

Tell Them From Me and student attendance

A guide for using Scout as a tool to identify themes that support student attendance

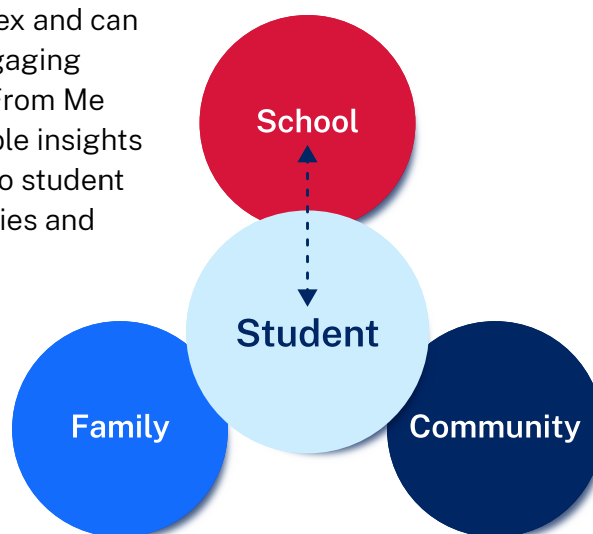
Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



Using Tell Them From Me to understand the drivers of attendance

Factors influencing student attendance are complex and can vary across school communities and locations. Engaging student voice through surveys such as Tell Them From Me (TTFM) can provide additional evidence and valuable insights to help understand what factors are contributing to student attendance or absence so that appropriate strategies and actions can be implemented. This can:

- enable a deeper understanding of students' perspective and school experiences
- identify specific factors that may act as barriers to student attendance
- create opportunities for staff and students to work together to improve attendance.



Attendance is influenced by school, family and community factors. This guide examines the school and student relationship through the lens of TTFM data.

A strategic approach to addressing student attendance requires looking at school data, investigating the root causes contributing to non-attendance and taking action to address the issues identified.

The TTFM student survey includes measures of levels of engagement, wellbeing and classroom experiences, enabling researchers and school leaders to determine those school and classroom practices which foster a positive culture of attendance.

In 2022, CESE published [Understanding attendance – a review of the drivers of school attendance and best practice approaches](#). This research analysed TTFM data alongside student attendance data to identify school-based drivers of attendance. Many of these critical school practices which support student attendance are measured using TTFM data reported in Scout. This guide will provide examples of these drivers and illustrate how to use Scout to make correlations or distinctions between aggregated TTFM data and student attendance. It is designed to assist school leaders to examine their TTFM data as part of their usual attendance planning processes and can be used in conjunction with the department's [Planning to improve attendance](#) resource hub.

