
Attendance

— Parent Information —

Agenda

Attendance - Why is it important?

Types of attendance - authorised / unauthorised

Irregular Attendance - Legislation, Expectations, Data, Bucks County Attendance Team

Reporting Sickness - Study Bugs

Why Regular Attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Attendance	Days Absent	Weeks Absent	Lessons Missed
100%	0 days	0 weeks	0 lessons
97%	5 days	1 week	30 lessons
95%	10 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	20 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	30 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	40 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

5 days absence over the
whole year

97% - 100%

Why is it so important?

- Better attainment
- Improved health and well-being
- Enhanced wider life opportunities

When your child can miss school

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

1. They're too ill to go to school



2. You have advance permission from the school



Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/ dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes or taking part in approved religious observance. Please make every effort to take your child to appointments outside of school hours if possible. You should seek approval for absence BEFORE taking the time out for appointments and religious observations.

Authorised Absences

Authorised absence	
Absent to participate in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Authorised absence
Pupil of compulsory school age is absent due to a part-time timetable agreed by the parent and the school	Authorised absence
Absence agreed by the school due to an exceptional circumstance	Authorised absence
Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
Illness (physical and/or mental health related)	Authorised absence
Absence agreed by the school to attend an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised absence
Absence agreed by the school for medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
Day set aside for religious observance	Authorised absence
Study leave for a public examination	Authorised absence

Understanding types of absence

Unauthorised absence

Definition: Any school absence not agreed upon by the headteacher, including holidays, unexplained lateness, or parents failing to report sickness properly.

Unauthorised absence from school, as defined by the UK's Department for Education (DfE), means a child's absence isn't approved by the school, often for things like term-time holidays or unexplained lateness, leading to parental prosecution risks if it crosses attendance thresholds, typically **10 unauthorised sessions (5 days) in 10 weeks**, triggering potential Fixed Penalty Notices or legal action under the Education Act 1996.

Understanding types of absence

Unauthorized absences are those which are considered unreasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority, through its Attendance Team using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which never have been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the register
- Day trips and holidays in term times
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Shopping

Leave during term time

Taking leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking leave in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school to go on leave.

- It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.
- Graduates earn an average of **£16.91 per hour**. Young people that leave school with no qualifications earn an average of **£6.40 per hour**. (report from youth employment in the UK (2024–2025)).

Leave during term time

- All Bucks schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of **not authorising leave**. The Principal will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. You will be asked to provide substantial evidence in support of your request.
- A member of SLT will discuss personally with every family applying for leave where possible to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
- Reasons for leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.
- The Attendance Services from Buckinghamshire Council will issue Notice to Improve and Fixed Penalty Notices (fine) for any unauthorised absence.
- After consultation with the Local Authority, any child on extended leave can be off rolled after 20 days. This means your child will lose their school place.
- Penalty notices will be considered for any **10 sessions** of unauthorised absence **in 10 weeks**.

Exceptional Family Circumstances

This is a discretionary category where the Headteacher decides if the reason is

"rare, significant, and unavoidable."

Examples often include:

- **Bereavement:** The death or funeral of a close family member.
- **Service Families:** Leave for children of personnel in the Armed Forces who are returning from or departing for an operational tour.
- **Family Emergencies:** Serious crises that require the child's presence or make attendance impossible.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution **if** their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year.

(The school year is technically **195 days** long, but five of those days are set aside as **INSET days** (In-Service Training days).

Traveller absence is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. The parent/carer must be travelling for work purposes, not for a holiday or family event.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school then the expectation is that their child will attend full time.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Department of Education (DfE) as being a persistent absentee, or a child missing education, is any pupil who has missed 19 days (38 sessions) across the school year for whatever reason. The Attendance Services at the Local Authority (Buckinghamshire Council) monitor pupils that are on track to become a PA by the number of sessions (2 sessions = 1 day). The following guidelines are used to help schools identify these pupils at the end of each **half term**.

Identification at the end of each half	Number of sessions of absence, at the term end of the half term, to be on track for persistent absenteeism
Term 1	7 sessions
Term 2	14 sessions
Term 3	20 sessions
Term 4	25 sessions
Term 5	32 sessions
Term 6	38 sessions

Irregular Attendance

The Attendance Improvement Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) from the Local Authority. The AIO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 44.1 and 44.1.a.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Fixed Penalties Notices

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country was increased to £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. More information from Bucks Council can be found in Appendix 4 of our attendance policy

Fines

Fine Structure (England, from August 2024)

- **First Offence:**
 - £80 per parent, per child (if paid within 21 days).
 - £160 per parent, per child (if paid after 21 days, within 28 days).
- **Second Offence (within 3 years):**
 - £160 per parent, per child (no early payment discount).
- **Third & Further Offences:**
 - Cases go straight to Magistrate's Court, bypassing fines.

When Fines Are Issued

- **Threshold:** A fine can be issued for 10 or more unauthorised school sessions (equivalent to 5 days) within a rolling 10-school-week period.
- **Causes:** This can include lateness after the register closes, or taking holidays during term time without permission.

Consequences of Non-Payment or Repeated Offences

- **Court Prosecution:** Failure to pay can lead to prosecution in Magistrates' Court.
- **Higher Penalties:** Court fines can reach up to £2,500, and parents could also receive a Parenting Order or community sentence.

What does this mean?

Attendance is tracked weekly

Any children who drop below 96% will be identified and a first letter will be sent to parents to inform them that their child/children will continue to be tracked for a further 5 weeks. If attendance does not improve, you may be invited to a contract meeting where we will discuss what we can do to improve

Any children who drop below 90% will be identified and a letter will be sent to parents to inform them that their child/children will continue to be tracked for a further 3 weeks.

