



# School attendance: What parents need to know

## Why is good attendance important?

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school, and to establish positive life habits that are necessary for future success.

Through regular attendance, students can:

- Build friendships and develop social groups and life skills
- Engage in essential learning and other school social events
- Achieve in their full potential
- Minimise the risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour and becoming victims or perpetrators of crime

**All parents should promote good attendance and work in partnership with their child's school to provide a cohesive approach.**

## What does the law say?

All children of compulsory school age, between 5 and 16, must receive a suitable full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for ensuring that this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making appropriate alternative arrangements.

Once you have registered your child at a school, you are also legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly. If you fail to do this, even if your child misses school without you knowing, legal action can be taken against you by the Local Authority. It is a legal offence to fail to ensure your child attends school regularly.

**Legal action can involve a penalty notice or being taken to court. Parents also face the risk of imprisonment and parenting orders. Parenting orders involve attending a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.**

A penalty notice of £60 may be issued as an alternative to prosecution, but this will rise to £120 if it is not paid within 21 days. Failure to pay a penalty notice will usually lead to prosecution.

## Can my child ever be absent?

When a student is absent from school, this will be classified as either **'authorised'** or **'unauthorised'**.

The Principal/Head of School decides which absences are granted as authorised. Authorised absences are only permitted for valid reasons such as illness, medical or dental appointments, religious observances and family bereavement. Wherever possible, parents should always try to arrange medical and dental appointments during school holidays or after school hours.

## What are unauthorised absences?

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential or reasonable.

**Unauthorised absences can include:**

- Forgetting school term dates
- Absences which have not been explained
- Day trips or family outings
- Problems with uniform/clothing

- Arriving at school after the register has closed
- Keeping pupils off school unnecessarily or without explanation
- Birthdays and holidays
- Absences after 7 days
- Oversleeping

### Holidays during term time

Taking holidays during term times means that students miss important school time, both educationally and for other school activities. It will be difficult for students to catch up on work when they return to school.

Any holidays taken during term time will be unauthorised. Changes in 2013 to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 state that headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### Exceptional circumstances do not involve cheaper costs, family availability or weather conditions.

You can be fined if you take your child on holiday during term time without permission from the headteacher.

### Requesting absences

- The authorisation of planned absences is at the discretion of the Head of School.
- All absences, including for holidays, must be requested as far in advance as possible, the minimum notice period is 20 days.
- The Head of School will decide the amount of time a student can be away from school, considering their attendance record.

### Requests will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before or during assessment periods
- When a student's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence for any reason

### Lateness

Good attendance doesn't just involve being present in school, it also involves punctuality. You also have a responsibility to ensure that your child arrives to school on time. Late arrivals can be disruptive to the class as learning commences promptly after registration. It can also be embarrassing and unsettling for a student who is late walking into class when lessons have begun. Should you live further afield please allow enough time for your journey to school.

### How can I help?

- Encourage good attendance by making sure your child goes to school regularly
- Take an interest in your child's schoolwork
- Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of absence from school
- Support our school in our efforts to control inappropriate behaviour
- Co-operate with our school to make sure your child overcomes any attendance problems
- Inform us on the first day of your child's absence, and keep us updated throughout the absence period
- Provide us with more than one emergency contact for your child

### Don't underestimate the importance of 100% attendance. Even one day missed can have an effect on learning:

5 minutes late each day means 3 school days missed.

### How can school support?

In order to support you and your child in maintaining good attendance either your child's Form Tutor, School Team or a member of the Attendance Team will make a wellbeing call at the end of each day of absence.

School will communicate your child's attendance weekly during form time and their current cumulative attendance written in their planner.

**After 3 days of absence** in a school year, a letter will be sent home explaining that if further days are taken, then your child may not reach school target and will be placed on an Attendance Plan.

**After 7 days of absence** or 4 broken weeks, a letter will be sent. This letter explains that an Attendance Officer and a member of the School Team will meet with your child to discuss how their attendance can be improved and identify support for this. Parent/carers can attend this meeting should they wish to do so by letting the school know.

**After 14 days of absence** or 8 broken weeks, a letter will be sent inviting the parent or carers and the child in for a meeting with the Strategy Lead for Attendance and the Education Welfare Officer to discuss how attendance can be improved and identify support for this and what the next steps may be should attendance not improve.

If you would like further information regarding attendance at our school, please see our Attendance Policy which is available on the school website.

### Honesty

Above all please be truthful about the reason why your child is absent from school. There are an increasing number of instances where a child's absence is reported as illness when in fact holiday is being taken.

It is important that there is honesty and respect between home and school and that your child is not put in a difficult position with trusted adults and friends.

## Attendance - Everyday counts!

