

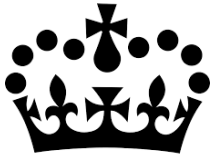


Working together to improve school attendance

KEY MESSAGES

Attendance is one of the biggest challenges facing the school system today. Since the pandemic, there has been a worldwide rise in school absence and persistent absence. In response to this, the government are pressing ahead with tougher attendance rules, with new statutory guidance in place from August 2024.

Government



- All schools to hold electronic registers and **share their daily attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority.**
- Attendance improvement to be a priority, with schools **monitoring attendance data rigorously** and working with families to address poor attendance.
- Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances** “*A need or desire for a holiday*” does not constitute an exceptional circumstance (**Statutory Guidance, August 2024**).

School



- Every moment in school counts. It is **essential that children arrive at school on time** to ensure academic success and to enable children to form good habits. Where school has concerns about lateness, we will get in touch to discuss what support is needed.
- In order to safeguard pupils, **a reason must be given for any absence.** This should be done following schools’ absence procedures and must be done on the first day of absence. Failure to inform school of reasons for absence may lead to welfare visits, unauthorised absences and possible legal intervention.
- If your child is **at risk** of becoming ‘persistently absent’ **school will alert you to this** with an offer of support. If these concerns continue and/or your child’s attendance drops to 90% or lower, school will invite you in for a meeting to explore any barriers your child may be facing.

Parents/Carers



- Attendance at school is not just important for your child’s learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development and their mental health. **For children who face complex barriers to attendance, school can offer a range of pastoral support and advice** and if needed, can access support from external sources—we are here to help.
- **It is usually safe for children to attend school with mild illnesses**, like a minor cough, a runny nose or sore throat. However children should stay at home if they have a high temperature of 38C or above. The **NHS has published guidance** to help parents decide whether their child is well enough to attend school.

Legal



- If school has raised concerns about a child’s attendance and offered support, but there is limited/no improvement, the **Local Authority will intervene**, offering formal support or the case may be escalated to legal prosecution.
- The revised guidance from the Department for Education dictates that if a child has 5 or more days unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks, a **fixed penalty notice (FPN)** may be issued.
- From August 2024, the first FPN is £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 28 days), a second FPN is £160 to be paid within 28 days, a third FPN cannot be issued within a 3 year period. Legal action may result, for example, prosecution.

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Expectations

As a school we aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and strive to build a culture where we all can, and want, to be in school and ready to learn. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full time education. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure that their child gets a good education. Good attendance is a learned behaviour so it is important to develop good patterns of attendance from the outset.

Monitoring

The DfE expects schools to monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends in order to intervene and support where attendance does not meet the required level. At Cheriton Primary School, we monitor attendance very carefully.

If your child is absent from school, you should contact school before 9am, providing the child's full name, reason for absence and the anticipated length of the absence.

Daily: If your child has not arrived before 9:30am and there is no reason provided for absence then you will be phoned to find out the reason for your child's absence. If the absence continues without explanation, we will continue to try to make contact, using all of the contacts listed on your child's records, including sending emails. This may also include a home visit.

If after 5 days no reason has been provided, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

Fortnightly: As a school we systematically analyse school attendance data to identify pupils that may need support. Where school begins to have concerns about a child's attendance, we will initiate school led support.

School-Led Support

When a pattern of poor attendance is spotted, school will agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. Good attendance is essential for children to achieve well academically and for their wider wellbeing.

You will be invited to discuss any possible barriers and school will make an offer of support. Hopefully this will positively impact attendance and no further intervention will be needed. Where absences persist and school continue to have concerns, you will be invited to an in-school meeting to discuss further support.

Formal Support

If School-Led support is not working or parents/carers are not engaging, a meeting will be held with the Local Authority to look at a more formal plan of support.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Frequently Asked Questions

When can my child be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty you ensure that your child attends school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and have been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absence.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if I know that my child will be absent from school?

All parents can request a leave of absence for their child, which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leave of absence must be applied for before your child's absence and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Evidence may be requested to support your application.

What does the law say about leave of absence in term time?

It says Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. *The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation, to be an exceptional circumstance.* Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

If my child's school refuses to authorise my term time leave of absence request, will I receive a Fixed Penalty Notice and can I be prosecuted?

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice might be issued include unauthorised leave in term time or other parentally condoned absence where the absence amounts to five school days or more in a minimum ten rolling school week period. You can be prosecuted if you receive a fixed penalty notice and it is not paid. Under the Education Act 1996, parents commit an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular school attendance. Taking a child out of school for a leave of absence without permission, and where the absence amounts to five school days or more of unauthorised absence in a minimum ten week rolling term, is viewed as failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Payment of a Penalty Notice, where offered, is an alternative to prosecution. A fixed penalty notice will be issued to each person with parental responsibility for the children/children who are deemed liable for the offence/offences.

What happens if I take my child on holiday without completing a leave of absence request form?

If school **has reason to believe** that the absence is due to a holiday, a suspected holiday letter will be issued and the absence will be unauthorised unless evidence can be provided for the absence. Please do not ask your child/children to lie about the reason for their absence—this is a safeguarding concern and creates a culture of mistrust.

Do I need to keep my child off school?

Chicken Pox
Until all spots have crusted over

Conjunctivitis
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Diarrhoea & Vomiting
48 hours from last episode

Glandular Fever
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Hand, foot & mouth
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Impetigo
Until lesions are crusted & healed or 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics

Measles or German Measles
4 days from onset of rash

Mumps
5 days from onset of swelling

Scabies
Until after first treatment

Scarlet Fever
24 hours after commencing antibiotics

Slapped Cheek
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Whooping Cough
48 Hours after commencing antibiotics

Flu
Until recovered

Head Lice
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Threadworms
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed

Tonsillitis
No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed