



HALEWOOD
ACADEMY

WE SEEK THE BEST

ATTENDANCE & LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY 2025-2026

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Next

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Academy Link: Mr D Day

Governor Link: Mrs S Weadock

A GREAT
PLACE
TO BE A
PART OF

MEMBER OF THE WADE DEACON TRUST



AIMS

At Halewood Academy we are very aware of the link between good attendance and good learning and progress. Research has shown that the lower the attendance of a pupil the lower the GCSE grade at the end of Year 11. Less than 95% attendance every year in school equals a 1 grade difference across all GCSE grades. Therefore, Halewood Academy has a minimum target of 96% attendance for every pupil. Excellent attendance and punctuality are essential for future employment, where an absence rate of 5% or above would be considered a cause for concern.

Therefore, the aims of this policy are –

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone in the school and the broader school community
- To develop and implement an effective Attendance Policy that touches all aspects of school life, and relates directly to the schools' values, ethos and curriculum. To these ends staff particularly strive:
 - to encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and eventually become independent learners who value learning with and from others, i.e. have a positive attitude to life-long learning
 - to value application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action, as well as co-operative endeavours
- This Attendance Policy and its implementation is intended to encourage all pupils to attend school regularly by the implementation of specific measures. Examples include:
 - registering pupils accurately and efficiently
 - setting attendance targets for targeted cohorts of pupils
 - contacting parents, the same day when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised
 - regularly monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality
 - reporting school attendance to parents via half termly letters and in cause for concern cases, via phone calls and face-to-face meetings or home-visits

To reinforce good attendance and to encourage improved attendance by using such measures as –

- promoting engagement in school to establish a culture of connectiveness and a sense of belonging by use of daily "meet and greet" and other informal comments from all staff
- by the more formal issue of attendance certificates in tutor time and assemblies
- by the use of rewards at regular intervals
- conversations between pupils and form tutors, assistant progress leaders and progress leaders when pupils are returning from an absence



- to monitor and evaluate this policy and its implementation by, amongst other means, rigorously collecting and analysing data about attendance to check our progress against measurable outcomes, e.g. national, regional and local authority data

RATIONALE

If a pupil does not attend school or is not taking part in an approved educational activity, they are classed as ABSENT from school. This means that if your child is off school for any reason, even if they are ill or have medical permission to be off school, they will be marked as ABSENT.

100% attendance is 187 days in school.

7.5 days of absence is 96%.

11 days of absence is 94%.

19 days absence is 90%.

28 days absence is 85%.

37.5 days absence is 80%.

47 days absence is 75%.

Please note: Even if an absence is authorised, percentage attendance is still affected. Therefore, the following rationale is pertinent –

- Good habits of attendance and punctuality will assist to develop self-discipline and responsibility in preparation for future employment
- Robust daily processes for monitoring attendance so that all staff can ensure the safety and academic progress of each pupil
- Development and maintenance of whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance
- Regular attendance promotes positive, long-lasting friendships and well-being and therefore helps pupils to build and lead happy lives

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on:

- Working together to improve school attendance August 2024 (linked Appendix A)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance August 2024 (linked Appendix B)
- Guidance for parents on school attendance – Office of the Children's Commissioner (linked Appendix C)
- Behaviour and discipline in schools
- The Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school



The school recognises its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of safeguarding and in respect of students with special educational needs & disabilities (SEND).

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

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 in partnership with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHECKING PUPILS' ATTENDANCE

We ask parents/carers not to keep their child off school unless the absence is absolutely unavoidable. Where this is the case, parents/carers are asked to do the following –

- Contact school on the first morning of absence by 8:15am to provide a reason for absence
- Contact the school each day of absence until your child returns to school
- Work with the school and any other agency to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance
- Provide medical verification for absence when requested to do so. This can be appointment cards, prescriptions, or notes of previous consultations (including via messages or apps).

Where absence is unavoidable, the school is very happy to ensure that work is provided so that your child does not fall behind in his or her progress. You will need to contact your child's progress leader or assistant progress leader to arrange this.

