

## School Attendance

If you are a parent of (or are responsible for) a child who is registered at school, this information explains your responsibilities for making sure he or she attends school regularly.

## The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a proper full-time education.

You are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at this school or by making other arrangements which provide an effective education. Whilst your child is registered as a pupil at this school, we must know why your child is absent. If your child does not attend, the relevant education authority can take legal action against you.

## Why must my child go to school regularly? What will happen if they don't?

Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life. If your child does not attend school regularly, he or she may miss learning areas of the curriculum.

If your child does not attend regularly, you will be informed by the school that attendance has to improve and the child's attendance will be monitored. If your child's attendance does not improve, a School Based Attendance Meeting (SBAM) will be arranged with the school's Headteacher and Attendance Officer. If attendance continues to fall following this, then a further meeting will be arranged with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO.)

## What can I do to help?

Make sure that your child goes to school regularly and arrives on time.

## Lateness

If your child is late more than 3 times in a 2 week period, we will notify you by letter. If lateness continues then your child may be kept in at breaktime and lunchtime to catch up on any work missed.

If your child arrives after 9:10am or 1:30pm then they will receive a U mark, meaning unauthorised lateness. If lateness persists, action could be taken by the Local Authority.

## Illness

If your child is ill, contact the school on the **first day** of your child's illness. Staff will be concerned if they do not hear anything. If your child is ever off school, you must tell the school why. If a child is absent, parents must contact the school as early in the morning as possible, giving a reason for the absence and the likely date of return. After this, parents should keep in regular contact with the school.

If your child is absent from school due to illness for **more than 3 days, then the parent must provide medical evidence on the fourth day of absence that they have visited a GP.** This could be either an appointment card, signed compliment slip from the doctor or a photocopy of the prescribed medicine. **If evidence is not produced, subsequent days will be unauthorised.**

## What about medical appointments?

Where possible, every attempt should be made to arrange such appointments outside of school hours. Requests for your child to be allowed out of school should be sent prior to the appointment. Where possible, your child should attend school before the appointment, and return directly afterwards.

## Special Occasions

If you want permission for your child to miss school, for example a special occasion such as a wedding of an immediate family member, **you will be required to submit an application form and letter, well in advance, giving full details.**

## Family holidays during term time

With effect from the 1 September 2013, following revised Education Regulations, the Headteacher is no longer permitted to grant leave of absence during term time, unless there are **exceptional circumstances.** Parents do not have a right or entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays.

**Parents will be required to submit an application form and letter detailing the reason why the leave is being taken during term time to the Headteacher,** who will review each case individually and will consider the exceptional circumstances for the absence request. The child's overall record of attendance will be a contributing factor. The national average of attendance, set by the Government, for primary schools is 95%; this is equivalent to 10 days absence per school year.

We will not agree leave:

- during national or school tests or examinations
- when a child's attendance is below 95%
- during the month of September
- for more than 5 days during term time in any school year
- for a second absence request within the same academic year

Taking a holiday when it has been unauthorised, may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by Essex County Council.

Should leave be granted but the child remain absent for longer than agreed, then this extra time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If you are unsure of your child's overall record of attendance, please ask at the school.

### **The role of the Local Education Authority**

The Local Authorities (LA) are responsible, by law, for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend their school regularly.

### **What is an education welfare officer?**

Essex County Council as the LEA employs education welfare officers to monitor school attendance and to help parents meet their responsibilities.

Our Education welfare officer visits the school periodically. They meet with the headteacher to discuss the attendance of children in the school and give advice on any actions to be taken. If your child is not attending school regularly, the Education Welfare Officer may meet with you and may issue a Penalty Notice to **each parent of £60 for each child to be paid within 21 days**. If the penalty is not paid within the timescale, the penalty will increase to £120. If the higher penalty is not paid within 28 days, the Education Welfare Service will then institute legal proceedings against you.

For your child's sake you should cooperate with the Education Welfare Officer to make sure your child overcomes his or her attendance problems and receives a proper education.

*As a guidance, remember that 1 day's absence per school year is equal to ½%.*

If you do not do everything you can to cooperate with the Education Welfare Officer and school, the LA may have no choice but to get an education supervision order. This means that the court appoints a supervisor to help and give advice to you and your child.

The LA can also prosecute you in a magistrate's court. This could result in you and your partner **both** being fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment, for each child who is not going to school and/or made subject of a Parenting Order.

### **What if I'm concerned about my child's attendance?**

If you have any concerns whatsoever about your child's attendance, please speak to the school.

Alternatively you can contact the school's link education welfare officer via the school.

**Education Welfare Service, PO Box 47,  
County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM2  
6WN  
Education Helpline 01245 436231**

# **A Parent/Carer's Guide to School Attendance**



**Raising pupil achievement  
through regular school  
attendance**