



School Attendance Matters

ATTEND TODAY
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Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem a big deal, but research shows that it can have a significant impact on children's learning.

Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up.

Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at secondary school. Pupils who miss between 10 and 20% of school (that's 19 to 38 days per year) 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.

Friendships can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates. Poor attendance also reflects badly on your child's school. Ofsted expect all schools to have good attendance rates, and they are marked down in inspections if their absence figures are too high.

What counts as good attendance?

The Government doesn't set specific attendance targets, but schools are expected to set their own.

An attendance rate of 95% is generally considered good; this allows for children to miss 9.5 days across the school year.

Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.

What absences can be authorised?

The Department for Education (DfE) states that you can only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from the headteacher.

The following types of absence may be marked as authorised:

- **Leave of absence authorised by the headteacher** (such as time off due to bereavement).
- **Illness:** you must notify your child's school on the morning of their first day of absence. **Medical or dental appointments**, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- **Religious observance.**
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence** when the family is travelling for occupational purposes.
- **Offsite educational activities:** this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event. Approval is at the school's discretion.

What absences are not authorised?

Certain types of absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher, time off for holidays is always unauthorised. Absences where the parents haven't given the school a reason are also recorded as unauthorised.

If your child is late to school and the registers have closed, they will be marked as an unauthorised absence, even if they turn up later in the day.

What happens if your child's absences are not authorised?

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child is at school, unless you're home educating or they have a long-term health problem.

If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't phoned in your notification, you'll be contacted by the school to find out why they're absent.

If your child is persistently absent, you will be contacted by the council's Education Welfare Officer.

They will discuss your child's attendance with you, and help you come up with a plan to make sure they get to school.

The emphasis should be on providing support to help you improve your child's attendance.

You may be asked to sign a parenting contract: a voluntary written agreement stating that you will work with the council and/or school to improve your child's attendance.

Ultimately, if your child continues to miss school, legal action can be taken.

What to do if your child is ill?

If your child is too ill to go to school, you must phone them in sick on the morning of the first day of absence.

If the school disputes the authenticity of their illness, they could ask you for medical evidence such as a doctor's note, an appointment card or a copy of their prescription.

Some children miss long or recurrent periods of school due to health issues. In this case, the local council is responsible for them getting a suitable education.

This could include home tutoring or a hospital school or teaching service.

How long should your child stay off school with an illness?

The NHS gives the following advice on how long children should stay off school if they're unwell.

Vomiting or diarrhoea	48 hours after the symptoms have stopped
Chickenpox	When all the spots have crusted over – usually five days after first appeared
Impetigo	48 hours after starting prescription medication, or when the patches have crusted over if they are not taking medication

Scarlet fever	24 hours after starting antibiotics, or two weeks after the symptoms start, if they are not taking medication
Hand, foot and mouth	As long as your child is feeling unwell – There's no need to wait until the blisters heal
Measles	At least four days after the rash develops
Scabies	24 hours after the first treatment
Shingles	When the last blister has scabbed – usually 10 to 14 days after they first appear
Flu	Five days

There's no need for your child to stay off school with these conditions, unless they're feeling unwell:

- Slapped cheek
- Headlice
- Coughs and colds
- Threadworms
- Ringworm
- Verruca's (although your child should cover them with a plaster for PE and swimming)