PROCEDURES

- Where a parent/carer has not contacted the school when a pupil is absent, the school will contact home that morning via telephone to establish the reason why
- If a pupil is absent and the Attendance Officer/Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader is unable to contact parents, then the Home-School Liaison Officer will make a home visit if deemed necessary
- If absence continues or a pattern is seen to be developing the Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader, then the SLT link and the Attendance Manager should be alerted
- The School Attendance Team will work with pupils and parents/carers to improve attendance using a range of different strategies when a pupil's attendance falls below government guidelines and causes concern
- If truancy is detected the parents/ guardian should be informed via a telephone call or letter
- Where the school-based strategies are deemed inadequate in combating truancy or poor attendance the LA's School Attendance Team should be informed by the Attendance Manager with the Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader's knowledge
- A pupil is deemed late if they are not present at lines when the school starts at 8:35am
- If a pupil arrives after 9.30am, without exceptional circumstances, then they will be coded as U (Late after registers closed - Unauthorised Absence).



- Pupils who achieve 100% attendance or achieve school target of above 96% each term will be acknowledged, rewarded and celebrated
- If your child is absent from school through illness the absence will usually be authorised with a phone call or email from parents on the day they return to school. If your child is being monitored by the School Attendance Team electronic copies of medical verification must be provided in order for the absence to be authorised
- Routinely, absences of 16 sessions or more will not be authorised unless medical verification is provided. It can be appointment cards, prescriptions, or notes of previous consultations (including from the NHS App)
- Parents and carers are asked to contact the school on the first morning of absence by 8:15am either by phone or email and contact each day the absence continues
- At any point during an absence the Assistant Progress Leader or Progress Leader may visit in order to satisfy safeguarding regulation and offer support where necessary

School Support Systems for Promoting Regular Attendance

Wave 1 Form Tutor

- Complete registers accurately and note with a right click any known reason for absence
- Discuss and celebrate weekly attendance in Form Time
- Share weekly Standards/Attendance PowerPoint with pupils
- Celebrate 100% attendance and recognise most improved within the Form Group
- Share relevant pastoral information with staff to support attendance
- 1:1 conversations with pupils on return from absence and support if needed – unlocking absence and removing barriers
- Support a culture of connectedness and a sense of belonging by use of daily “meet and greet” and other informal comments regarding attendance
- Raise profile of attendance and stress importance of attendance to pupils in terms of outcomes and wellbeing

Wave 2 Assistant Progress Leader / Progress Leader

- Attend daily attendance huddle and based on current/historic attendance agree First Day response action e.g. home visit, call, referral to other agencies
- Target 5-10 pupils to support/mentor 1:1 re: attendance including reintegration
- Promote attendance within the year group and celebrate Form Time with top attendance and most improved weekly in assembly



- Liaise with Attendance Manager re: communication home to parent
- Analyse attendance patterns and liaise with class teachers/ subject leaders re: individuals where patterns emerge
- Support with referrals to Attendance Improvement Programmes to support targeted pupils. For example – TJ Reengage, Attendance Surgery, VIBE Attendance, Reengage Inclusion Room, Halewood Community Centre (HCC)

Wave 3 SLT Link /Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader

- Celebrate attendance and raise profile/ reward 100%/ reward top attending forms and most improved
- Target group of 3-5 pupils at PA or at risk of PA and have 1:1 conversation with pupils
- Regularly discuss key groups and waves with PL/APL

Wave 4 Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader + Local Authority (LA)

- Attendance summit meetings 3 weeks into half term to review waves and review caseload
- Liaise with LA regarding statutory work where applicable
- Liaise with safeguarding team to offer multi-agency support
- Referral to re-engage room for additional support and alternative curriculum offer
- Reintegration plans for pupils returning from long term absence

PROCEDURES TO PROMOTE ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY AND TO COMBAT TRUANCY

Truancy from School is staying away from school for any reason other than:

- Illness of the pupil
- When the parents have obtained the school's prior permission by requesting
- Leave of absence and this has been approved by the designated member of staff

