

Why good attendance is important

Children need a good education and parents/carers have the important task of ensuring they make the most of this opportunity. Regular and punctual attendance is very important from an early age for:

- ☺ Social skills and friendships
- ☺ Developing a good attitude to learning and understanding the basics
- ☺ Enhanced level of achievement
- ☺ Establishing the habits of reliability and punctuality – sought by employers
- ☺ The Law – poor attendance without good reason can lead to prosecution

If parents are positive and enthusiastic about school, their children generally will be too.

Role of the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO)

- Help schools improve the attendance of the whole school and individual pupils
- Inspect registers and discuss concerns with/of school staff
- Assist schools in drawing up a plan of action to support pupils and their carers to improve attendance and/or punctuality
- Ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal duty in getting their children to school regularly and punctually. The aim of the service is to support parents/carers to achieve good attendance for their child, however, should they fail in this duty, legal proceedings against them will be considered.

Reasons to attend school regularly

Aim for 100% attendance and ensure your child fulfils their potential

- 90% attendance**
- ½ a day of school missed every week
 - 4 whole weeks of school missed in a year
 - Over ½ a year in total from Reception to year 6

- 80% attendance**
- 1 day of school missed every week
 - 8 whole weeks of school missed in a year
 - Over 1 year in total from Reception to year 6

- Attendance over 93%** - Improved SATs results at primary school
- Students achieve an average of 75% A*-C GCSE grades

- Attendance below 90%** - SATs results lower at primary school
- Students achieve an average of 25% A*-C GCSE grades

Authorising absence from school

It is the Head Teacher's decision whether to authorise an absence, but an absence can not be authorised without a satisfactory reason being given. Parents should contact the school on the first day of any absence and then keep them regularly updated. Unauthorised absence may lead to the involvement of the AIO.

Legitimate reasons

- Sickness
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances, by agreement with the Head Teacher
- Medical appointments that cannot be made out of school time (GP and dental appointments should generally be after school)

Examples of reasons which would not be authorised

- ☹ Shopping
- ☹ Birthdays
- ☹ Got up late
- ☹ Late night
- ☹ Looking after a relative
- ☹ Day Trips
- ☹ Haircut

Holidays

Parents are dissuaded from taking holidays during term time other than for exceptional or unavoidable circumstances. Financial consideration is not a valid reason under the current guidelines issued by the Department for Education.

Time off school for family holidays is not a right. The Head Teacher may consider a request from parents where:-

- a) an application has been made in advance by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides and
- b) the Head Teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the special circumstances relating to the application

When holidays are taken during term time, children:

- miss any new work/concepts introduced during that time
- miss reinforcement of what has already been taught
- can experience difficulty re-establishing friendships on their return
- receive a negative message about the value and importance of going to school

The signs

The following (especially if several apply) may indicate your child is experiencing difficulties in school –

- Frequently feeling 'ill'
- Angry – tantrums
- Withdrawn or anxious
- Asking for money or pocket money disappearing
- Unexplained marks/accidents (on more than 1 occasion)
- Change in personality/character
- 'Flimsy' excuses for not wanting to go to school
- Spending no time/long time on homework
- No friends
- Unhappy
- Difficulty sleeping or starts bed wetting
- Low self esteem
- Frightened

Sometimes, children are reluctant or unable to explain their feelings and what is happening in their world. If you think that your child might for example be bullied, avoid asking questions like "Has anyone been horrible to you today?" Children will nearly always want to please you with a positive answer and may invent or exaggerate something up which was not actually a problem for them. You might want to try instead the '**Star and Wish**' approach. When you are both relaxed eg on the walk home from school or a quiet time before bed, ask what the star (best) part of their school day was. This encourages a positive attitude, and can give you an insight into what goes on at school. Then ask what they would change about the day if the child could have one wish. Very often these are fantasies eg "I'd like to ride to school on a pony". However, they can sometimes raise a real concern about friendships, bullying, schoolwork etc. If the same issue keeps cropping up, you know that it needs to be addressed.

Should you have concerns about your child, or as a parent/carer need some assistance please speak to school staff, who may be able to help you, or advise you of appropriate support available.

Checklist for good communication and support

- ✓ Maintain contact with school staff
- ✓ Telephone school with an explanation on the first day of your child's absence, and send a note on their return.
- ✓ Attend meetings regarding your child e.g. Parent/Teacher Consultation Meetings
- ✓ Be positive in your views of the school, so that this filters through to your child
- ✓ Reward children for positive behaviour and attendance. This does not have to be financial – children enjoy praise
- ✓ Work in partnership with school, to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- ✓ Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours when possible
- ✓ Avoid booking holidays during term time
- ✓ Ensure that you are aware of the school's Attendance Policy

Conclusion

This school aims to be a caring and nurturing place, where pupils are encouraged to engage socially and enjoy all aspects of learning, enabling them to learn effectively. We believe that when children attend school regularly and punctually, they are settled and happy and able to achieve to their full potential.

We hope that your child will enjoy their time at school, but a good education doesn't just happen – you, as parents/carers, make it happen. Please work with us, to ensure your child attends school regularly and punctually. This will establish good habits –

- Positive attitude
- Eagerness to learn and work
- Good time keeping
- Good social skills and friendships

Should you at any time feel your child is struggling at home or school, or you as a parent need some assistance, please come in and talk to staff. They will try to help you, or may be able to advise you of appropriate support available.

Together, we can help your children to grow into caring, responsible adults, able to lead successful, fulfilling and happy lives.



Thank you