



School Attendance Some Common Questions

Can my child have a day off school?

The head teacher will only authorise absence if a child is genuinely ill and unable to attend school. In exceptional circumstances, he may agree to authorise other absences, such as absence due to a family bereavement or to attend a family funeral.

The following examples of reasons for absence are **not** exceptional circumstances and absences for reasons such as these would be recorded as **unauthorised**:

- to take him/her out for new shoes
 - to collect relatives from the airport
 - to care for other family members
 - to interpret for a parent/carer
 - to take a family holiday in term time
 - because it is his or her birthday
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What happens if the head teacher refuses to authorise the absence?

The absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised', and this will be noted on your child's attendance record. If a child has 5 or more days of unauthorised absence in a school term, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice, which is a £120 fine per parent, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. In some circumstances, a parent may be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court.

As my child's parent/carer, why can I not authorise the absence?

It is for the head teacher to consider whether absences are justified (The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended).

It is important that parent/carers contact school on the first day of their child's absence and follow this up with a note of the reason for absence when their child returns to school.

The school will investigate all cases where pupils have high levels of absence.

If my child is absent from school on a regular basis, what will happen?

If your child is genuinely ill, and there is more than an average level of absence, school may ask you to obtain confirmation that he/she is unfit for school from your GP, or provide evidence of any prescribed medication.

If the absence is considered unjustified or excessive, the school will contact you to discuss the situation and agree measures for improving attendance.

If your child has a high level of absence from school and there is no medical evidence to substantiate this, school staff will work with you to try and improve things. They may ask for your permission to refer your child to the School Nurse or other appropriate agencies. As a consequence of a child's poor school attendance, a parent could be liable to legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

My child seems unhappy at school and this is having an impact on their enthusiasm to attend?

Sometimes a child can present with feelings of illness but as a parent you believe that there is something underlying.

If you believe that your child's absence may be due to a school-related issue then it is important that you make contact with the relevant member of staff at the earliest opportunity. Your child's Form Tutor or Progress Leader are good points of contact and will be able to advise you if you have concerns.

The earlier issues are identified the quicker we can act to resolve matters. We have a strong pastoral team at Alder and support lots of students with difficulties at particular times in their school life. These issues include:

- **learning difficulties**
- **problems in friendships**
- **issues in a particular subject area**
- **managing change**

Pupils may also carry with them, concerns and upset about family issues, such as illness, bereavement or changes in family circumstances. It is important that we are made aware of such issues to enable us to support your child appropriately. We need to work together with

families and can assure parents that things will be managed sensitively and in their child's best interest.

In some situations, where a family requires support in addition to what school can offer, a Early Help Assessment (EHA) may be completed. The Early Help Assessment process is a way of gathering information about children and the whole family in one place and using it to help decide what type of support is needed to help a family. People from different organisations will talk to one another, share information with your consent and work together with you to help to support you and your children.

What do I do if my child refuses to attend school because he/she is being bullied?

If your child is upset about something that has happened in school or involving students who attend Alder then please discuss this with them initially in order to understand, from their perspective, what has caused the upset. If following this conversation, you feel that school need to be aware and action may need to be taken, please make contact with his/her Form Tutor, who will make every effort to resolve the difficulty in school.

If you feel that the problem is more complex, you can ask to meet with the Progress Leader for your child's year group.

From time to time, students fall out or they are unpleasant to each other. Although this is not acceptable and sometimes they need support and guidance to manage these issues, it is important to stress that the majority of young people experience unpleasantness from others whilst growing up and helping them manage such situations helps them develop skills for like. Bullying is usually defined as behaviour that is:

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, eg because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

We have an anti-bullying policy which can be viewed on the school website or you could ask a member of staff to provide you with a paper copy. If your child is affected by bullying and needs additional support, then we have a wide range of strategies in school to support them. We would also take appropriate action against any student who bullies any other person at our school.

It is extremely important for your child that they remain in school whilst issues are investigated and appropriate action taken.

How will I know if my child is truanting?