The school's Behaviour Policy will be followed in cases of truancy:

- The investigation of absence and truancy is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer who will report to; The Assistant Progress Leader, Progress Leader, SLT Link and the Form Tutor



PUNCTUALITY

The school day starts promptly at 8.30am. Note that pupils who are not present in the school building or at lines before the 8:35am bell will be marked as late. Pupils who are marked as late will receive a detention on the same day. The detention may take place at break time, lunch time or after school. A message will be sent home informing parents/carers of the late mark and subsequent correction. Where a pupil has a record of lateness to school the detention may be escalated. Pupils who fail to attend a detention will be dealt with in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.

FORM TUTORS

Form Tutors and Progress Leaders/Assistant Progress Leaders must enforce this policy rigidly. If a pupil is absent without explanation when the register is called, a member of the Attendance Team should contact the parents the same day wherever possible. Where no reply is received, a further message or email should be sent from The Attendance Team to the parents, requesting an explanation for the pupil's absence. Furthermore, a home visit may take place in order to establish the whereabouts of the pupil and satisfy any safeguarding concerns.

SUBJECT TEACHERS

When a pupil is missing from their lesson for no apparent reason subject teachers should record as a 6 and use the "buzzer" function on SIMS (if appropriate), so that the pupil's absence can be further investigated. Subject teachers should monitor their class registers to check for patterns of irregular attendance. Subject teachers can also contribute to the reduction of unauthorised absence by delivering interesting and engaging lessons and insisting on punctuality for themselves, colleagues and pupils.

INTERNAL TRUANCY

- Is either, registering and then leaving school, or, missing particular lessons
- A register should be marked by the class teacher in every lesson. The Attendance Manager will send staff a notification informing of any registers that have not been completed. This will be monitored by The Attendance Team throughout the day
- All incidents where pupils receive an absence mark during the day should be checked with the subject teacher. An email, or a message via SIMS will be sent to class teachers to check any pupils not marked present in lessons where they should be
- The Form Tutor should check the register from the previous day to see if there were any incidences of absent marks for lessons. If internal truancy is discovered, then the Form Tutor should take this up with the pupil; inform the Attendance Team and Progress Leader/Assistant Progress Leader
- Persistent offenders will be sanctioned in-line with the Behaviour Policy



PROGRESS LEADERS AND ASSISTANT PROGRESS LEADERS SHOULD

- Liaise with the Attendance Team and Form Tutors, to ensure that the system is working and organise a full year attendance check on a daily basis, where it is deemed appropriate. Look for patterns of non-attendance, internal and external truancy in consultation with the Attendance Team and SLT link for the year group

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- All children of compulsory school age should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. In addition to statutory obligations parents have all signed the Home-School Agreement; a section of which describes the agreed responsibilities of the parents

THE PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents are to help fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents and are therefore requested to –

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually every day when school is open
- To notify the school if their child cannot attend for any reason with a phone call (0151 477 8830) or email (admin@halewoodacademy.co.uk) to the school by 8:15am on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence, this is for the child's safety as well as administrative reasons
- To work with the school subsequent authorities to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence during term time. Leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances
- Book medical appointment around the school day where possible
- Take an interest in their child's school work

PUPILS

- Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school and at the start of lessons
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, E.g. bullying, racism, personal issues etc.
- Pupils will pass on absence notification from parents to their tutor where appropriate



LOCAL AUTHORITY (LA) & EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE (EWS)

Prosecution - the LA has a statutory responsibility to ensure that a parent of a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school and attends regularly. If a parent fails to do this the LA may bring prosecution under the Education Act (1996). As a parent you are legally responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly and is punctual. If you fail to ensure this you are committing an offence under the Education Act (1996) which may lead to a fine of up to £2500 and/or a prison sentence. You may find yourself issued with a penalty notice.

