



19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

# Attendance Support Bulletin

## **How to improve your child's school attendance and where to get support.**

For most pupils, the best place to be during term-time is in school, surrounded by the support of their friends and teachers. This is important not just for your child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development, and their mental health.

As a parent, it can be difficult to know when to send your child into school if they are feeling unwell or are mildly anxious, but finding solutions is a team effort between schools, parents and children, and there is support and information available to help you make the best decision for your child.

There are plenty of important moments in each school day which make a positive difference to your child, and the Chief Medical Officer has written a letter to schools explaining why regular attendance is vital to the life chances of children and young people.

It's also important to acknowledge that children with long-term medical or more serious mental health conditions, and those with special educational needs and disabilities may face additional barriers.

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, schools should have sensitive conversations with children and families and work with them to put support in place for their individual needs.

## **What if my child is too ill to go to school?**

It's usually safe for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild illnesses, like a minor cough, runny nose, or sore throat. However, children should stay at home if they have a high temperature of 38C or above.

The NHS has published guidance to help parents and carers decide whether their child is well enough to attend school, including information on a range of common childhood illnesses and conditions, such as coughs, colds, chickenpox and headlice.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

## **What if my child is too anxious to go to school?**

Children can sometimes feel a little bit worried about going to school. Mostly, this is a very normal emotion. It's important to recognise that going into school can help children to feel less worried than letting them stay at home.

If your child is anxious over several weeks, talk to their school about how they can support you. There are some useful links on the Education Hub of mental health support which you may find helpful.

[Mental health resources for children, students, parents, carers and school/college staff - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

## **What does it mean if a child is persistently or severely absent?**

Children who are registered at a school but regularly fail to turn up are officially referred to as being 'persistently' or 'severely' absent. The school day is split into two sessions – one session counts as a morning or afternoon spent in school. Pupils who have missed more than 10 percent of school sessions are considered persistently absent, while children who have missed more than 50 percent of school sessions are referred to as severely absent.

## **What about children with SEND?**

Of course, some children face greater barriers to attendance, such as pupils with long term medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities.

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, schools should have sensitive conversations with children and families and work with them to put support in place. Support may include reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities or help for pupils for whom mental health issues are affecting their attendance.

## **When can my child be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school.

In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences. These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent. Parents who take their child out of school without permission may face paying a fine.