

Advice from Parents from <https://www.theschoolrun.com/school-attendance-explained>



Support your child's learning journey

All children will have days when they're not able to go to school, whether that's due to illness, holiday or a family emergency, and the occasional day off is unlikely to affect their education.

However, missing too much school can be seriously detrimental.

A child who misses school just twice per month will lose out on 18 days' education across the school year – that's nearly four weeks.

Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem a big deal, but research shows that it can have a significant impact on children's learning. Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up.

Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at **secondary school**. Pupils who miss between 10 and 20% of school (that's 19 to 38 days per year) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school.

Friendships can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates.

Poor attendance also reflects badly on your child's school. **Ofsted** expect all schools to have good attendance rates, and they are marked down in inspections if their absence figures are too high.

The Government doesn't set specific attendance targets, but schools are expected to set their own. An attendance rate of 95% is generally considered good; this allows for children to miss 9.5 days across the school year.

Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.

The Department for Education (DfE) states that you can only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from the Head Teacher.

The following types of absence may be marked as authorised:

- **Leave of absence authorised by the Head Teacher** (such as time off due to **bereavement**).
- **Holidays authorised by the Head Teacher**, who must specify how many days are approved. These should only be approved in exceptional circumstances.
- **Illness**: you must notify your child's school on the morning of their first day of absence.
- **Medical or dental appointments**, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- **Religious observance**.
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence** when the family is travelling for occupational purposes.
- **Offsite educational activities**: this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event. Approval is at the school's discretion.

Certain types of absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher, time off for holidays is always unauthorised.

Absences where the parents haven't given the school a reason are also recorded as unauthorised. If your child is late to school and the registers have closed, they will be marked as an unauthorised absence, even if they turn up later in the day.

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child is at school, unless you're **home educating** or they have a long-term health problem. If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't phoned in your notification, you'll be contacted by the school to find out why they're absent. If your child is persistently absent, you will be contacted by the council's **Education Welfare Officer**. They will discuss your child's attendance with you, and help you come up with a plan to make sure they get to school.

The emphasis should be on providing support to help you improve your child's attendance.

You may be asked to sign a parenting contract: a voluntary written agreement stating that you will work with the council and/or school to improve your child's attendance.

Ultimately, if your child continues to miss school, legal action can be taken. Consequences include a parenting order compelling you to do what the court says to improve your child's attendance; a fine of £60, rising to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days; and prosecution, which could lead to a community service order, a fine of up to £2,500, or a custodial sentence of up to three months.

If your child is too ill to go to school, you must phone them in sick on the morning of the first day of absence. If the school disputes the authenticity of their illness, they could ask you for medical evidence such as a doctor's note, an appointment card or a copy of their prescription.