

School Attendance

In order to achieve academic success and engage fully in the life of the school, pupils must attend regularly and punctually.

The importance of school attendance

Regular school attendance allows a pupil to make positive relationships with staff and other pupils. It enables a child to feel they belong within the school community and provides an opportunity to experience success and satisfaction. If a child is absent when new work is introduced they will find it difficult to understand the topic. In these circumstances some children give up trying, some become distressed, while others vent their frustration by misbehaving.

The consequences are:

The child is unhappy and frustrated

Parents and teachers are faced with increasingly difficult behaviour

The pupils choices of employment, training and opportunities in later life are much reduced

The education of other pupils is disrupted.

Responding to pupil absence

Frequent absence from school is often an early indication of difficulties affecting the child and / or family.

Poor attendance may result from fear or anxiety which the child experiences in school or may be the result of difficult or traumatic experiences within the family or wider community.

Education Welfare Officers work in partnership with pupils, parents, schools and other agencies to encourage and support regular attendance. They also provide advice, guidance and support to address issues which lead to irregular attendance and school refusal.


Schools are required by law to classify absence as authorised or unauthorised. If the absence is due to sickness or unavoidable cause it will be authorised by the school. In other circumstances absence may be deemed to be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence is a particular cause of concern in that it may indicate that the child is at risk as a consequence of truancy or that parental control is inadequate or ineffective.

In order to enable schools to determine the cause of absence it is important that parents and carers inform the school when a child is unable to attend. This ensures that if a child is missing from registration the school is aware of the circumstances. This enables appropriate procedures relating to Child Protection to be put into place when the whereabouts of a child is uncertain or unknown.

It is the duty of the Local Authority to explore the reasons for non-school attendance and to take appropriate steps to address the cause. This involvement may include advice and guidance regarding Local Authority policies and procedures, information regarding statutory responsibilities of parents and in certain circumstances negotiate and mediation with education providers.

In dealing with issues relating to school attendance the needs of the child will be paramount. As a consequence the Local Authority will, in certain circumstances, institute legal proceedings in either the Magistrates' or Family Proceedings Court in order to ensure that children and young people have access to appropriate educational opportunities.

 [Education Welfare Statutory Procedures: a guide for parents \[PDF 211KB\]](#)

A useful guide for parents and carers covering pre-court meeting, evidence for prosecution, defence against prosecution, attendance at court, court proceedings and possible outcomes

 [The Police and Criminal Evidence \(PACE\) interview: a guide \[PDF 227KB\]](#)

* Can my child miss school sometimes?

The Education Act 1996 states that parents, whose children are registered at school, must ensure that they attend regularly. Absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

Medical conditions and illness

Religious celebration

Leave of absence with prior permission

No parent can demand leave of absence for any other purpose. In particular circumstances, a leave of absence may be granted, but school staff must consider the effect of such absence on the child's education and well being.

School Attendance (Cont'd)

*** What do I do if my child is absent?**

If your child is absent you should:

Inform the school as soon as possible.

If the absence is prolonged keep school informed regarding progress. In some cases it may be appropriate for the school to provide work for children who are unfit for an extended period.

*** What about medical appointments?**

Requests for your child to be allowed out of school should be made in advance. It is preferable that such visits be arranged outside school hours. If this is not possible, you should try to arrange the appointment early or late in the day in order that your child can be in school for as much time as possible.

*** What if my child is late?**

Most schools prefer children to come late than not at all. You must however, make every effort to get your children to school on time. Children who arrive late miss vital parts of the lesson and find it difficult to join in. Late arrivals also disrupt the learning of other children.

*** School Starting Times**

Breakfast Club	8.00am
School Opens	8.35am
Registration	8.45am