TTFM data in Scout

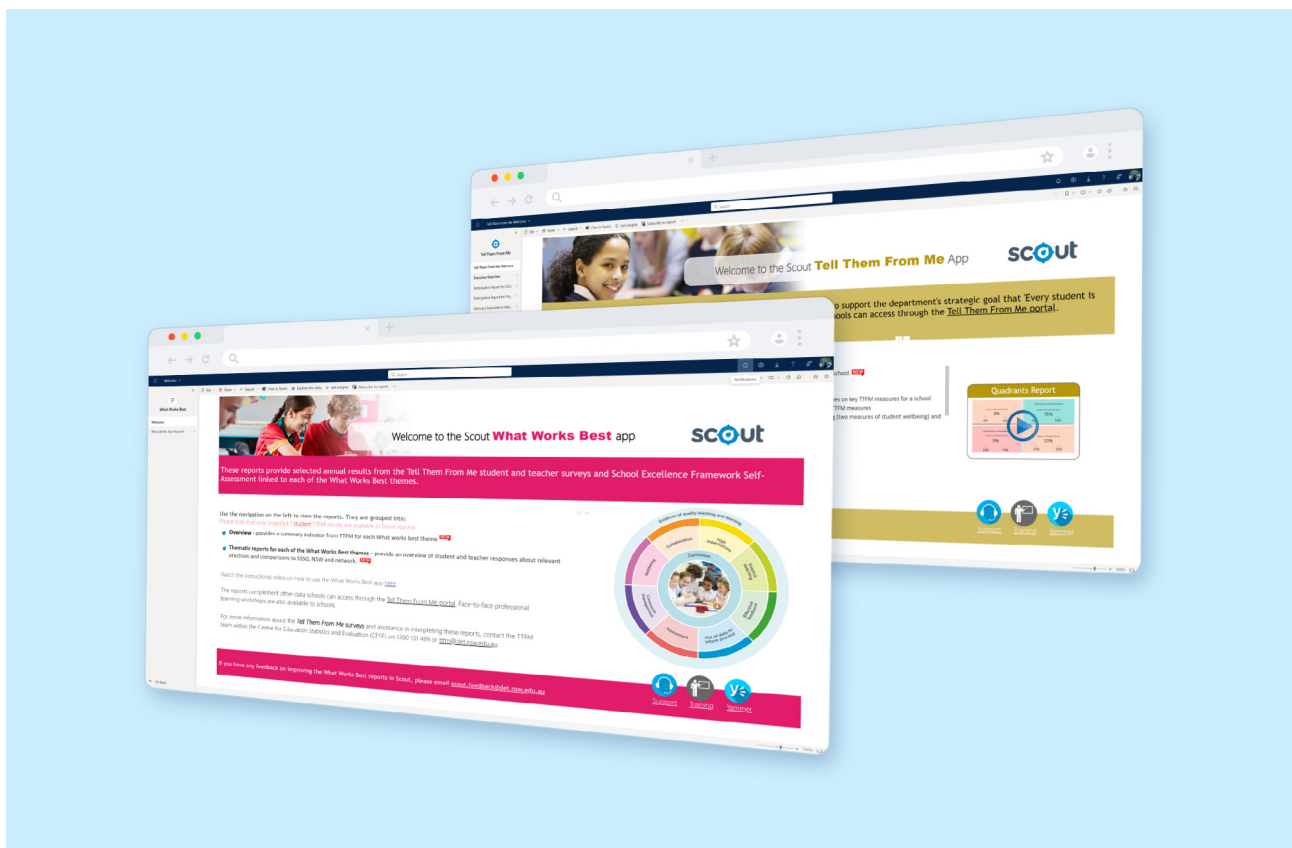
Our Plan for NSW Public Education commits to strengthening student wellbeing and development so that **every student is known, valued and cared for**. From 2024, all schools will be asked to include attendance improvement measures in their Strategic Improvement Plans. Insights into how schools are progressing towards these goals can be obtained from students' reporting on their sense of belonging at school and their rates of attendance. There are 2 TTFM applications in Scout that include measures which report on factors contributing to student attendance – the **Tell Them From Me** and the **What Works Best** applications.

1. Tell Them From Me application

This app reports on select measures from the TTFM student survey aligned to the department's wellbeing priority that every student is known, valued and cared for. Additionally, an overview report within this app provides departmental executive staff with data on all TTFM student measures and select measures from the TTFM teacher survey.

2. What Works Best application

This app reports on select measures from the TTFM student and teacher surveys designed to provide an indication of the extent to which effective teaching practices are in evidence across the school.



