

What can you do to help?

If you suspect that your child may be missing school or is unhappy at school, you should contact the school as soon as possible so that you can work with them to resolve any difficulties.

Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them missing school, but be on the alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance, such as bullying or problems with school work and discuss these with the school.

If your child is ill or absent for any other reason, contact the school on the first day of absence.

Follow the school's procedures for notifying absence, and always let the school know of any days that your child is unable to attend.

Make sure your child arrives at school on time for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Take an interest in your child's education. Ask them about their day and praise and encourage their achievements at school.

Co-operate with any support, such as a Parenting Contract offered by the school or Local Authority

Updated October 2017
S:\EPI\oversights\attendance\webedocs\leaflet for Parents – School Attendance Oct. 2017

Updated: 26.10.17 S:\EPI\Oversights\Attendance\WebDocs\Attendance Guidance for Schools (Updated 26.10.17)

The world is run by those who turn up

Attending school every day = 100% attendance

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 or 2 full years missed over the course of their school career.

Attending 3½ days each week = 70% attendance
= more than a quarter of the school year missed.

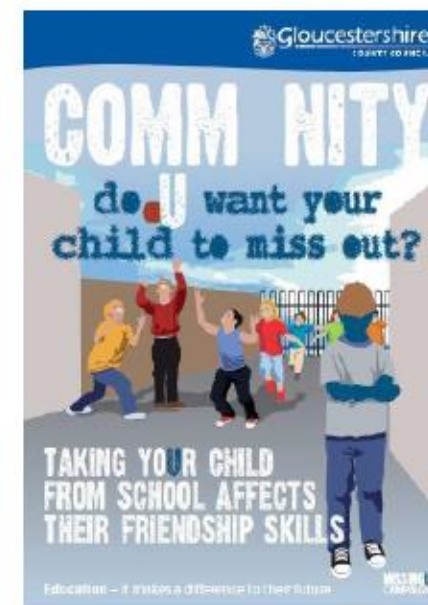
An average attendance of 80% or less across a child's school career adds up to missing a whole 2 years from school

Being late for school reduces learning time.

- 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.

Make every minute count

School Attendance



Information for Parents and Carers

Why is it important for children not to miss school?

Most parents want their children to get on well in life. Nowadays, it is more important than ever to have a good education behind you if you want opportunities in adult life. Children only get one chance at school, and your child's chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending school or alternative provision regularly. If children do not attend school regularly they may:

- struggle to keep up with school work. In a busy school day it is difficult for schools to find the extra time to help a child catch up.
- miss out on the social side of school life – especially at primary school. Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships; a vital part of growing up.

Setting good attendance patterns from an early age, from nursery classes through primary school, will also help your child later on. Employers want to recruit people who are reliable. So children who have a poor school attendance record may have less chance of getting a good job.

Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher, and the other children in the class.

Some parents may be trying but finding it hard to get their children to attend school.

What might the impact of poor attendance be on your child?

Research has shown that children who are not in school are most vulnerable and are easily drawn into crime. Those children who play truant are more likely to offend than those that do not. Research also shows that:

- less than 40% of pupils in secondary schools with an average of 17 days or more absence get 5 good GCSEs (grades A* to C and/or 9-5) compared to more than 90% in schools with an average of less than 8 days absence.
- In primary schools less than 65% get good results in Maths and English in schools with an average of 15 days absence compared to around 90% in schools where the average is less than 8 days. Many parents are surprised how quickly their children accumulate 15 days absence.

What does the law say?

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a suitable, full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide a suitable full-time education.

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 - the Local Authority (LA) may take legal action against you.

The LA is responsible for making sure that parents fulfil their responsibilities. Parents are responsible for making sure that their registered children regularly attend school and any alternative provision arranged for them.

If you think you might need to take your child out of school, discuss the reasons with the school as soon as possible.

Reasons such as family bereavement or taking part in an agreed religious observance would be

acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school include shopping and birthdays.

What happens if your child does not attend school regularly?

Your child's school is responsible by law for reporting poor attendance to the LA. As a parent, you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. You run the risk of being issued with a penalty notice or being taken to court.

The LA may decide to prosecute a parent. If this happens:

- Parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.

What about authorised absences?

There may be times when your child has to miss school because she or he is ill. This is to be expected and for the odd day off sick you should follow the school's procedures for notifying illness. Children may also have to attend a medical or dental appointment in school time. However, you should try to make routine appointments such as dental check-ups during the school holidays or after school hours. Any absence must be requested as far in advance as possible. Absences can only be authorised by the school.

Penalty Notices and the Education Act 1996

Section 444 of the Education Act gives powers to the Local Authority (LA) to issue Penalty Notices when a parent or carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance and/or punctuality.

Government Advice on School Attendance

'Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.'

Penalty Notices



Information for Parents and Carers

Q. Why are Penalty Notices used?

Missing school damages children's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others. Children who miss school are vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities.

If your child fails to attend school regularly and punctually and the absence is recorded by the school as unauthorised, you are guilty of a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act.

Q. What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice 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 Penalty Notice means you avoid the potential danger of prosecution and subsequent conviction.

Q. When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

If your child is absent from school, without authorisation from the Headteacher, you may be sent a warning letter by the school or in the case of unauthorised holiday, warnings will have already been made clear to you by the school. This includes sessions where your child has arrived after the school's registration period without an acceptable reason.

The school will continue to monitor your child's attendance and if there are further unauthorised absences there will be no further warning and a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority.

**Each school day contains two sessions.*

Updated October 2017

S:\EP\oversights\Attendance\webdocs\Leaflet for Parents - Penalty Notices Oct.2017

Q. How is a Penalty Notice issued?

You will receive the Penalty Notice by post to your home. Fines are issued to each parent (as defined in Education Law) for each child.

Q. What is the cost of the fine?

The penalty notice allows you 21 days to pay a £60 fine. If you pay after the 21-day period but within 28 days, the fine increases to £120. If the fine remains unpaid at this stage, we would initiate legal proceedings against you for your child's non-attendance.

Q. How can a Penalty Notice be paid?

Your Penalty Notice will include clear instructions on how to pay. There are two main ways - by cheque or over the phone using your debit or credit card. We cannot accept payment in part or by instalment for a Penalty Notice.

Q. What happens if I do not pay?

You will have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If you fail to do so, the Local Authority is required, by law, to consider proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of poor school attendance and/or punctuality.

If you are convicted of this offence there are a number of possible sentences, including a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a period of up to 3 months' imprisonment.

Q. Is there an appeal process?

No. When you receive your Penalty Notice all investigations will have taken place, so once a Penalty Notice has been issued, we cannot withdraw it unless it has been issued in error. It must be paid.

Q. What happens if the Penalty Notice is paid but my child still misses school?

Parents/carers are not liable for prosecution for their child's school attendance for the period in question once the Penalty Notice is paid. However, prosecution may be considered for further periods of absence not covered by the Notice. Prosecution will be considered if two Penalty Notices have been served in any single year.

Q. Who can I contact about a Penalty Notice that has been issued?

In the first instance you should contact the Attendance Officer at the school your child attends.

Q. Where can I find more information?

For more information about the issuing of Penalty Notices you can contact the Education Performance and Inclusion Team at:

Gloucestershire County Council
Education Performance and Inclusion Team
3rd Floor
Block 4
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TP

Phone: 01452 427274

Email: Attendance@gloucestershire.gov.uk