

Any leave of absence requests should be made to the school, with leave of absence granted in only the most exceptional circumstances.

School attendance and the Law

The Education Act 1996 requires parents to ensure their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and to any special educational needs they may have.

Most parents do this by registering their children at a school.

Where a child is registered at a school, the parents are legally responsible for ensuring they attend school every day that they can.

The Education Act 1996 considers a parent as anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child.

A child is compulsory school age from the prescribed day following their 5th birthday.

The prescribed days are 1st September, 1st January or 1st April.

Local Authorities have the ability under sections 444 of the Education Act 1996 for criminal prosecution of parents, to enforce attendance at school or alternative educational provision.

Contact details:

School Attendance
Children & Young People's Services
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House
Ipswich
IP1 2BX

Email: schoolattendance@suffolk.gov.uk



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

INFORMATION LEAFLET



Advice for parents/carers

Children and Young People's Services

Why is good school attendance important?

It is well known that missing school for any reason can cause a child to fall behind in their learning. Missing school not only damages a pupil's learning and grades but can disrupt routines and can make children vulnerable to crime. Sometimes children also find it difficult to settle back into school after a break.

In the longer term, evidence shows that reduced levels of attendance are likely to affect the progress of any child, whatever their needs or ability and can result in lower levels of qualifications being achieved.

By ensuring your child attends school regularly, this will help develop crucial life skills, resilience, and a strong work ethic that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Why am I being sent this leaflet?

It is important that parents and carers promote regular school attendance, whilst understanding their responsibilities and the consequences of their children having unauthorised absence from school.

The Education Act 1996 considers a parent as anyone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has care of a child.

What should I do if my child is absent from school?

The school should be contacted as early as possible on the first morning of any absence to discuss the absence reason.

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

However, if your child has frequent absences, schools have a responsibility to verify if the level of absence is necessary and may request medical evidence.

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. They can monitor the situation and send the child home as appropriate.

What should I do if my child is struggling to attend school?

We understand that life can present challenges that may impact attendance. If you are facing difficulties or concerns that are affecting your child's attendance, you should reach out to the school or schools Education Welfare Officer, so that we can work together to support you and ensure your child can attend school regularly.

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.

Never cover for your child's absence, as this only empowers a child to do what they want to do and prevents you from controlling the situation. Tell the school exactly why your child is not coming into school.

Absence from school without permission from school

If your child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence without prior permission from the school, the absences will be marked in the school register as an unauthorised absence. This may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

The Local Authority strongly encourages parents to take holidays or leave of absence for other reasons during the school holidays, rather than during term time.

Schools are closed for 13 weeks a year, so it should not normally be necessary for children to miss school for these reasons.