Penalty Notice - the LA in conjunction with the School may issue a Penalty Notice if a child has 10 or more unauthorised sessions where the pupil's attendance is causing concern and, or below 95%, if the pupil has been excluded from school and is found in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion, late after the register has closed or has holiday in term time. The fine for school absence penalty notices is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If you do not pay the fine you may be prosecuted in court.

If a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices for absence before the 2025-26 school year do not count.

A parent cannot receive more than two penalty notices for the same child within any three-year period. This is because it is clear that previous penalty notices have not worked. Once this limit has been reached, another action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Penalty notices for absence before the 2025-26 school year do not count in this limit.

THE GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Principal manages the day-to-day running of the School and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy. The School will ensure that the register is marked with the standardised codes.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE RATES

The school has considered initiatives that are best for the school and always considers a pupil's individual circumstances, e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates and prizes. Other helpful initiatives include:

- Implementing first day contact with parents of children who are absent from school without prior knowledge. It is hoped that this sends a clear signal to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up
- Live up to date attendance information for all staff via SIMS
- Use of rewards to celebrate exceptional attendance or improve attendance



- Having a senior member of staff responsible for attendance as per the Working together to improve school attendance August 2024 and the Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance August 2024
- The introduction of breakfast clubs
- The introduction of re-engage rooms to support pupils returning to school following long absences
- Attendance support Programmes – for example, Attendance Mentoring through TJ Reengage Programme, Attendance Surgery, Pupil Confidence Groups via VIBE Attendance Project, Reengage Inclusion Room, Halewood Community Centre (HCC)

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

A child going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation, or issues such as mental health problems, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, but some children are particularly at risk. These include children who:

- Are at risk of harm or neglect
- Are at risk of forced marriage or FGM
- Come from Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller families
- Come from the families of service personnel
- Go missing or run away from home or care
- Are supervised by the youth justice system
- Cease to attend a school

Children who have failed to take up a school place or who have been unexpectedly absent from school for 10 or more consecutive school days are potential Children Missing from Education. We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.



Staff will be trained in signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns which may be related to being missing, such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

If a staff member suspects that a child is suffering from harm or neglect, we will follow local child protection procedures, including with respect to making reasonable enquiries. We will make an immediate referral to the local authority children's social care team, and the police, if the child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger.

CATEGORIES OF AUTHORISED ABSENCE

For all absence known in advance pupils should be encouraged to give advance notice and to supply evidence in electronic form where possible, such as dental appointment cards, a letter of invitation for interviews, etc. In all cases tutors should consider criteria such as the nature the parent gave advance notice; the pupil's overall attendance pattern, etc. Illness, medical and dental appointments - pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can consult the School Health Service, or the pupil's GP and medical verification may be sought.

Interviews with prospective employers, or for a place at another school (including entrance examinations) - if the interview takes place during Year 11 and the School is satisfied it is linked to future education or employment prospects, absence can be recorded as 'approved educational activity'.

Dual Registration - where a pupil is dual registered at two institutions, e.g. a mainstream school and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or special school, the pupil is registered as having an approved education activity while they are attending the other institution. A similar situation arises whilst traveller children are traveling; during this time they should enrol with another school. N.B. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not acceptable alternatives to attendance at school.

Public performances - the Local Authority must license a pupil aged 5 – 16 to take part in a public performance. Licensed participation should therefore clearly be treated as authorised absence.

Birth of a child to a pupil - A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed up to 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. This period of time will include two 6-week periods of tutoring to support the pupil.

Approved educational activities off-site - the following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

- Field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas
- Participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities
- Interviews with prospective employers, schools or for a place at a further or higher education establishment
- Link courses, whereby pupils attend an FE college for part of the time



- Pupils receiving part of their tuition off-site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school, i.e. a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration. This can include special tuition for children with medical issues that remain on the school roll that receive home tuition.

EMPLOYMENT

While children are of compulsory school age, they may not be employed full- time. They are; however, free to undertake a range of part-time jobs. All children of compulsory school age who choose to work part-time must be registered with the Local Authority. For further details, contact your local Education Welfare Service. Please note that any part time job must not be during school hours.

