

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

A Guide for Parents/Carers



Regular attendance at school is vital to help children achieve and get the best possible start in life. Regular attendance is strongly linked to achievement and all children should maximise their full potential by attending school every day possible. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure your child attends school regularly and on time and by doing so you will be taking an important step in supporting your child's school success.

This guide provides relevant and important information for you.

The Law

- The Law states that a parent/carer has a legal duty to ensure their child receives an education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs
- If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly the parent could be guilty of an offence under **s444 Education Act 1996**

What is regular attendance?

This means that the child must attend school on every session that the school requires them to do so i.e. every session the school is open.

What is a session?

Each day the school is open consists of two sessions – the morning session and the afternoon session. Registers are taken on both sessions each day.

What is Persistent Absence?

The Department for Education considers a child to be persistently absent if there are 38 sessions or more of absence during the academic year. This equates to a 90% or less attendance rate.

What is Authorised and Unauthorised absence?

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
Authorised absence is when your child's absence has been agreed by the school's Headteacher	Unauthorised absence is when your child's absence has NOT been agreed by the school's Headteacher
Examples of authorised absence can include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Illness - only allow your child to stay home for contagious and severe illness. If your child has high levels of absence due to illness you may be required to provide supporting medical evidence - Unavoidable medical or dental appointments - these should be arranged outside of school hours where possible - Exceptional circumstances – the Headteacher will decide if the circumstances are exceptional 	Examples of unauthorised absences can include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absent with no explanation given – it is important that you notify the school on the first day of your child's absence with an explanation. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if you do not contact the school. - Birthdays / Day Trips – these are not reasons for your child to miss school - Looking after siblings or ill relatives are not reasons for your child to miss school - Term time holidays – holidays during term time will not be agreed <p>Important: Unauthorised absence can lead to you being issued with a fine or prosecuted</p>

Can my child go on holiday during term time?

Headteacher's will not authorise a holiday during term time. The Headteacher may approve your child's absence in exceptional circumstances. All leave requests should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher as soon as possible.

If your child is absent

If your child is unable to attend school it is very important that you contact the school on the first day of absence to explain the reason. Absences will be recorded as unauthorised on your child's record if no contact has been made.

The Local Authority

The local Authority will consider any of these courses of action to address poor / non attendance cases;

- The issue of a Penalty Notice (fine)
- Prosecution in the Magistrate's Court
- Application for an Education Supervision Order
- School Attendance Order

Penalty Notices

Slough Borough Council issues penalty notices for unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more. Penalty Notices are issued on a per parent, per child basis. Each penalty notice is £120 and must be paid within 28 days of the issue date. The lesser amount of £60 per penalty notice can be paid if payment is made within 21 days of the issue date.

There is no right of appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice. If this is not paid the local authority can proceed to prosecution or withdraw the notice.

Prosecution

If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly the parent could be guilty of an offence under s444 Education Act 1996

There are two offences;

1. **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996** - If the child is absent without authorisation then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000
2. **Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996** - If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act then the parent is guilty of an offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to 3 months.

Remember —



Please ensure your child attends school regularly.