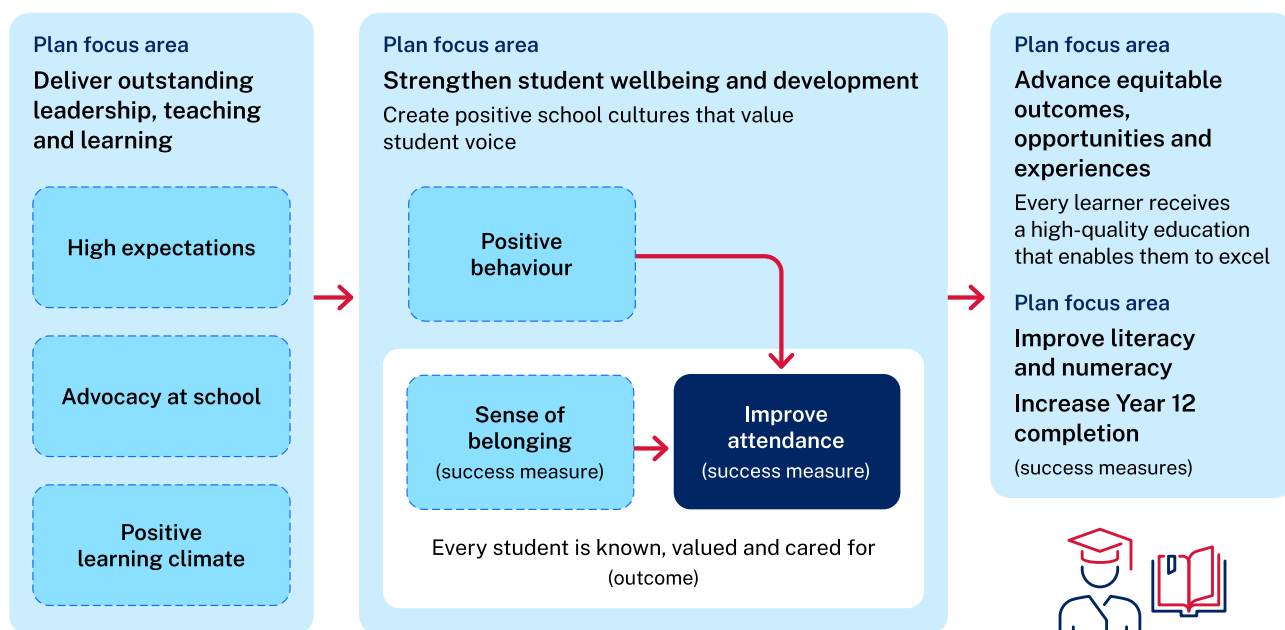
Key information, statistics and indicators for school student attendance can be obtained in the Attendance and Engagement and the School Dashboard applications.

The screenshot shows the Scout Attendance & Engagement app interface. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: Attendance Source, Attendance Data Completeness, Attendance, Daily Attendance Report, and Attendance by Half Term. The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to the Scout Attendance & Engagement app" with the Scout logo. Below this, a blue banner states: "These reports provide key information and indicators for a school with student attendance and their engagement with learning activities." A section titled "We need your help to ensure data is complete!" includes instructions for schools using Sentral and a list of report types: Attendance Source, Attendance Data Completeness, Attendance by Half Term, Application Activity, and Daily Attendance. A "Watch report overview" video thumbnail is visible on the right. At the bottom, there are links for Support, Training, and Yarnnet.

The screenshot shows the Scout School Dashboard app interface. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: School Dashboard, Target Progress, School Plan Terms, Scout Usage, Digital Data Walls, and SEF Self Assessment. The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to the Scout School Dashboard app" with the Scout logo. Below this, a blue banner states: "These dashboard reports provide key information and statistics for a school, drawn from multiple data sources, in an easy to access format." A section titled "Use the navigation on the left to view the reports. They are grouped into:" includes a list of report types: School Dashboard, School Dashboard (Updated), Target Progress, SEF Self Assessment, School Plan Terms, Scout Usage, and School Complexity Factors. A "Watch report overview" video thumbnail is visible on the right. At the bottom, there are links for Support, Training, and Yarnnet.

Measures of engagement, wellbeing and teaching practices linked to attendance within Scout

Analysis of data from NSW public schools highlights how good teaching, coupled with positive student engagement and wellbeing, drives attendance at school.



 Measure from TTFM shown to drive attendance using data from NSW public schools

School leaders can examine data on these measures of effective teaching, engagement and wellbeing through TTFM. The measures below, alongside other evidence, are reported on in Scout and can be used to examine consistent trends and correlations (for example, among particular cohorts), test and refine ideas about key attendance challenges and plan areas of focus for improvement efforts.

Positive behaviour at school

This measure refers to behaviours that occur in the learning environment, such as whether students are listening to their teacher or being disruptive. In TTFM, students respond to questions asking how often they have been in trouble in the classroom. Students with a low score are considered to have ‘positive student behaviour’. Like attendance, positive behaviour at school is a measure of students’ institutional engagement.

Sense of belonging

Sense of belonging refers to students' feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers and by others at school. It reflects the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others at school. It is a key component of social engagement. In TTFM, students respond to questions about their relationships with their peers at school. Sense of belonging emerges as one of the main student-level drivers of attendance across the literature. When students feel a sense of belonging at school, they have positive relationships, value learning and engage with their school environment.

High expectations for success

Expectations for success represent the extent to which school staff value academic achievement and hold high expectations for all students. In TTFM, students respond to questions about their interactions with adults at their school to gauge the extent to which school staff value academic achievement and hold high expectations for all students. High expectations promotes students' engagement in their learning.

