

# **Portway: supporting your child's attendance at school – important information for parents and carers**



**Leading  
Learning Trust**

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**Selwyn** PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS  
PRIMARY SCHOOL 

## Introduction

This is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

## Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

## Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

## Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

**A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school**

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.



## Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, Pharmacy First Advice Voucher etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time and emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will be UNAUTHORISED under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy
- Children attending parent's medical or legal appointments

## Reluctant attenders

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

## Persistent absence

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of some kind of support.

## Parenting contracts

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance.

These are initiated where school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. They have no force in law, and are entered into voluntarily. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The problems will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the



situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

### **Reporting your child's absence**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence, either by telephone or in person, and
- Send a note/evidence in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence

### **Applications for leave of absence in term time**

This school's policy is not to authorise holidays during term time. Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Head teacher. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

### **Penalty notices**

Penalty Notices can now be issued for a range of attendance-related offences, including unauthorised term-time holidays, poor attendance and poor punctuality, a child coming to the attention of the police in school time, or located twice or more in truancy sweeps in 6 months. Further details are available on [www.newham.gov.uk/schools/Attendance](http://www.newham.gov.uk/schools/Attendance).

### **Your contact details**

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.



### **Legal references**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.