

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

INFORMATION LEAFLET

Advice for parents/carers

by the Children and Young People's Services, SCC

Absence from school:

- **Since the 19th August 2024, no school is able to authorise term time holidays, for any reason.**
- **If you make the decision to take your child on holiday in term time, and / or take leave of absence without prior permission from the school, the absences will be marked in the school register as an Unauthorised Absence, which may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.**
- **Any 'Leave of Absence during Term Time Requests' should be made to the school.**
- **Leave of absence should only be granted in only the most exceptional circumstances.**

The Local Authority strongly encourages parents/carer to take holidays or leave of absence for other reasons during the school holidays, rather than during term time. Schools are closed for 13 weeks a year, so it should not normally be necessary for children to miss school for these reasons.

Department for Education guidance does state that 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'.

Tell the school exactly why your child is not coming into school, or your child will!

What is an 'Exceptional Circumstance'?:

Exceptional circumstances are **one off events** which are '**rare, significant, unavoidable and short**', examples may include:

- death of a close relative, or attendance at a funeral
- a housing crisis which prevents attendance
- important religious observances
- The needs of the families of service personnel due to operational tours of service

When **NOT** to send your child to school:

- **If they have been sick in the past 48 hours possibly linked to a stomach bug.**
(as opposed to an 'episode' or 'intolerance' to something they've eaten.
- **If they have had diarrhea in the past 48 hours possibly linked to a stomach bug.**
(as opposed to an 'episode' or 'intolerance' to something they've eaten.
- **They have a contagious infection / illness and have been informed by the school to stay at home; i.e. Measles / Mumps / Chicken Pox.**
- **They are very unwell with a fever / ear-ache / other viral or bacterial illness and may need to see a G.P.**
- **Under the direction of a health-care professional following an operation etc.**

How the school **WILL** support your child to attend school, if they are 'off-colour':

Schools are very familiar with illnesses and will be able to make a professional decision if your child needs to go home due to illness, medical or health conditions or wellbeing. If you are unsure, take your child to school and inform their class teacher and or office so they are aware of your concerns. **The following are frequent unnecessary absences which can be avoided:**

- **Tiredness or having had a disturbed night's sleep can affect parents / carers more than children.** We encourage you to get your child to school so you can rest during the day, they will be well-looked after.
- **Advise your school office your child may be feeling a little off-colour:**
They will ensure your child is well looked after through the day, and will contact you if needed.
- **If your child has a cold, hay fever, ear-ache, tooth ache or similar:**
Administer age appropriate over the counter medication at breakfast time and encourage your child to attend school as normal.
- **Visit the school at lunchtime** to administer age-appropriate over the counter medication (if necessary).
- **If your child has been prescribed medication from a health professional:**
Your child's school can administer medication on completion of the appropriate form.

What should I do if my child is struggling to attend school?

We understand that life can present challenges that may impact attendance. If you are facing difficulties or concerns that are affecting your child's attendance, you should reach out to the school or school's Education Welfare Officer, so that we can work together to support you and ensure your child can attend school regularly.

Listen to your child, spend time with them to give them space to talk about what is concerning them and reassure them that there is no problem too big or too small, that they can't talk about.

Never cover for your child's absence as this only empowers a child to do what they want to do and prevents you from controlling the situation. Tell the school exactly why your child is not coming into school.

School attendance and the Law:

The Education Act 1996 requires parents to ensure their children (of compulsory school age) receive efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have.

Most parents do this by registering their children at a school. Where a child is registered at a school, the parents are legally responsible for ensuring they attend school every day. The Education Act 1996 considers a parent as anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child.

A child is compulsory school age from the prescribed day following their 5th birthday.

The prescribed days are 1st September, 1st January or 1st April.

Local Authorities have the ability under sections 444 of the Education Act 1996 for criminal prosecution of parents/carers to enforce attendance at school or alternative educational provision.

Why is good school attendance important?

It is well known that missing school for any reason can cause a child to fall behind in their learning. Missing school not only damages a pupil's learning and grades but can disrupt routines and can make children vulnerable to crime and exploitation. Sometimes, children also find it difficult to settle back into school after a break.

In the longer term, evidence shows that reduced levels of attendance are likely to affect the progress of any child - whatever their needs or ability - and can result in lower levels of qualifications being achieved.

By ensuring your child attends school regularly, this will help develop crucial life skills, resilience, and a strong work ethic that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Why am I being sent this leaflet?

It is important that parents and carers promote regular school attendance, whilst understanding their responsibilities and the consequences of their children having unauthorised absence from school.

The Education Act 1996 considers a parent as anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child.

What should I do if my child is absent from school?

The school should be contacted as early as possible on the first morning of any absence to discuss the absence reason. Children can attend school under normal circumstances with minor symptoms. You must make a judgement on when your child is too unwell to leave the house and needs to stay at home and rest.

However, if your child has frequent absences, schools have a responsibility to verify if the level of absence is necessary and may request medical evidence.

If you are unsure whether to send a child into school or not, you can send them in and let the school know your concerns. They can monitor the situation and send the child home as appropriate.

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Contact details:

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