use regular data to target support strategically, share effective practice across schools, and celebrate progress – families included.



Questions & discussion

Thank you



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