Advocacy at school

Advocacy at school refers to the support students receive from adults in the school who consistently provide encouragement and who can be turned to for advice. In TTFM, students respond to questions about their interactions with adults at their school to indicate to what extent this is the case at their school. Students who experience high levels of advocacy feel more positively about school and have higher levels of institutional engagement.

Classroom management

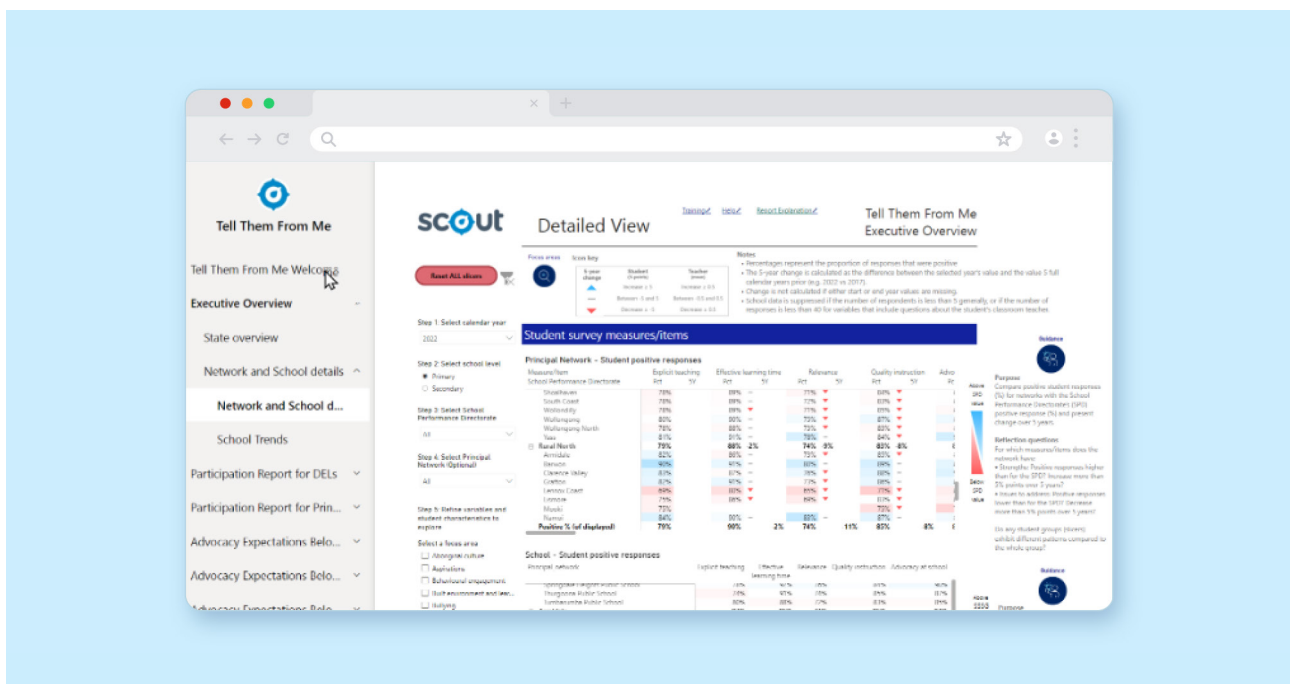
Positive classroom climate is concerned with the extent to which students internalise the norms and values of the classroom, which is affected by the formal and informal rules of the classroom, the effectiveness of classroom management strategies and the relationships between students and teachers. In TTFM, students are asked about the behaviours they encounter in classrooms across the school as an indication of the norms and values of the school and the degree of positive classroom management across the school. Students are not asked about a specific subject or teacher. A positive learning climate across the school indicates that students feel safe and ready to learn when at school.

Absence of bullying

Bullying is when a person tries to hurt another person and does it more than once. It can be physical, verbal, social or cyber. TTFM asks students about their experiences of bullying over the past 4 weeks. Students are presented with a definition of bullying to ensure a consistent understanding of the behaviours intended. When there is absence of bullying, students are more likely to be engaged with school. Victims of bullying are more likely to be disengaged and may seek to avoid school.

