

The law

- You must make sure your child gets a full-time education that meets their needs (for example if they have special educational needs)
- You can send your child to school or educate them yourself
- Children must get an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16
- The Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is ***'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'***. Children are expected to attend as timetabled by the school
- You'll be contacted by the school - if your child is on roll, does not turn up (even if they're only absent for a day) and no contact has been made by the parent/carer with a reason for absence
- As a parent you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. You run the risk of being issued with a penalty notice or being taken to court
- A penalty notice of £60 may be issued by the LA as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £120 if unpaid after 28 days. Failure to pay will lead to prosecution
- Parents can be fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly

Key Points

- Only the head teacher and their designate (not the Local Authority) can authorise an absence
- Be open and honest with your school
- Work together

Parent / Carer Guide School Attendance

Who is responsible for a child's attendance

If you are a parent/carer **OR** have day to day care for a child aged between 5 and 16 who is registered at school, you are responsible for their school attendance. This guide explains your responsibilities.

Why must my child go to school regularly?

- A good education gives your child the best possible start in life
- If your child does not attend school regularly, they will not be able to keep up with the work
- As a result they may not be able to achieve their maximum potential
- Children who have not attended school regularly have less chance of getting a job
- Young people who are off school for no good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse. They may also be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour

What should I do?

- Start good habits as soon as they start school
- Make sure they go to school regularly, attend all lessons, arrive at school and lessons on time
- Make sure your child understands that it is not acceptable to miss any time from school
- Contact the school each day your child will be absent and give a reason for absence
- Do not allow absences for shopping trips, day trips, birthdays or to look after siblings and/or family members during school hours

What about medical appointments?

- Every attempt should be made to arrange such appointments outside school hours
- Requests for your child to be allowed out of school should be sent prior to the appointment, evidence may be requested
- They will be released from school in sufficient time and should return to school after the appointment where possible
- The school will code the absence appropriately, which may lower your child's school attendance percentage

Can I take my child out of school for a holiday?

Parents do not have a right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a holiday.

- All requests for leave of absence due to a holiday must be made in writing as outlined by the school
- In most situations schools will not agree leave during term time as this will disrupt your child's education
- If permission is not granted and you still take your child out of school for a holiday, the school can refer to the Local Authority (LA) to issue a penalty notice
- If a request for leave is not made and school believe you have taken your child on holiday, the school can refer to the LA to issue a penalty notice
- Penalty notices are issued to both parents of every child. This includes step-parents/partners who have day to day care

What if I am concerned about my child's attendance?

- Do not hesitate to contact the school to discuss your concerns either by telephone or by requesting a meeting
- Communication and working with the school is key to support your child's education

What if the school is concerned about my child's attendance?

- They will contact you to talk through concerns and give you an opportunity to discuss reasons for absence
- You may be asked for evidence to support your reasons for absence
- They will discuss with you any support that may be available, and may follow up the conversation in writing
- If school attendance continues to be a concern they may invite you to a school attendance meeting either in person or via video link
- If there is no improvement the school may issue a Legal Action Warning letter to you and those with day to day care and responsibility for your child
- Once issued, if attendance does not improve, the school may refer to the LA to issue a penalty notice or for prosecution

Can I educate my child at home?

Yes. However, listed below are points to consider.

- Your child will lose their current school place
- Full responsibility for your child's education including costs become yours
- If you wish to return your child to school, you must re-apply for a school place, and a place may not be available at your last or preferred school
- You must discuss your intentions with the school and clarify the outcome in writing for each child
- If your child has an education, health care plan (EHCP), and is at a mainstream school, the support provided will not be available to you
- If your child is on roll at a special school or enhanced provision and has an EHCP, you must satisfy the LA you are able to meet the needs outlined in the EHCP. If the LA is not satisfied with this, you will not be allowed to remove your child for home education, and if they fail to attend, you may face legal action for non-attendance