We will be looking for improvement over that period.

If attendance improves, there will be no further action. We will continue to track all attendance. If attendance does not improve, County Attendance Team will be informed.

If any child has 10 unauthorised absences within a 10 week period, they will be reported to the County Attendance Team.

How to report absence or request special leave during term time

Requesting Leave

If you require leave during term time, this must be requested before the leave is taken. You should complete a leave request form in order for leave to be considered by the Principal. You will receive a response in writing. This includes medical appointments.

(By law, you need the school's permission for term-time absence, whether for holidays or appointments).

Reporting Illness Absence



If your child is absent you must:

- contact us by telephone (01753 655104) as soon as possible on the first day of absence and keep the school regularly informed, preferably daily, or, you can come into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you,

OR inform us via the new studybugs app

- report absence to the school for the first three consecutive days,
- on the fourth day of an absence the school will require medical evidence to support the absence period. This can be in the form of a prescription or appointment card at the very least.

if your child is absent and you have made contact with the school the following will happen:

Day 1

The Attendance Officer will note the absence in the register. However, if we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we will conduct a home visit.

Day 2

The Attendance Officer will note the absence in the register. However, if we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we will conduct a home visit.

Day 3

The Attendance Officer will note the absence and parents will be informed of their child's attendance figure and advised to supply medical evidence. However, if we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we will conduct a home visit.

Day 4 & 5

If medical evidence has not been provided, parents are still required to call in every day. However, if we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we will conduct a home visit.

Day 6

If no medical evidence has been provided, the Attendance Officer will discuss the absence with the Principal and a keeping in touch call will take place via a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If required, a welfare home visit will be conducted to see if the school can offer any support in aiding the child's return to school.

If your child is absent and you have not made contact with the school we will:

Day 1

Telephone or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. However, if we cannot make contact with you we may make a home visit. If we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we **will** conduct a home visit.

Day 2

If we still have no contact with you a second telephone call will be made, including a call to any emergency contacts. However, if we have a safeguarding or welfare concern we will conduct a home visit.

Day 3

If we still have no contact, a home visit will be carried out. If there is no response from the home visit then the school will contact the Police for a routine welfare check.

After 10 days, we will refer the absence to the Children Missing Education team.

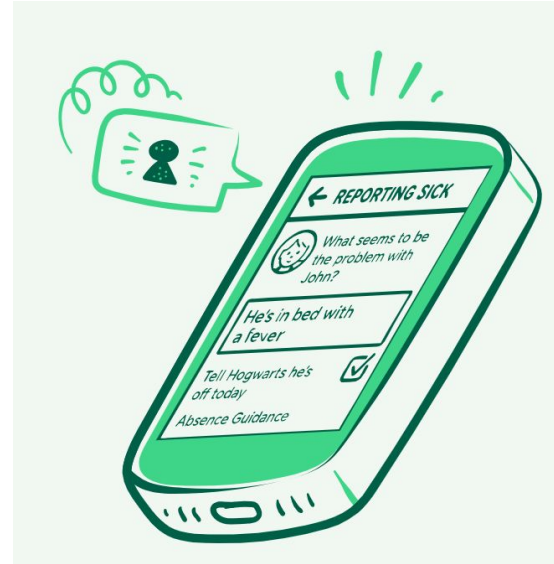
If no medical evidence is provided and previous attendance is low, a referral will be made to Buckingham Council Attendance Service and a fine may be incurred.

New - Reporting Sickness Absence



**A better, safer way
to report when your
child is sick and off
school.**

With a few quick taps or clicks, you can give your child's school all they need to record absence due to illness. Get the free mobile app now...



Why Parents and Schools Choose Studybugs



Saves You Time

It takes seconds to give the school all they need, and know they've got the message even if you're reporting at 6am or 11pm the night before.



Helps Safeguard Your Child

Studybugs automates schools' processing of sick reports, so if any children are unaccounted for, they'll know right away. Also verifies that reports of your child's absence have really come from you.



Guides You

With official guidance from the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England) on the need to stay off school, based on the symptoms or illnesses you enter.



Contributes to Public Health

Studybugs collects anonymised data on illnesses going around — to help schools, parents and public health organisations take preventative action as early as possible.



Confidential and Secure

Your personal data is kept strictly confidential between you and your child's school. We never share your personal data with third parties. Your child's school cannot see your location. All shared illness data is first anonymised so your personal data is always kept confidential. You can also opt out of having your anonymised data shared. Studybugs is hosted from purpose-built secure facilities and all communications with our apps and website are encrypted.



What do you need to do next?

Download the Studybugs app on your phone

Register and verify your email address

Sign in

Find and select our school

Add your details

What do you need to do



You can now communicate with the office to inform us of any absences.

The app will ask what sort of absence. You may receive advice based on keywords you use e.g. The word chicken pox will provide you with advice from uk.nhs about how long to quarantine for, what to look out for etc.

This will all be forwarded to Arbor and the office will be alerted.

You will not need to call the office in addition to this.

If you do not wish to use the app, you can call the office as before.

The text "Any questions?" is presented in a clean, white, sans-serif font. It is centered across three overlapping, tilted teal-colored shapes that resemble pieces of paper or sticky notes. The shapes are arranged horizontally, with the first shape on the left, the second in the middle, and the third on the right, each slightly offset to create a layered effect. The background is a light, neutral color, and a thin teal horizontal bar is visible at the bottom of the frame.

Any questions?