School has a text messaging system 'School Comms' and once registers are completed and checks made within school, a text message is sent to the parents of all students who are absent.

Occasionally mistakes are made but if a parent receives a text notifying them that their child is absent, it is because they have not had a mark in the register that day.

If you believe that your child is in school, it is important that you ring the Attendance Office to discuss this further.

In order to safeguard your child, it is imperative that you let school know if you change your contact details at any time. A text message will only be sent to the number held on school records.

If you were not aware of the absence then you need to discuss this with your child and contact school at the earliest opportunity to let us know that you have not condoned the absence. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If truancy becomes a concern with your child school will work together with parents to ensure that a robust action plan is in place to address the concern.

What happens if I cannot control my child?

The law specifies that it is the responsibility of the parent/carers to ensure that their child/children attend school regularly and punctually. In law, parental failure to ensure a child's regular attendance at school is treated as an absolute offence and defences can only be presented in relation to the child and not the parent/carer. This means that parent/carers will be held liable and at risk of prosecution if their child is not attending school on a regular basis.

The Local Authority only uses legal action as a last resort, and parent/carers will be offered support from school staff to ensure that their child school regularly by offering guidance on difficulties resulting in poor/non-attendance.

It is important that positive habits relating to regular school attendance e.g. being organised at the start of the day and arriving at school on time are formed at a very early age. If your child is generally beyond your control, there are support agencies, which may be able to

offer family support. Speak to your child's Progress Leader who will work with you to put a plan in place to help improve things. They may refer your child to a Learning Mentor or suggest outside agencies who specialise in offering the support you require.

Will I get taken to court if my child does not attend school?

If your child's absence from school is unacceptable and fails to improve, despite involvement by the school, consideration will be given to progressing the matter to court or through the issuing of a Penalty Notice (PN). Each case will be considered individually. The school will advise you of your legal responsibilities to ensure your child's regular attendance at school and offer strategies to remove barriers to regular attendance.

Legal action will be taken in cases of persistent poor attendance where the parent/carer has not co-operated or despite the school offering support/guidance this has not resulted in a parent/carer ensuring that their child is attending school regularly.

What will happen if my child is frequently late for school?

Getting to school punctually every day and in time for registration is an important part of the school day. Your child will miss out on important learning which could affect their achievement.

The school day starts at 8.20am and a student is marked late from 8.25am. Any student that is late during registration is given an after school detention that they are expected to attend the same day. If lesson time is missed then the student will return to the period 1 teacher, after completing the late detention, to catch up the work missed.

If your child arrives after 9.45am, they will have missed the whole of period 1 and they will receive an unauthorised absence mark for the morning session. 10 sessions or more of unauthorised absence, could result in an application being submitted for a Penalty Notice.

A student who arrives at school late has a bad start to the day.

What can parents do to support their child:

- find out how long it takes for your child to get to school and ensure that they leave home in plenty of time
- encourage a regular routine for the start of each day
- advise your child to get their clothes and equipment ready before they go to bed

- set a reasonable bedtime to make sure that your child gets enough sleep
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What will happen if I want to take my child on holiday during term time?

We no longer authorise holidays during term time. There are 39 weeks in the year when school is open, and 13 weeks when families can take holidays. Taking your child out of school during term time for holidays is likely to impact on their attainment. We may authorise absence in exceptional circumstances and if you need to take your child out of school for any reason other than illness, it is advisable that you discuss this with the Senior Leader responsible for Attendance (Rachel Anderson).

Things that will be taken into consideration when looking at exceptional circumstances include:

- your child's attendance history
- previous requests for leave in term time
- the likely impact on your child's attainment, and
- individual circumstances

If a child is taken out of school for a holiday that has not been authorised by school, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in:

- a child losing their school place
 - a parent being issued with a Penalty Notice
 - a parent being subject to legal action by the authority that could result in a fine of up to £2,500 per child.
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What can I do if I want to make a complaint about school?

Please see the school policy 'Complaints Procedure for Parents'.

Further information regarding attendance procedures can be found in the Attendance Policy which is available on the website or you can ask a member of the office staff if you would like a paper copy.
