

"The Government believes that regular school attendance is essential. Repeated absences can disrupt learning and lead to educational disadvantage. "

Children are required by law to attend school throughout the year. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. The Government's Attendance regulations are in place to meet the desired Attendance level of 96%.

The Law

The law states that it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that a child attends school regularly and on time. Neglect of this responsibility can result in the prosecution of parents/carers, the penalty for which can be up to a £1000 fine. It is not uncommon now for the parent/carer of a child with persistent absence, or unauthorised holidays, to be served with a penalty notice.

When attendance falls below 95% the Education Welfare Officer will intervene and be informed of the children whose attendance falls below this figure. There are occasions when a child might be unable to attend school due to ill health, for reasons of religious observance or to undergo medical or dental treatment. On these occasions parents are asked to inform the school as to the nature and time of the absence; a telephone call or letter to the office. These absences are defined as "authorised absences" and are recorded in the register accordingly.

For children to gain the most out of their time in school they need to attend regularly. Only through regular attendance will they be able to maintain the continuity of their education and ensure that they do not miss out on valuable teaching and learning experiences.

Holidays in term time

The Governors have a statutory duty to ensure that the attendance policy is implemented and therefore **will not authorise holidays during term time**. If parents choose to take a holiday during term time, the Local Authority may issue penalty notices to each parent who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Each parent (with parental responsibility) will be required to pay £60 per child if payment is received within 21 days or £120 if paid after 21 days, on each occasion that their child is taken on holiday during term time.

We may request medical evidence if children are ill prior to or after a holiday (half term etc). If a child is not back in school due to a flight delay we will require evidence of this.

The process is managed by the Borough, who also issues the fine. The school does not receive any monies collected for unauthorised absence, or process the penalty.

Exceptional circumstances are considered on an individual basis by the Head Teacher.

Parents joining the school are advised of the school's and the Local Authority's position on attendance.

Attendance registers

Registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. All children present are recorded in the register and those absent are recorded as such. Children arriving late will have their arrival recorded at the office. Late arrival at school is unacceptable and children will be marked as unauthorised if they arrive after the close of registers. Parents of children who frequently arrive late will receive a letter reminding them of the importance of punctuality and as such may be liable to legal action.

Class teachers keep a check on children's general level of attendance and raise any concerns with the head teacher. The head teacher makes regular checks to ensure that children are maintaining a good level of attendance. Our registers are automatically generated and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) makes regular visits to the school to check on any children whose attendance falls below 95%. Parents of children who, for whatever reason, have in the opinion of the school a significant amount of time away from school will receive a letter highlighting this fact. Parents will be invited in to school to discuss the problem and to look at ways in which the school can help. If serious health problems are involved it might be necessary for the school to write, with the parents' permission, to their family doctor. Where necessary a referral will be made and the EWO will make a visit to the family.

Authorised and unauthorised absences

Authorised absences are those absences that are satisfactorily explained. Parents are asked to notify the school by telephone on the first day of an absence. If the absence continues parents are asked to telephone the school again. On the child's return to school parents are required to send in a letter of explanation. If a letter of explanation is not received the computer will generate a letter requesting this information. First day absence calls are made by the office if we have not received notification of absence by 9:30 and a home visit may be made by the Head Teacher or EWO if absence is not satisfactorily explained.

Parents are asked to provide a medical certificate after the child's fifth day of absence. This could also apply if children are regularly absent from school where parents are reporting that their child is ill.

If the absence is not satisfactorily explained either through a letter or a telephone call then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If a child doesn't want to attend school for any reason it is important that parents/carers do not collude with the child by stating sickness as a reason for absence. Please discuss any problems with the school at the first opportunity.

Absence will be authorised during term time for children who are involved in sporting, musical or artistic activities providing their attendance is above 95% at the time of application. If attendance is below 95% absence will not be authorised and in the case of drama or theatre productions, a Performing Licence will not be issued.

End of year reports

At the end of the year all parents receive a report about their child's progress. This report includes a printout of their child's attendance throughout the whole year and also shows any unauthorised absences.

Where attendance has been poor the head teacher and/or class teacher will make comment on this fact and possibly highlight how it has affected the child's overall progress throughout the year.

Monitoring and Review

All possible measures are taken to ensure that children attend school regularly and have the opportunity to gain as much from education as is possible. It is the responsibility of the head teacher, supported by the Education Welfare Services, to ensure that the attendance of the children is at the highest possible level and that parents are encouraged and supported to achieve this. It is also the responsibility of the head teacher to make the necessary absence returns to the DCSF.

Did you realise.....?

Your child starts working as soon as they come into their classroom in the morning.

If your child is just 5 minutes late every day, then they could be missing 25 minutes work in a week.

Over a typical 6 week term, this would be 150 minutes-that's 2½ hours learning time!

In the course of a school year (31 weeks) this would rise to 775 minutes, or *nearly 13 hours!!*

Please! Help your child-get them to school on time!

Just imagine - if they are always 10 minutes late....That could be nearly 26 hours of missed learning - rather a sobering thought!

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