EARLY LEAVING

A child enrolled in a school remains on the register until the last Friday in June in the year of their 16th birthday.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

AIMS

The aim of this policy is to set out the way in which the School monitors and promotes the attendance and punctuality of its pupils. The school is committed to maximising the potential of every child and good attendance and punctuality are essential to this aim. We feel this will be achieved, with the support of parents/carers by ensuring that leave of absence is not taken in school time. Absence during term time for any reasons interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of pupils.

THE LAW

From 1 September 2013 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 amends the 2006 regulations and makes clear that Head Teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

The school will not routinely grant permission for leave of absence to be taken in term time and discourage parents/carers making an application for leave except in "special or exceptional circumstances".

The following will not be deemed to be an exceptional circumstance:

- Family Holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodations
- Parent/carer working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member



- Overlap with the beginning or the end of term/half term.
- Holidays moved due to COVID 19

Taking holidays in term time will affect a pupil's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to support school by not taking pupils away in school time. There is NO entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

School will reply to your request, advising whether the planned absence will be authorised or unauthorised. If the absence is unauthorised and the number of days absence reaches the threshold, a notification will be sent to the Local Authority and you may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice where each parent/carer receives a penalty of £60 per child to be paid within 21 days. This will rise to £120 between the 21st and 28th day. If the penalty is unpaid after the 28th day, the LA will instigate legal proceedings in the Magistrate's Court.

SPECIAL AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If a pupil is meeting the school's expected attendance of 96%, the Principal or person designated by the Principal may consider that the following circumstances are "special" or "exceptional".

- To allow a pupil to return to their country of origin for family, religious or cultural reasons
- A family member is seriously ill
- There has been a death or significant trauma in the family and leave may promote the child's well-being.



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Appendix A

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Appendix B

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf301e253aee7aafdbdfea/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Appendix C

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2024/07/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance-19th-Aug-version.pdf>



Working together to improve school attendance

Being in school and having the best attendance possible underpins all the many benefits of school for your child, such as their learning, wellbeing and wider development.

For some children, attending school every day will be harder than for others. This is why schools, and local councils in some cases, are committed to working together with families to solve problems and support your child's school attendance. This guide covers two areas:

- Parents' responsibilities¹ for school attendance and what you need to do when your child needs to be absent.
- How schools and local authorities will work with you to support your child's attendance.

Parents' responsibilities

What are my responsibilities for my child's attendance?

As a parent, you are legally responsible for making sure your child gets a suitable fulltime education, usually from the age of 5 to 16.

For most parents, this will mean making sure your child is in school every day except when:

- Your child is too ill to go to school.
- You have permission for a leave of absence from your child's school for them not to attend. You should only ask for this in exceptional circumstances. Generally, a holiday would not be classed as an exceptional circumstance.
- Your religious body has a day especially for religious observance.

There are also some other circumstances. For example, where:

- Your local council is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.
- Your child attends an independent school that is beyond walking distance from home and your local council has not arranged for your child to board at or near the school or attend another school closer to home.
- Your child does not have a permanent address and you are required to travel for work. (This exception only applies if your child attends their usual school or another school where you are staying as often as possible. This must be 200 half days or more a year if they are aged 6 or older.)

Whilst some absence is unavoidable, it is important that your child is in school every day they can be for their learning, wellbeing and development.



If my child needs to be absent from school, what do I need to do?

You should contact their school as early as possible on the first day of absence to explain why. If you do not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why your child is not in school.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Your child's school has the final say over whether to approve the request and for how long your child can be absent. Generally, a leave of absence would not be allowed for a holiday.

My child has a short-term illness. Do they have to go to school, and will I be penalised if they don't?

If your child is ill, read the NHS's 'Is my child too ill for school?' advice to help you decide whether they can go to school.

If they are too ill to attend, you are not breaking the law and will not be penalised. You should let the school know as soon as possible on the first day of absence and schools must record such absences as authorised. If the absence due to illness is ongoing or frequent you should speak to your child's school to see what support can be put in place.

