

Guidance from Department for Education regarding attendance

School attendance and absence

Please visit this website to access the links: [Print School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

1. Overview

You must make sure your child gets a full-time education that meets their needs (for example if they have special educational needs). You can send your child to school or [educate them yourself](#).

Children must get an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16.

You'll be contacted by either:

- the school - if your child is enrolled in school and does not turn up (even if they're only absent for a day)
- the council's education welfare officer - if they think your child is not getting a suitable education at home

You can be prosecuted if you do not give your child an education. You'll normally get warnings and offers of help from the local council first.

You can [get education and attendance information from your council](#).

When your child can miss school

You can only allow your child to miss school if either:

- they're too ill to go in
- you've got advance permission from the school

There's [extra support available](#) if your child cannot go to school for long periods because of a health problem.

Holidays in term time

You have to get permission from the head teacher if you want to take your child out of school during term time.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application to the head teacher in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with)
- and there are exceptional circumstances

It's up to the head teacher how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted.

You can be [fined](#) for taking your child on holiday during term time without the school's permission.

School trips

Your child's school can ask you for a voluntary contribution to the cost of activities like school trips. They cannot stop your child from attending if you do not pay, but they should cancel the activity if there is not enough money to cover the cost of it.

2. Help with getting your child to go to school

If you're having trouble getting your child to go to school, the school and local council can help.

The school will discuss attendance problems with you and should agree a plan with you to improve your child's attendance.

A lot of local councils have teams that help parents improve their child's attendance at school. The council will tell you if they're able to help. Forms of help could include:

- support to reduce the burden on children where families are in difficulty (for example if a child is spending a lot of time caring for someone)
- working with families and schools to overcome bullying and other serious problems
- a parenting contract

Parenting contract

This is a voluntary written agreement between you and either the local council or the school's governing body. Between you, you agree to find ways to improve your child's attendance.

If you refuse to make a contract or you do not stick to it, it can be used as evidence if the local council decides to prosecute you.

3. Legal action to enforce school attendance

Local councils and schools can use various legal powers if your child is missing school without a good reason. They can give you:

- a Parenting Order
- an Education Supervision Order
- a School Attendance Order
- a fine (sometimes known as a 'penalty notice')

You can be given one or more of these but the council does not have to do this before prosecuting you.

Parenting Order

This means you have to go to parenting classes. You'll also have to do what the court says to improve your child's school attendance.

Education Supervision Order

If the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you're not cooperating, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order.

A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of prosecuting you, or as well.

School Attendance Order

You'll get a School Attendance Order if the local council thinks your child is not getting an education.

You have 15 days to provide evidence that you've registered your child with the school listed in the order or that you're giving them [home education](#). If you do not, you could be prosecuted or given a fine.

Fine

Your local council can give each parent a fine of £60, which rises to £120 each if you do not pay within 21 days. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

Check [your local council's](#) rules on when you can be fined.

Prosecution

You could get a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court also gives you a Parenting Order.