

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

By law, school must record absences and the reasons given. You are, therefore, required to contact the school on the first day of your child's absence, before 09:20 and on every further day of absence, also before 09:20. Ensure your child returns to school as soon as possible and provide medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence.

The school office should be informed in writing of absences, known in advance, such as dental appointments. If you wish to request a longer absence - which may or may not be authorized (see overleaf) - please use a Leave of Absence form available from the school office and submit with a letter, detailing in full why the application is truly exceptional.

Please note:

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". Unavoidable means an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Are you aware of the potential impact on your child's education of absence during term time?

1 day off per school year = 99.5% attendance

10 days off per school year = 94.7% attendance

20 days off per school year = 90% attendance.

90% attendance = 4 whole weeks off school
90% attendance in years 1-6 means more than HALF A YEAR off school!

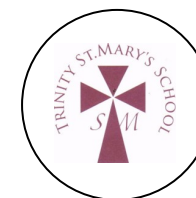
90% attendance for your child through Primary and Secondary school, means they will have missed a WHOLE YEAR off school in their education!!

90% or less attendance is classified as a "Persistent Absentee"

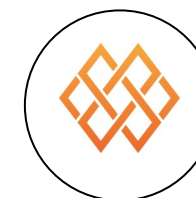
If a pupil has reached the level of a Persistent Absentee (PA), or is at risk of doing so, their parents or carers will be informed and the child will be monitored carefully. All PA pupils and their parents will be the subject of a school based meeting and other relevant professionals, including the Local Authority, may be involved. If there is not clear and sustained improvement in attendance, then more formal procedures will follow, possibly leading to a Penalty Notice or prosecution.

(May 2023)

A Parent/Carer's Guide to School Attendance



Woodham Ferrers' Partnership working together for excellence in schools.



Raising pupil and student achievement through regular school attendance.

School Attendance

Improving school attendance is a key priority for all schools across Essex.

For all children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and prevent them fulfilling their true academic potential.

Our Attendance Policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively, in line with Government and Local Authority requirements and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Working in partnership with parents/carers so that they are aware of their own child's attendance record and the impact that this is having on their education.

NB. The school's Attendance Policy provides additional information and sets out the process for applying for any leave of absence during the term time. It is available on the school website.

Understanding different types of absence.

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always necessary and is a legal requirement.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons from school for a good reason like illness, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the headteacher, following Government guidelines, does not consider exceptional and for which no 'leave' has therefore been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings including penalty notices and fines.

An absence is likely to be unauthorised:

- if parents / carers keep children off school unnecessarily eg. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury, that would not affect their ability to learn;
- for truancy before or during the school day;
- for absences which have never been properly explained, or those not agreed by the headteacher.
- when children arrive at school too late to get registered;
- for shopping trips, day trips, birthdays, holidays in term time;
- if a child is looking after other siblings or accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- when the absence is at the start of a new year; during or prior to exam or national test periods; or if a child is a persistent absentee.

Holidays in Term Time

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

Please note:

Where families choose to take a family holiday during term time and the absences are coded as 'unauthorised', Essex County Council may not issue penalty notices, but may instead proceed to prosecution in a Magistrate's Court. If found guilty, parents could face a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Leave of absence during term time may only be granted by the head teacher, or his/her designate, (not the Local Authority) and applications should only be made if there are reasons which are considered to be truly exceptional (see over).

It is important for parents / carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case by case basis, requests will normally be refused.

We will not consider applications for leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class at the start of the academic year as quickly as possible.as quickly as possible.
- During assessment and test periods in the school's calendar, affecting your child..
- When a pupil's attendance already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year;