

School Attendance – Does it Matter?

Regular School Attendance

The Department of Education is committed to providing all children with the best start in life.

Absence when your child is young can limit their life opportunities as well as creating bad habits for school and work.

Reducing absence is a key priority both for the Department of education and the Government.

The Advisory Service within the Department of Education has the role to support schools, parents and children with improving attendance.

Your child only gets one chance at school and their future may be affected by not attending school

If children do not attend school regularly they may:

- Struggle to keep up with school work.
- Miss out on the social side of school life. Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships; a vital part of growing up.
- Have less chance of securing a job when they are adults.

What does the law say?

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 4 and 15) must receive a suitable, full time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens. Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure he or she attends regularly. If your child fails to attend regularly – even if they miss school without you knowing – **legal action may be taken against you.**

What are the legal penalties that can apply for not ensuring my child's regular attendance at school?

Under Section 52 of the Education Act 1974:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at school, his/her parents are guilty of an offence".

As a parent, ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence and may result in referral to the Education Welfare Service, the issue of Penalty Notices and fines and eventually prosecution



What will happen if I do not ensure the regular attendance of my child at school?

1st - The school will notify you in the first instance if attendance drops below **85%** and they will try to help you improve your child's attendance.

2nd - If there is no improvement the matter will be referred to the Department of Education. Education advisers will try to help and support you.

3rd - If there is still no improvement to your child's attendance, the Director of Education will issue an Attendance Order.

4th - A referral to the Care Agency can be made and parents can be fined or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

What can you do to help?

Show your child that school is very important by:

- Ensuring your child is fully **prepared for school each day**- make sure your child has the correct school uniform, equipment, homework, ready the night before.
- Ensuring that your child is **on time for school and attends every school day.**

- Contacting the school about **necessary absences** and when they are likely to return.
- **Communicating any problems or changes** in circumstances with school.
- **Not keeping your child at home for minor ailments or for worries** -e.g. Friendship issues or coping with school work. The best way to support your child is to contact school and make them aware of the situation so that a solution can be found. The longer your child is absent from school the harder it will be to re-establish regular attendance.
- Do not take **holidays** during term-time or keep them off because of bad weather.
- **Take an interest in your child's education.** Ask them about their day and praise and encourage their achievements at school.
- Try to arrange **dental and medical** appointments outside school hours when possible

Research in UK shows that there is a clear link between poor attendance and low achievement

Shocking Facts

- ! 19 days of school missed per year (90% attendance) = **1 GCSE grade dropped** on average.
- ! In primary schools, with an average of 15 days absence, **less than 65% of children achieve good results** in English and Maths
- ! Children who are not in school can become vulnerable. Children who miss school are more likely to be drawn into **crime** than those who do not.
- ! Attending 4½ days a week = 90% attendance = **4 weeks missed per year**
- ! Attending 4 days a week = 80% attendance = **more than half a term missed per year.**
- ! An average attendance of 80% across a child's school career adds up to missing a **whole 2 years from school!**

Let's work together to give your child the best chance of success in their learning journey

Punctuality

Being late for school reduces learning time

When your child arrives late at school, he/she may miss the teacher's instructions and the introduction to the lesson. Your child may also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late. Punctuality is important for children to start the day off well.

- If your child is 5 minutes late every day they will miss three days of learning each year.
- If your child is 15 minutes late every day they will miss 2 weeks of learning each year.

Request for Absence

Requests for absence can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. All requests must be sent in writing to the Head Teacher and will be considered on a case by case basis.

Due to the disruptive effect on a child's education, you are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term-time. Parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a term-time holiday.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and on time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable

