



School Attendance

Parents' Guide

This guide is to help you understand the rules regarding school attendance and the importance of children attending school regularly.

As a parent, you can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by ensuring your child attends school whenever possible and by taking holidays during the school holidays.

If you take your child on holiday in term time, you will be liable for a penalty notice of at least £60 per parent per child.

September 2015

When does my child need to be in school?

Staff are on duty on the playground from 8.40am each day. The bell rings at **8.50am** and the children line up. They are then taken into class by their teacher for registration. Lessons start promptly at **9.00 a.m.** Afternoon sessions start at 1.00pm.

What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives within **15 minutes** of the start of the morning or afternoon session, he/she will be marked **late**.

If your child arrives **15 minutes** or later than the start of the morning or afternoon session, he/she will be marked **absent (unauthorised)**..

Should I write a letter about my child's absence or phone school?

We expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of the absence. If you do not phone us, we will contact you. In addition, we need a written explanation of your child's absence on their return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. For medical absences, we ask for a hospital/doctor appointment card.

What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Genuine illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays, if possible)
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances such as family bereavement

Except in the case of illness or family bereavement, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absence through illness you may be asked for a medical certificate or letter from the doctor.

What absence is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for:

- Any type of shopping
- Looking after brothers and sisters
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Visiting relatives
- Haircuts
- Family holiday

Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

The school operates a first day response to absences: we will phone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure your child's safety as well as regular attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

Can we take family holidays during term-time?

Parents have no automatic right to take their child out of school for holidays. Family holidays should be taken during school holidays to avoid disruption to your child's education. If, **in exceptional circumstances**, you need to request permission for your child to accompany you on a family holiday during term time, you should complete an application (holiday) form, **at least 3 weeks in advance**, stating the reason why the holiday must be taken in term time. Leave of absence will only be considered for **exceptional cases**, and only if attendance is at least 95%.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher, immediately, and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with the Education Welfare Officer. The school may also refer you to an Education Welfare Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise. Please ask at the school office for further details.

Penalty Notices

The Education Attendance Service, on behalf of Suffolk County Council issue fixed penalty notices in the following situations where unauthorised absence occurs:

- Where a child is stopped with parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school;
- Where a child has missed at least 5 sessions (2.5 school days) due to unauthorised absence in a school year.

In every case a child will have lost a minimum of 5 sessions (2.5 school days) of unauthorised absence during the current term before a Penalty Notice is considered.

Penalty notices are currently £60 per parent per child. When a penalty notice has been issued, there is no right of appeal. If the notice is not paid within 21 days, the penalty increases to £120. If no payment is made within 28 days, the local authority commences legal proceedings. This can lead to a fine of up to £1000.