Do I need to provide medical evidence to support my child's illness related absence?

If your child is too ill to attend school, schools must record these absences as authorised. In the majority of cases medical evidence is not needed, but schools may ask you for evidence where:

- Your child is regularly absent because of illness, to assess how they can help your child by putting the right support in place.
- In a small number of cases where they have reason to believe your child was not too ill to attend and a conversation cannot resolve the issue.

If you are asked to provide evidence this does not need to be a letter from your doctor or consultant, and doctors will not usually provide such letters. It can, instead, be appointment cards, prescriptions, or notes of previous consultations (including from the NHS App). A lack of written evidence must not prevent the right support being put in place or the absence being authorised if you can demonstrate your child was, or is, unable to attend, or is awaiting treatment. If you are asked for evidence you cannot provide, a conversation with the school can help to resolve the issue.



What should I do if my child needs a dental or medical appointment in school time?

To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day whenever reasonably possible. When they are, you should ask the school in advance for a leave of absence and collect them as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day afterwards.

Accessing support to help my child attend school

My child is struggling to attend because of an issue in school. Who can help us?

The first step is to talk to your child's school about why your child is missing school, and what help the school can give. You should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible whilst waiting for help and support to be put into place. Information on who in school you can contact for help, including the school's senior leader responsible for attendance, can be found in the school's attendance policy on its website or available in hard copy from the school. The school and local council are expected to follow the expectations set out in the guidance document working together to improve school attendance (Appendix A).

If your child is struggling to attend because of something that is happening at school, their school is expected to work with you (and your child if they are old enough) to overcome the issues. You should agree a set of joint actions with the school that you have all developed together to support your child. This will often include a commitment to support you and your child by working together or help you to access support services, in exchange for an agreement from you (and your child if they are old enough to understand) to take part in the support offered. The school will also arrange times for you to come together to review these actions and your child's progress.

Depending on the reasons for your child's absence, this may take the form of an action plan, an early help plan, or an attendance contract.

My child is struggling to attend because of an issue at home or getting to school. Who can help us?

Again, talking to the school should be your first step. It is expected to help you access the support you need, such as from a school nurse or local housing or transport team. Your local council's school attendance team is expected to work with the school and provide access to the support you need if the issues you or your child are facing are beyond the remit of the school. If there are lots of reasons for your child's absence, local services are expected to work together to support you and your child. They are expected to provide you with a single action plan and lead worker to help and support you. In most cases this will be a member of school staff, but it might be a member of local council or local healthcare staff. In exchange, you are expected to agree and take part in accessing the support once it has been put in place. It is advisable to regularly meet with your child's school to review what is and isn't working, involving your child if possible. While waiting for help, you should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible.



Accessing support for my child with long term illness or special educational needs and disabilities

My child has a long-term illness, special educational needs or a disability that is impacting their attendance. What help is available?

If your child is regularly absent from school because of illness (regardless of whether it is mental or physical) or special educational needs or a disability, they have the same right to a suitable full-time education as any other child. You should work with your child's school to discuss the reasons and make sure the right support is in place. All schools are expected to provide support in these cases.

Schools are expected to:

- Work with you to consider adjustments to practice and policies to help your child attend, as well as a duty to make formal reasonable adjustments where your child has a disability. These could include adjustments to uniform, transport, routines, access to support or lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure your child receives the right pastoral care and in certain cases consider a time-limited phased return to school where appropriate, for example for those who have anxiety about school attendance.
- Work jointly with other services, including your local council and health services.
- For pupils with a long-term medical condition – either physical or mental – schools are also expected to make attendance support a key feature of any individual healthcare plan. More information can be found in your child's school's policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions.

For pupils with Education, Health and Care plans schools must help ensure that the support set out in the plan is delivered.

To make this work, it is important that you are open and work with your child's school by sharing information. This will help ensure the right support is put in place to ensure your child's needs are met.

In most cases this will be sufficient, but no child should be out of school due to illness without appropriate education for more than 15 school days over a school year. Where additional support is needed, your local council is responsible for arranging alternative suitable fulltime (or close to) education for your child, as far as health needs allow.



