School Attendance – A Basic Guide

Why is school attendance important?

Pupils with good attendance are more likely to do well at school. When pupils miss school, even if the time period is very short, it can lead to gaps in their learning which might make future lessons more difficult for them.

Regular attendance helps pupils to feel part of the school community and enables them to develop good relationships with their peers and other members of the school community. This can have a positive impact on their wellbeing and help them to feel more settled in school.

For older children, school attendance may be taken into account by post 16 providers. Pupils with high levels of unexplained absence might find it more difficult to secure a place on their chosen further or higher education course.

When a pupil attends school everyday, it helps to establish good routines and habits for their later life.

What does the law say?

It is a legal requirement for schools to keep a record of attendance and the reasons for any absences. There are clear guidelines set out by the government about how schools should manage attendance and schools are expected to follow these.

Only the headteacher can officially authorise an absence. Parents and carers should provide reasons for absences to enable the school to decide whether or not to authorise the absence based on government guidelines.

Parents and carers must ensure that their child attends school regularly. Failure to do so, without good reason, is an offence, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. Parents and carers of children with unauthorised absences may be subject to a fixed penalty notice/legal action.

What are the different types of absence?

There are two broad categories of absence:

Authorised absence: This is an absence that has been authorised by the school for a legitimate medical, emergency or unavoidable situation.

Typical examples of authorised absence include:

- illness that means a child is too unwell to come to school;
- following NHS advice regarding remaining off school following a period of illness (in the case of certain infectious illnesses);
- an emergency medical or dental appointment;
- religious observance, as long as certain conditions are met.

Unauthorised absence: This is where a pupil's absence is for a reason deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

Some examples of unauthorised absence include:

- looking after a younger sibling;

- time off for birthday celebrations;
- a family holiday;
- oversleeping;
- shopping trips or days out;
- waiting in for a delivery.

Why is it important that my child is on time each day?

When children are late to school, they may initially feel unsettled and they might miss important information and activities.

Schools are required to record late arrivals. If pupils arrive after the start of the school day but when the register is still open, it will be recorded as a late mark. If pupils arrive after the register closes then their morning mark will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, unless evidence can be provided that there are exceptional circumstances that led to the late arrival.

How does occasional absence affect my child?

Missing occasional days from school may seem unimportant at the time; however, this can have a significant impact on your child in the long term:

% of attendance in a school year	Number of days absent	Weeks missed
98%	**4**	**Less than 1 week**
95%	**9.5**	**Nearly 2 weeks**
90%	**19**	**Nearly 4 weeks**
85%	**28.5**	**Nearly 6 weeks**

A pupil with 85% attendance is missing nearly half a term of learning time each school year.

Regular absences can result in poorer outcomes over time. Research shows that pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school (which is between half and one day per week on average) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days.

Late arrivals also add up over time – being 10 minutes late each day adds up to two weeks of lost learning time over the whole school year.

What about medical appointments?

We understand that pupils need to attend medical and dental appointments and that it is not always possible to arrange this outside of school time. However, we would request that any non-emergency appointments are made for outside of the school day as this keeps the disruption to a minimum and ensures that they do not miss important lessons.

Why won't the school usually authorise absence for a family holiday?

We recognise that family vacations during the school holidays can be expensive and that booking a cheaper term-time holiday might be tempting. However, headteachers can only authorise leave during term time if there are exceptional circumstances, even if your child has an excellent attendance record or if you believe that the reason for the absence is justified.

Parents and carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid asking for permission to take their children out of school unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made to the school using our absence request form which can be found **[add details]**.

Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible and at least **[add number of days]** before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

What is school refusal?

If your child is refusing to go to school, this is known as 'school refusal'. There are a number of different reasons for school refusal, including general anxiety, worries about leaving home, problems with friends or peers, academic problems and depression. Sometimes, the cause can be a combination of different factors.

If your child is refusing to attend school, you should let us know immediately so that we can work together to put a plan in place to deal with any underlying issues and get your child back into school. The longer school refusal goes on, the more difficult it is to address.

How do I request an absence in advance?

If you want to request authorisation for a planned absence, please use our absence request form which can be found here:

[add link to school website]

Paper copies of this form are also available from the school office.

Please submit any requests as early as possible as we may need to ask for additional information before we can consider your request. Please do not make any plans until you have been told the outcome of your request.

Please be aware that we can only approve absences that are for exceptional circumstances so will be unable to authorise family holidays in most cases.

How do I report an unplanned absence to the school?

Unexpected absences should be reported to school by calling the school office on 01707 331508 by 9:00am. If this is done via email someone will call you to discuss the absence.

In the case of illness, the absence will usually be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness may not be genuine or that it might not be sufficient to require time off school. In these cases, the school may ask for additional evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, hospital letter or medical report. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If you do not provide a reason for your child's absence, we will make contact with you to find out why they are not in school. Unexplained absences will be recorded as unauthorised.

Who should I contact if I have any questions or concerns about my child's attendance?

Karen Cayford, Headteacher.

The information in this leaflet is based on our attendance policy which can be found on the school website or paper copies provided upon request.