

School Attendance Matters

School Attendance Matters - a parent's guide to good attendance

Why is regular school attendance so important for my child?

Regular attendance at school means that your child can make the most of their education and improve their chances in adult life.

School can also help your child's social skills such as making and developing friendships. A regular and punctual attendance pattern will help your child when they enter the world of work.

The link between attendance and attainment in school is clear. The more a pupil is in school the more they increase their opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Punctuality

Schools are legally required to take a register of pupils first thing in the morning and at some point in the afternoon. The government advises that schools can keep the register open for up to 30 minutes though the school can set a shorter period of time.

If a pupil is late but the register is still open they are marked as late. If the register has already closed when a pupil arrives late and without a satisfactory explanation, it may be classed as an unauthorised absence. This may lead to legal action for not ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.

Punctuality is important because if, for example, a child arrives 15 minutes late at school each day, they lose almost 2 weeks of education a year.

Holidays during term time

The law states that parents **do not** have a right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time. Only in exceptional circumstances may a head teacher grant permission for leave.

The school governing body sets out the requirements for permission to be granted for term time leave. Please contact your child's school if you wish to know more about this.

Parents who choose to take their child out of school without written permission from the school may be issued with a fixed penalty fine.

How can I help my child attend school regularly?

- Talk to your child about school
- Take a positive interest in your child's work, including homework
- Keep in touch with school staff
- Contact school on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend for whatever reason
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events

What should I do if I'm worried about my child's school attendance?

The first thing to do is to contact the school to discuss your concerns. If school staff are unable to resolve the problem, they may suggest you speak to an Education Welfare Officer.

What are my responsibilities regarding my child's school attendance?

As a parent/carer it is your responsibility to ensure that any child of compulsory school age attends school both regularly and on time. The local authority has a duty to make sure that all parents/carers fulfil this responsibility.

What will happen if my child does not attend school regularly?

The school should contact you in the first instance to raise concerns about your child's attendance. If they see no improvement, or there are particular difficulties involved, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

What if my child's school attendance does not improve?

If you continue to fail in your responsibility you may:

- Be included in the Fast Track System, which means you will be given 12 weeks to improve your child's attendance (see [Fast Track Leaflet](#))
- Receive a Fixed Penalty Notice, which is a fine of £60 per parent/carer for truancy, holidays in term time or poor attendance/punctuality
- Be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court, which could result in you receiving a Community Order, a fine of up to £2500 per parent/carer or a custodial sentence
- See your child issued with an Education Supervision Order, which would mean your child attending court and certain measures being put in place regarding attendance at school

How will regular school attendance help my child?

School gives your child a wide range of opportunities and experiences in the form of academic lessons, educational trips and school clubs allowing them to develop their interests and achieve their full potential. Regular school attendance means that your child can make the most of their education.

How can Education Welfare help?

The Education Welfare Service can:

- Advise you on your rights and responsibilities regarding school attendance
- Visit you and your child in your home to discuss difficulties
- Liaise with school staff on your behalf
- Meet with your child in school if necessary
- Accompany you to meetings in school
- Suggest other agencies that may be able to help
- Provide information about school transfers
- Refer you to the exclusions officer if your child has been excluded
- Provide further information on the consequences of irregular school attendance