Tell Them From Me app (Executive Overview report)

CESE has released a TTFM Executive Overview report, which is available in the Tell Them From Me application in Scout. This is accessible to DELs, EDs, Principals, School Leadership and Principals, Coach Mentors, and provides high-level data on a broad range of measures from the Tell Them From Me suite of surveys. It is designed to assist school executives to reflect on current school performance to drive strategic planning and school improvement.



Identifying attendance themes in the TTFM Executive Overview report

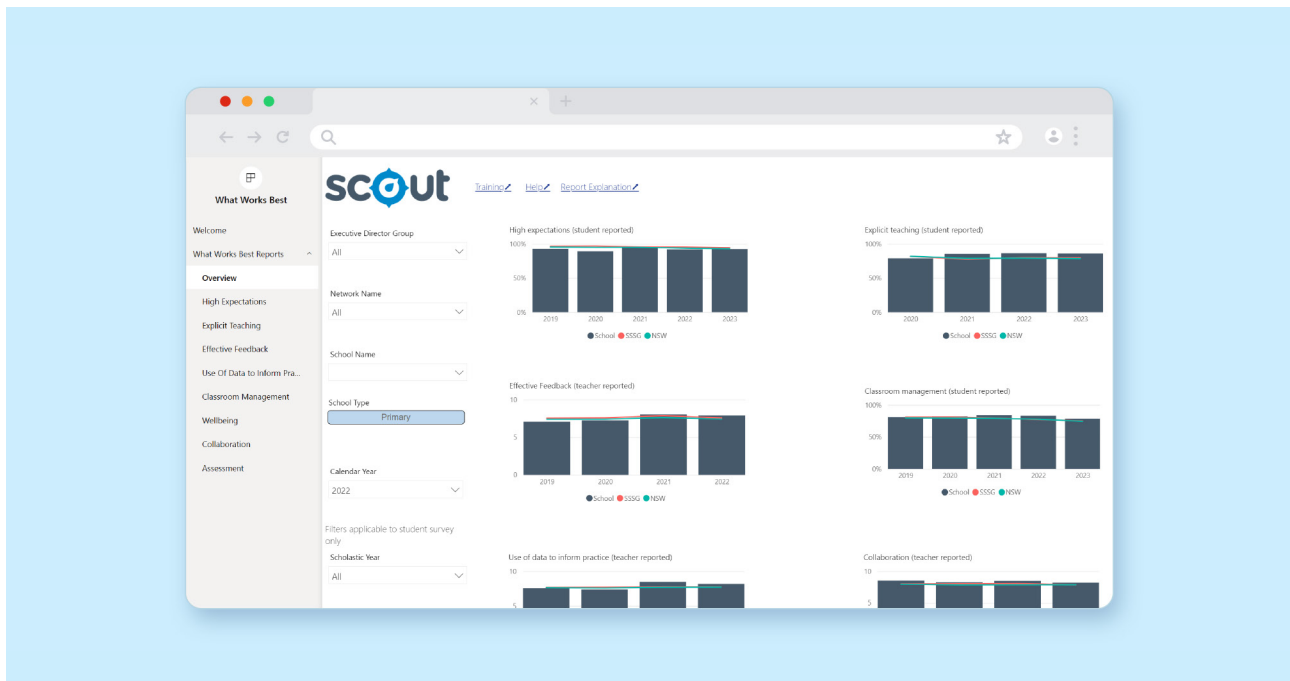
Data within the TTFM Executive Overview report comes from the full range of measures in the TTFM student survey, as well as measures from the teacher survey that align to practices outlined in the department's framework for effective teaching, What Works Best. The report can be used to identify performance in TTFM measures related to school attendance. Areas to focus on that share relationships with absentee data include:

- behavioural engagement
- classroom context
- social engagement
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- social-emotional learning
- absence of bullying.

Within this report, it is possible to link directly to the attendance dashboard and What Works Best resources.

What Works Best app

The What Works Best application is available in Scout and is accessible by principals and school leaders and/or nominated staff. It is designed to support improvements to teaching and learning. It allows schools to measure performance in relation to yearly state averages, statistically similar school groups and within their principal networks. Department staff can access an [instructional video](#) on how to use this application.



Identifying attendance themes in the What Works Best application

The What Works Best Scout report is aligned to the 8 What Works Best themes. The report can be used to track performance in What Works Best themes that are related to school attendance, including:

- wellbeing
- high expectations
- classroom management.

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