



# **Absence from School**

## **A Guide for Parents**

## **Introduction**

Regular school attendance is an important part of giving your child the best possible start in life. Going to school regularly is important to your child's future. For example, children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams; there is clear evidence that children whose attendance falls below 95% are at risk of not fulfilling their full potential. Research also suggests that children who attend school regularly could also be at less risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime.

## **School Attendance and Absence: The Law**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (five to 16) must receive a suitable full-time education. Once your child is registered at a school, you are legally responsible for making sure they attend regularly. If your child fails to do so, you risk getting a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.

## **Preventing Your Child from Missing School: What You Can Do**

There are many ways you can ensure that your child attends school regularly, including:

- making sure they understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- taking an interest in their education - ask about school work and encourage them to get involved in school activities
- discussing any problems they may have at school - inform their teacher or head teacher about anything serious
- not letting them take time off school for minor ailments - particularly those which would not prevent you from going to work

Arranging appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays will help to prevent disruption to your child's education and to the school. Please note that there have to be very exceptional circumstances given for time off to be taken during term time.

## **What if my Child is Unwell?**

Inevitably, there will be times when your child is too unwell to attend school. If this is the case, please telephone the school by 9.00 am on 01980 623009 and take option 1 to report your child's illness. The answer phone is available 24 hours a day. Please leave a message including your name, your child's name and class, the reason for their absence and an indication of when they are likely to be fit to return to school. As long as a message is left with the reason for your child's absence there is no need to send a note with them on their return.

Before keeping your child at home please consider the following:

- most minor ailments can easily be accommodated at school such as coughs, colds, "I've got a bit of tummy ache", general "I don't feel very well" etc
- the majority of children who are brought in to school with minor ailments have forgotten about them within the first few minutes of school
- there is so much stimulation at school that children often cope with minor illnesses better in school than dwelling on them at home
- if your child becomes genuinely too ill to cope with school we do have a small medical area with a bed to look after them while we contact you to collect them

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) issues strict guidance regarding infection control within schools which we follow. If your child is diagnosed with an illness, please let us know and we can check the guidance for your child's specific case.

### **Vomiting and Diarrhoea**

In line with HPA guidance, any child suffering from vomiting and/or diarrhoea must be kept off school for **48 hours** after the final bout.

### **What if my Child has a Medical Appointment?**

Time in school is precious so where possible please make medical appointments outside of the school day. However, we understand that medical appointments during school hours are sometimes inevitable. In this case an Absence Request Form – Medical is available from the blue folder on the wall of the school entrance porch. This should be completed and returned to the school office for the head teacher to authorise, giving as much notice as possible. Please attach a copy of your child's appointment card or letter to the request.

When collecting your child from school to attend a medical appointment, please come to the school office and your child will be collected from their class for you. Please allow plenty of time as it takes us time to get them collected from class.

### **Can I Take my Child on Holiday During Term Time?**

Time off school for family holidays is not a right. Head teachers have the discretion to agree up to 10 days leave in exceptional circumstances, if they believe that the situation warrants it, such as:

- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis
- for service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.

In general terms, the Local Authority would expect a school to consider the potential negative impact that any absence can have on a child's academic progress, even if a child's attendance is good, for example at 95% or above.

Holidays for the following reasons will **not** be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with the beginning or end of term.

All requests for holiday should be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks before the proposed leave on a Holiday Request Form which is available from the school office. You will be advised within 2 school days, where possible, if your request has been authorised, refused or if further evidence is required. Permission cannot be granted retrospectively.

Please be aware that if you choose to take your child out of school on an unauthorised holiday of 5 days (10 sessions) or more then the Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice. A leaflet giving further details of Penalty Notices is attached to all Holiday Request Forms.

## **Absence for any Other Reason**

If you need to take your child out of school for any other reason, please contact the school office in the first instance for guidance.

## **What if we are Late for School?**

School starts promptly at 8.40 am and all children are expected to be in the playground ready to line up and go into class at that time. Any child arriving in school after 8.40 am is late and must be brought into the school office to be signed in by a member of staff. This ensures the safety of your child as in the case of an emergency we need to know exactly who we have on the school premises at any time.

If you arrive after 9.00 am, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If your child has 10 or more unauthorised absences recorded, the Local Authority will issue you with a Penalty Notice.

## **What Happens if My Child is Absent but We Forget to Telephone School?**

A text message is sent to parents of all children who are marked absent in the register and we are not aware of the reason why. You then have the opportunity to reply directly to the text message with the reason for your child's absence. After a further reminder, any unexplained absences will be marked in the register as unauthorised.

## **Education Welfare Services**

The Local Authority closely monitors the school's attendance through the Education Welfare Services. Our Education Welfare Officer visits school regularly to review individual children's attendance and advise on any attendance issues.

## **Support with School Attendance**

There are many different underlying issues which can affect school attendance. Examples include problems with:

- bullying
- housing or care arrangements
- transport to and from school
- work and money

If you feel you need support with your child's attendance, please contact their class teacher or the school office in the first instance.

We also have a Parent Support Advisor, Debbie Pittman, and part of her role is to support parents with exactly these types of issues. Her contact details are available from the office.

**Please help us to help your child reach their full potential by making sure they attend school regularly and on time**