

School Attendance

future

A Parent/Carers Guide

Raising Pupil achievement through regular school attendance



Essex County Council

If you are a parent of
(or are responsible for)
a child aged between 5 & 16
who is registered at school,
this information explains
your responsibilities
for making sure he/she
attends school regularly.

Why must my child go to school regularly?

Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life. If your child does not attend school regularly, he/she will not be able to keep up with the work. Employers will want to be sure that the people they are thinking of taking on are reliable. So children who have not attended their school regularly have less chance of getting a good job. Young people who are off school for no good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse. They may also be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.

What can I do to help?

- **Make sure** that your child goes to school regularly, arrives on time and keeps to the school's rules on going to all lessons. Start these good habits at an early age, while your child is in primary school.
- **If your child starts missing school**, help the school to put things right. Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of him/her missing school.
- **If your child is ill**, contact the school on the first day of your child's illness. Staff will be concerned if they do not hear anything. If your child is ever off school, you must tell the school why. Do this by following the arrangements made by the school.

- **If** you want permission for your child to miss school, for example because of a special occasion such as a wedding, you should ask for permission well in advance and give full details. Do not expect the school to agree to shopping trips during school hours, day trips, birthdays or for looking after a brother or sister.
- **Take** an interest in your child's school work.
- **Support** the school in its efforts to control bad behaviour.

What about medical appointments?

Where possible, every attempt should be made to arrange such appointments outside of school hours.

Requests for your child to be allowed out of school should be sent prior to the appointment. He/she will be released from school in sufficient time to attend and, where possible, should return to school after the appointment.

Family holidays during term time

You are strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have a right or entitlement to take their child out of school for such a holiday, but schools may choose to grant leave of absence of up to two weeks in any school year to enable a child to go on a holiday.

In deciding whether or not to agree leave for a family holiday, schools will normally consider each case individually and

will look at the child's overall record of attendance. In most situations schools will not agree leave during term time. If permission is not granted and you still take your child out of school for a holiday, the Local Authority may issue a penalty notice. This is a fine of up to £100 for each parent for each child.

The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must get a proper full-time education. (School starting date is the beginning of the term after which the child reaches their 5th birthday; school leaving date is the last Friday in June of the academic year in which the child reaches their 16th birthday.) You are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by making other arrangements to provide an effective education. If your child is registered as a pupil at a particular school, that school must give permission for your child to be absent. If your child does not go to the school at which he/she is registered, the relevant education authority can take legal action against you.

The role of the Local Authority

Local Authorities (LAs) are responsible, by law, for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend their school regularly.

What is an Education Welfare Officer (EWO)?

Essex County Council as the LA employs EWOs to monitor school attendance and to help parents meet their responsibilities. EWOs work closely with groups of schools and are accommodated in one of the schools. If your child is not attending school regularly, an EWO may visit you. For your child's sake you should co-operate with the EWO to make sure your child overcomes his/her attendance problems and gets a proper education.

If you do not do everything you can to co-operate with the EWO and school, and school attendance does not improve, the Local Authority may have no choice but to take legal proceedings against you. This could result in you and your partner each being fined up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment, for each child who is not going to school and/or made subject of a parenting order.

Alternatively an Education Supervision Order may be made. This means that the Court appoints a supervisor to work with you and give advice to you and your child.

What if I am concerned about my child's attendance?

If you are concerned or anxious about where your child is you can contact his/her school to check if they have arrived. If you continue to have concerns arrange a convenient appointment to talk to a member of staff. Some schools also employ school attendance officers who can assist you. Alternatively you can contact the school's link EWO via the school.

Helpline: 0845 603 7627

**This leaflet is issued by Essex County Council,
Education Welfare Service
You can contact us in the following ways:**

Helpline:

0845 603 7627

By post:

Education Welfare Service,
Essex County Council
PO Box 47
Chelmsford CM2 6WN

By email:

ews@essexcc.gov.uk

By textphone for people with hearing difficulties:

08457 585 592

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The information contained in this leaflet can also be made available in alternative formats: large print, braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate this information into other languages.