If your child has an Education, Health and Care plan, we expect the school to inform the local council who is responsible for your child's plan if attendance falls. This is to ensure that they are aware of the situation and to seek their support for your child where necessary.

Where can I get help if my child is too anxious to go to school?

Attending school usually helps to protect your child's mental health, for a range of reasons including giving them a chance to be with friends and to benefit from learning. However, some children can be anxious or worried about going to school, particularly around the start of the new year or joining a new school or class. It's normal for children to feel a little anxious sometimes.

Avoiding school can make a child's anxiety about going to school worse. It's good to talk about any worries they may have such as bullying, friendship problems, school work or sensory problems.

If their anxiety continues and becomes an attendance issue, you should speak to your child's school together with your child about why they are anxious and what can be done to help them.

If your child is still struggling and it's affecting their everyday life, it might be good to talk to your GP or school nurse. You can also find some useful advice from the NHS on anxiety in children and at Young Minds. These sites will help you work through likely reasons together with your child, what to do and how to make sure that you get the right support if there are more serious issues.

Getting help when support hasn't been provided, or hasn't worked

Support isn't working because my child's current school place is not suitable for their needs. What can I do?

Your first step is to discuss it with your child's school to see if extra support can be given. If you are still having problems, you can apply for a place at a different school or schools. Your local council will be able to provide details on how to apply.

It is important that you don't take your child out of their current school in the meantime – your application for another school may not be successful, for example, if it is full for that particular year group.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care plan then it is helpful to discuss the best way forward with both your school and your local council's SEND team.

What action can you take if your child's current school place is not suitable for their needs?

If you have applied for a place at a school and it does not offer your child a place, you have the right to appeal this decision. See Advice for parents and guardians on school admission appeals – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).



Mainstream education isn't working for my child. Can I get help with an alternative provision?

Your first step is to discuss with your child's school to see if extra support can be given. If you are still having problems you should discuss them with your local council. In many cases additional support can be provided to help a child remain in mainstream school. In a small number of cases where a child would not receive a suitable, full-time education without alternative provision, your local council is responsible for putting that in place.

Where can I find help if my child's school or the local council have not delivered what they are expected to?

Your first step is to discuss it with school. Most issues can be resolved this way. You can also contact your local council's school attendance support team. You should be able to find their contact details on the council's website or through your child's school. Your local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) will also be able to offer advice and support.

If these steps don't succeed, you can make a formal complaint to the school or local council following their complaints procedure. All schools must have one and details can usually be found on the school website.

If you believe that the school did not handle your complaint correctly there are different processes of how to complain depending on your child's circumstances. If you do not believe your local council handled your complaint correctly you can make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) at www.lgo.org.uk once you have completed the council's complaint process.

Can my child's school force me to remove my child from school and home educate?

If your school has asked or is putting pressure on you to remove your child from school to home educate, this is known as off-rolling.

Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This includes pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school. While it may not always be unlawful, Ofsted and the Department for Education believe that off-rolling is never acceptable.

Elective Home Education should always be a positive choice taken by parents without pressure from their school.

If you believe your child has been removed from the school site and formal suspension/permanent exclusion procedures have not been followed, you should approach the head teacher in the first instance to discuss the matter. If you are not satisfied, you can take up the issue with the governing board and in the case of a maintained school, with the local authority, or in the case of an academy, the trust. If you remain dissatisfied, you are able to write to the Department for Education. You may also wish to consult the Coram Children's Legal Centre.



Formal and legal action where voluntary support hasn't worked or isn't taken up

Will my local council take legal action against me?

If your child is absent from school without permission or a valid reason, you are likely to be breaking the law. Where this happens, your child's school or your local council will speak to you to understand the reasons. If your child hasn't attended because they are struggling to, both your child's school and your local council are expected to put the right support in place to help you.

