

Summary: Working Together to Improve School Attendance

Underpinning the many benefits of school for children are aspects such as learning, wellbeing, and overall development. Recognising that daily attendance can be challenging for some, schools and local councils are committed to collaborating with families to address issues and support school attendance.

Parents' Responsibilities:

- Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child receives a suitable full-time education from ages 5 to 16.
- Exceptions for absence include illness, approved leave, or religious observance.
- Collaboration with the school is crucial for addressing unique circumstances, such as lack of transportation or temporary addresses.

Managing Absences:

- Parents should inform the school on the first day of a child's absence and may request a 'leave of absence.'
- If a child is unwell, providing medical evidence is generally not required, except in specific cases.

Accessing Support:

- Communication with the school is key if a child faces challenges attending due to issues within the school or at home.
- Support may include action plans, early help plans, or parenting contracts, with regular reviews.

Long-Term Illness or Special Needs:

- Children with long-term illnesses, special needs, or disabilities have the right to a suitable full-time education.
- Schools are expected to make reasonable adjustments, provide pastoral care, and collaborate with other services.

Anxiety and Mental Health:

- Regular school attendance contributes to mental health, but anxiety may be a concern.
- Collaborate with the school to address anxiety issues, involving support services if necessary.

Challenges with Current School Placement:

- If a child's current school placement is unsuitable, collaboration with the school, local council, and application to other schools is recommended.

Legal Actions:

- If support measures fail, parents may be invited to agree to a parenting contract or, in extreme cases, may face legal actions.
- Legal actions can include education supervision orders or, in severe cases, prosecution.

Glossary

Attendance action plan – an informal agreement between you, your child if they are old enough to understand, their school and sometimes your local council about what actions supporting your child will take to improve their attendance.

Community order – an order that can be made by a Court after you have been found guilty of knowingly failing to secure your child's regular attendance rather than sending you to prison. This may include requirements for you to take part in certain activities or observe certain rules.

Early help assessment – a voluntary assessment of what you and your family need help with to allow your child's school and/or your local council to put the right support in place or help you access the right services.

Education supervision order – an order that can be made by the Family Court to require a local council to advise, assist, and direct you and your child so that they receive suitable full-time education. This is not a criminal conviction, but persistently breaching the council's directions can lead to prosecution.

Leave of absence – permission given by your child's school for them to be absent from school for a specified period of time. You should write to the head teacher and ask for a leave of absence before the time your child needs to be absent from school. They will only be agreed to in exceptional circumstances.

Parenting contract – a formal signed agreement between you, and your child's school and/or your local council agreeing what actions you will take to improve your child's attendance and what the school/council will do to support you in this.

Parenting order – an order that can be made by a Court after you have been found guilty of failing to secure your child's regular attendance. You will be required to take part in certain activities or observe certain rules.

Reasonable adjustment – a change made by your child's school to remove or change something that is preventing your child from attending school.

Regular attendance – attending school every day that the school is open in line with the school rules apart from in a small number of allowable circumstances.

School attendance support team – the team in your local council who can help you with your child's attendance.

Special educational needs (SEN) – Children and young people with SEN all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.