

School Attendance – Frequently asked Questions

Please find below some common questions asked about school attendance.

What is compulsory school age?

Children must get an education between the school term after their fifth birthday and the last Friday of June in year 11.

What level of school attendance is acceptable?

The government state that a child has 90% or below school attendance can be regarded as a persistent absentee. However, appropriate levels of attendance depend on the child's individual circumstances. Good attendance however is above 96% and children should not have unauthorised absence as this means the absence is illegal.

What is my legal duty in relation to my child's education?

Parents are responsible for ensuring that a child receives an education. One way you can do this is by registering them at a school and ensuring they attend school regularly. If a child is on a school roll, the adults who have day to day care of a child are responsible for ensuring a child attends school.

My child had a couple of weeks off school what difference does it make?

Attendance generally has a direct link to attainment. Absence can also affect a child socially and impact on the way they see themselves as a learner. The government's research into the impact of absence on school showed that as absence increased, pupils attainment at year 6 SATS and year 11 GCSEs decreased even for those having a few days off of school.

When is a child considered too ill for school?

Children can attend school under normal circumstances with minor symptoms. Parents have to make a judgement on when a child is really too unwell to leave the house and needs to stay at home and rest.

However, if a child has frequent absences schools have a responsibility to verify if the level of absence is necessary. 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 so they can monitor the situation and send the child home as appropriate.

If I tell the school my child is sick do they have to authorise the absence?

No, it is schools' discretion whether to authorise the absence or not. Absence should only be for unavoidable reasons. Schools generally will accept the reason given to them by parents but if they have cause for concern they do not have to authorise the absence and they may request evidence to support the reason given.

I can only get a medical appointment in school time, does the school have to authorise the whole day?

If you are unable to get a medical appointment outside of school time you should send your child into school wherever possible either side of this.

If my child is absent for religious observance do the school have to authorise this?

The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. It is one day per religious observance so for example Eid absence would be one day per Eid. Parents must apply for religious observance absence directly to the school.

My child refuses to go to school what can I do?

- Good school attendance starts with good home routines, ensure your child gets to bed at the right time and is not in front of an electronic screen an hour before they should be going to sleep.
- Always contact school staff for help at the earliest opportunity.
- Never cover for your child's absence this only empowers a child to do what they want to do and prevents you from controlling the situation, tell the school exactly why the child is not coming into school.
- Accept help offered and respond to the advice given.
- Accept referrals to explore different strategies
- If you don't understand anything or are not happy with what is happening you need to tell school staff so that they can try to answer your questions or concerns.
- Be positive about the school to your child even if you have concerns. Concerns need to be raised and addressed with school staff but never run a school down in front of your child.
- 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. We have to work harder at this with teenagers than younger children and it is often best to engage a teenager in an activity to create the space for them to open up.
- If you feel your child is anxious contact your GP to discuss this.

My child's school has said they want supporting medical evidence, what kind of medical evidence is accepted?

If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. The right evidence will vary depending on the situation but it needs to prove that the child was unable to attend on that session. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, hospital letters, discharge notes etc rather than doctors' notes.

I have received a warning letter ,what does this mean?

This means that your child has unauthorised (illegal) absence and the local authority is making you aware that they are collecting evidence for a possible prosecution case if this continues. You will not be prosecuted without being made aware in writing by the LA prior

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?

A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. It does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice enables the parent/carer to discharge the potential liability for prosecution and subsequent conviction.

When is a Fixed Penalty Notice issued?

A Fixed Penalty Notice is issued if a pupil has unauthorised absence from school and their parent/carer fails to co-operate with the school to improve this situation; or if a pupil has unauthorised absence from school and this does not improve following a warning letter; or if a holiday is taken during term-time despite the school authorising the absence

What is the cost of a Fixed Penalty Notice?

£60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days of receiving the penalty notice in writing.

If you have received a Penalty Notice from Slough Borough Council, you can [make online payment](#).

What happens if I go to court?

At court you will be prosecuted for failing to send your child to school regularly (this means your case will be heard in court and if you are found guilty of breaking the law you can receive a criminal record plus a fine/community service/custodial sentence and court costs).

You will be asked to give your plea of guilty or not guilty. If you plead not guilty the case will be adjourned for a trial and recommended to seek legal advice, if you plead guilty the prosecutor will outline the facts for the court and you will then be given an opportunity to give your side of things before the court makes a judgement.

Will I get a criminal record?

If you are prosecuted and found guilty of the offence of failing to send your child to school regularly you will receive a criminal record. If you have initially been given the option of paying a penalty notice, you will not receive a criminal record if the fine is paid.

If my child is absent for religious observance do the school have to authorise this?

The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. It is one day per religious observance so for example Eid absence would be one day per Eid. Parents must apply for religious observance absence directly to the school.

The Department for Education [DfE] publishes information on school attendance and absence

Website: [DfE School Attendance and Absence](#)

Any other questions

If you have any further queries please feel free to contact the Attendance Service. Details below:

Attendance Service Main Line: 01753 787670

Attendance Service Email: attendance@slough.gov.uk