

The background of the cover features a photograph of two young women in school uniforms. They are wearing dark blue V-neck sweaters over white collared shirts. Each sweater has a crest on the left chest. They are standing outdoors, with a brick wall on the right and green foliage in the background. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

EssexWorks.

# School Attendance

## A Parent/Carers Guide

**Raising Pupil achievement  
through regular school attendance**



Essex County Council

**If you are the 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. As a result he/she may not be able to achieve their maximum potential. Children who have not attended school regularly have less chance of getting a 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 should I do?

- 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, as soon as they begin school.
- Make sure your child understands that it is not acceptable to miss any time from school.
- If your child is ever absent you must contact the school on the first day of absence and give the reason.
- If you want permission for your child to miss school due to an exceptional circumstance, you must apply for permission well in advance and give full details. Absences can only be authorised by the school.

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 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.

### **Can I take my child out of school for a holiday?**

Parents do not have a right or entitlement to take their child out of school for a holiday. If you need to take your child out of school for a family holiday due to special circumstances, you must request permission from the school. In most situations schools will not agree leave during term time as this will disrupt your child's education. If permission is not granted and you still take your child out of school for a holiday, the Local Authority (LA) may issue a penalty notice.

## 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. If the school is concerned about your child's attendance they will work with you to resolve the problem and may involve an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if there is no improvement.

## The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must get suitable 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.)

As a parent you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly, even if they are missing school without your knowledge. You run the risk of being issued with a penalty notice or being taken to court.

A penalty notice of £50 may be issued by the LA as an alternative to prosecution. This rises to £100 if unpaid after 28 days. Failure to pay will lead to prosecution.

Parents can be fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a parenting guidance programme.

The LA may apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) instead of, or as well as, prosecuting parents. This would be heard in the Family Proceedings Court. An ESO is made in respect of a child and makes the LA responsible for advising, supporting and giving directions to a child and his or her parents in order to make sure that the child attends school regularly. There are sanctions against parents who fail to cooperate.

**Helpline:**  
**0845 603 7627**

**This leaflet is issued by**

Essex County Council, Education Welfare Service.  
You can contact us in the following ways:

**By Post:**

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**By telephone:**

0845 603 7627

**By textphone:** (for people with hearing difficulties)

08457 585 592

**By email:**

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The information contained in this leaflet can be translated, and/ or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published August 2008.



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DS08 1502