If you do not take part in that support, or it doesn't work because more structured formal support is needed, then your child's school or your local council may:

- Invite you to agree to an attendance contract. This is a formal action plan that sets out what you will do to improve your child's attendance and what your child's school and/or your local council will do to support this.
- Apply to the family court for an education supervision order to ensure you and your child receive advice, assistance and direction to make sure they receive a suitable full-time education.

If you do not make any efforts to improve your child's attendance or it is clear you have knowingly allowed your child to be absent without good reason – for example, taking your child on holiday in school time without permission – your local council may prosecute you to protect your child's right to a full-time education. Even during this process, you have the opportunity to accept and engage in voluntary support (such as an early help assessment) or formal support (such as an attendance contract or education supervision order) to prevent the case from going to court. If found guilty you may be given a parenting order, community order, a fine of up to £2,500 or in very exceptional circumstances a sentence of up to 3 months in prison.

When can I be given a penalty notice (fine) if my child misses school?

From the 2024-25 school year, there will be new national rules on how penalty notices for school absence are used. The new rules mean that all schools must consider giving a penalty notice to a parent when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons within a 10-school week period, and support to help your child be in school is not appropriate. If support would help improve attendance, that should be provided by the school or local council rather than a penalty notice. You cannot be given a penalty notice for absence that is authorised by the school (such as illness).

A penalty notice will usually only be issued in cases of holidays taken in school time, or for other reasons where the school or council is trying to help attendance to improve and you are not engaging in that support or it is not working and they believe that a penalty notice would improve attendance.

Your school or council can still decide to issue a penalty notice or proceed to prosecution for less amounts of absence than 10 sessions (5 days) if support is not appropriate and they think it would improve attendance. For example, if parents are often taking shorter holidays in school time to deliberately avoid a fine.



When may I be given a 'notice to improve' instead of a penalty notice?

In some cases, your school or local council may choose to give you a 'notice to improve' instead of a penalty notice once the national threshold of 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence is met. This is a formal written warning that, unless attendance significantly improves, you will be issued with a penalty notice. This is to give you another chance to work with the school to improve your child's attendance. A 'notice to improve' will not be given if you take a holiday in term time without permission.

How much could I be fined if my child misses school? How many penalty notices can I get?

From the 2024-25 school year, the fine for school absence penalty notices across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If you do not pay the fine you may be prosecuted in court.

If a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count.

A parent cannot receive more than two penalty notices for the same child within any three-year period. This is because it is clear that previous penalty notices have not worked. Once this limit has been reached, another action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count in this limit.

Glossary

Attendance action plan – an informal agreement between you, your child if they are old enough to understand, their school and sometimes your local council about what actions supporting your child will take to improve their attendance.

Community order – an order that can be made by a Court after you have been found guilty of knowingly failing to secure your child's regular attendance rather than sending you to prison. This may include requirements for you to take part in certain activities or observe certain rules.

Early help assessment – a voluntary assessment of what you and your family need help with to allow your child's school and/or your local council to put the right support in place or help you access the right services.

Education supervision order – an order that can be made by the Family Court to require a local council to advise, assist, and direct you and your child so that they receive suitable full-time education. This is not a criminal conviction, but persistently breaching the council's directions can lead to prosecution.

Leave of absence – permission given by your child's school for them to be absent from school for a specified period of time. You should write to the head teacher and ask for a leave of absence before the time your child needs to be absent from school. They will only be agreed to in exceptional circumstances, and not for holidays.



Attendance contract – a formal signed agreement between you, and your child's school and/or your local council agreeing what actions you will take to improve your child's attendance and what the school/council will do to support you in this.

Parenting order – an order that can be made by a Court after you have been found guilty of failing to secure your child's regular attendance. You will be required to take part in certain activities or observe certain rules.

Regular attendance – attending school every day that the school is open in line with the school rules apart from in a small number of allowable circumstances.

School attendance support team – the team in your local council who can help you with your child's attendance.

Special educational need (SEN) – A child has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which means that they need extra or different help from that given to others of the same age in mainstream schools. If the school has identified your child as having SEN, they will have discussed that with you.