

★ ATTENDANCE MATTERS ★

Guidance for Parents & Carers on the new DfE Attendance Strategy

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE: Sept 2025

KEY MESSAGES:

Attendance is one of the biggest challenges facing the school system today. Since the covid pandemic there has been a world-wide rise in school absence. In response to this, the UK government have introduced tougher attendance rules from August 2024.

GOVERNMENT 	All schools will hold electronic registers and share daily attendance with the LA & DfE. Attendance improvement will be a priority. Headteachers are unable to grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances; a need or desire for a family holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance.
SCHOOL 	Every moment in school counts; it is essential that children arrive at school in time. A reason must be given for all absences; this is to safeguard children. Schools must regularly inform parents of their child's attendance and if they are at risk of becoming a persistent absentee. Schools will monitor attendance rigorously and work with families to address poor attendance.
PARENTS 	Attendance at school is important for your child's learning and their overall wellbeing. School can offer pastoral support and advice where there are complex barriers to attendance. It is usually safe for children to attend school with minor illnesses; the NHS have published guidance to help parents decide if their child should be in school.
LAW 	If school raises a concern about attendance and support has been offered but there is no or limited improvement, the local authority may intervene with formal support or even legal prosecution. A fixed penalty notice may be issued if there is the equivalent of 5 days unauthorised absence in any 10-week period. Repeat fixed penalty notices within a 3-year period may result in legal action / prosecution.



What does this mean?



EXPECTATIONS

As a school, we aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents. We strive to build a culture where all children can - and want - to be in school, and are ready to learn. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. Good attendance is learned behaviour, so it is important to develop good patterns of attendance from a young age.

MONITORING

The DfE expects schools to monitor and analyse attendance patterns in order to intervene and support where attendance does not meet the required level. If your child is going to be absent, you need to contact the school office by 9am. If your child has not arrived by 9.30am and no reason is provided, we will try to call you. If we have difficulty contacting you, a member of staff may conduct a home visit. In cases where no valid reason for absence is given it will be recorded as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences may lead to enforcement action by the local authority.

SCHOOL LED SUPPORT

When a pattern of poor attendance is spotted, school will consider how partners can work together to resolve them. Good attendance is essential for children to achieve well academically and for their wider wellbeing. You will be invited to a meeting to discuss any possible barriers to good attendance, and school will make offers of support. Hopefully this will have a positive impact, attendance will improve and no further intervention will be required.

FORMAL SUPPORT

If school-led support is not working, or parents are not engaging with the school to improve attendance, the local authority may get involved to look at a more formal plan of support.

WHAT DOES GOOD ATTENDANCE LOOK LIKE?

Every Day Counts		
100%	0 days missed	EXCELLENT
99%	2 days missed / 10 lessons	VERY GOOD
97%	5 days missed / 25 lessons	GOOD
95%	10 days missed / 50 lessons	BEGINNING TO MAKE IT HARD TO MAKE PROGRESS
94-91%	11-17 days missed / 55-85 lessons	CAUSE FOR CONCERN
90%	4 weeks missed / 100 lessons	PERSISTENTLY ABSENT
80%	7.5 weeks missed / 190 lessons	Over 5 years this equates to 1 year absent
50%	19 weeks missed / 485 lessons	SEVERELY ABSENT

90% attendance is the threshold for absence to be regarded as persistent. Persistent absenteeism has a significant impact on a child's outcomes.

RISK OF PERSISTENCE ABSENCE

Days absent	Risk of Persistent Absenteeism
1 - 5	VERY LOW
6 - 9	LOW
10 - 14	MODERATE
15 - 18	HIGH
19+	PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

Number of separate episodes of absence	Risk of Persistent Absenteeism
1 - 2	LOW
3 - 4	MEDIUM
5 - 6	HIGH

PENALTY NOTICES

1. OVERVIEW

Penalty Notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by the headteacher.



2. LEAVE

Headteachers are unable to grant leave or authorise absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.



3. ABSENCE

A fixed penalty notice may be issued if there are 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a period of 10 school weeks. A notice may also be issued where the 5-day level of absence has not been reached; for example, if there are several periods of unauthorised leave.



4. AMOUNT

Within a 3-year period:
 ~ The first penalty notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
 ~ A second penalty notice is £160 to be paid within 28 days.
 ~ A third penalty notice cannot be issued. Legal action (prosecution) may result.

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER AN ILLNESS?

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

Chicken pox	All spots need to have crusted over
Conjunctivitis	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
Covid	3 days at home after positive test result
Diarrhoea & Vomiting	48 hours (2 days) from last episode
Glandular Fever	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
Hand, foot & mouth	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
High Temperature	Keep off school until returns to normal
Impetigo	When lesions crusted over / 48 hrs antibiotics
Measles / German measles	4 days from onset of rash
Mumps	5 days from swelling starting
Ringworm	After treatment started
Scabies	After first treatment
Scarlett fever	After 24hrs on antibiotics
Slapped Cheek	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
Whooping Cough	After 48hrs on antibiotics
Flu	When recovered / well enough
Headlice	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
Threadworm	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>
Tonsillitis	<i>No need to keep off school, unless unwell</i>

Please come and speak to a member of staff if you have any concerns about punctuality or attendance. Our first step will be to try to work with families and provide support where there are challenges that impact attendance.



BELIEVE * ACHIEVE * THRIVE

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