

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

EVERYONE IS
RESPONSIBLE



The importance of school attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

The expectation of schools and the Local Authority is that children attend school every day the school is open. A pupil missing 10% or more of their own possible sessions due to authorised or unauthorised absence is classified as a persistent absentee, and 50% missed is a severe absentee; as defined by the Department for Education (DfE).

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

100%=Perfect

95% and below=Concerning

90% and below=Persistent Absence

Attendance

Acceptable reasons for absence are:

- Sickness (Where medical evidence has been supplied)
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Religious observance
- Exceptional Circumstance (Head Teacher's Discretion)

Unacceptable reasons for absence are:

- Truancy
- Holidays in term time
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Looking after siblings or the home
- Non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Continued illness where no medical evidence has been supplied

The Impacts: Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study). Irregular school attendance may also leave children vulnerable to:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CME)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- Grooming
- Youth Crime (drugs/gangs/knife)
- Anti-Social Behavior
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Underachievement
- Disaffection
- Reduced opportunities
- Unemployment
- Social exclusion
- Mental Health issues
- High anxiety

Everyone is responsible

The parent: It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives an education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. Parents also have a responsibility to engage with school staff, report absences and provide medical evidence, also to seek advice/support and engage where required.

The child/young person: Must ensure they attend school every day the school is open, arrive punctually, adhere to uniform/behaviour policies, and engage with the education, and to seek advice/support where required

School staff: Must record and regularly monitor school attendance, identify vulnerable pupils/persistent absentee's, report non-attendance and children missing education to the local authority, alert parents of attendance concerns, hold parent meetings, offer support, facilitate Team Around the Family/Team Around the Child meetings (TAF/TAC), liaise with external partners and support services.

Support Services: Must know the attendance of the children open to them, work with the parents to secure regular school attendance, work collaboratively with all partner agencies to improve school attendance.

School Attendance Support Service (SASS): Must work with parents/pupils to improve school attendance, provide schools/parents with advice and support, offer families support where required, liaise, and work collaboratively with all services, analyse attendance data, ensure statutory duties are followed.

Working together to improve attendance

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families.

The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all children can access the full-time education to which they are entitled.

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together.

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Absence for pupils with a social worker, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

Where unauthorised absence is a concern or escalates schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils.

To do this and manage attendance by; preventing patterns of absence from developing by promoting good attendance, intervening early by using data to spot patterns of absence before they become persistent and working with families to remove the barriers to attendance, and targeting support for persistent and severe absentees with all local partners working together to re-engage pupils.

If you require advice, please contact

School Attendance Support Service

**SASS Duty 0208583 2622
(08:30am – 4:30pm)**

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