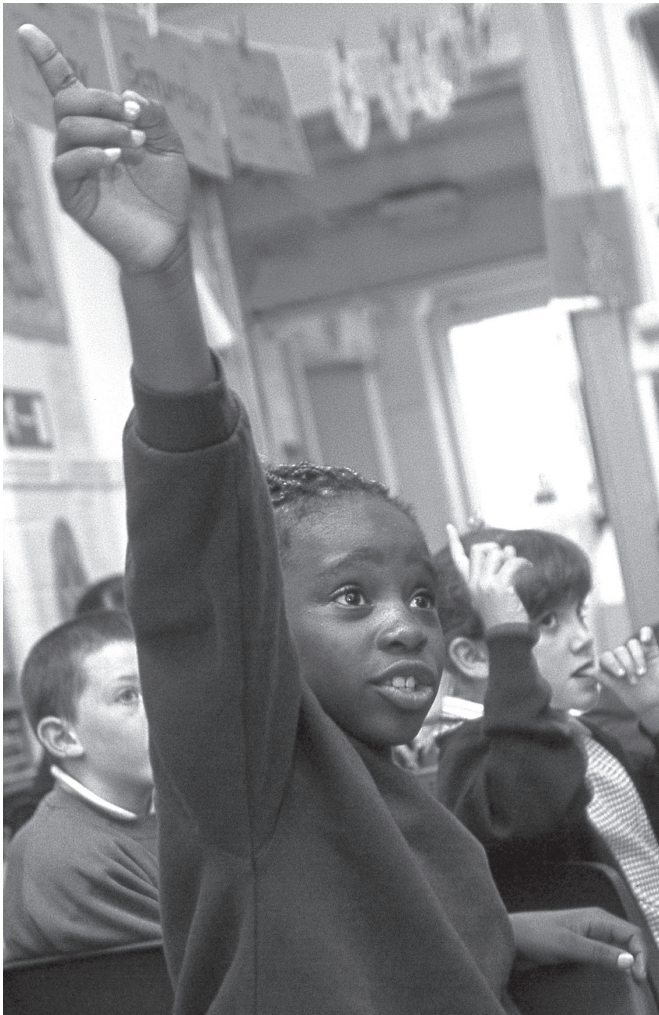


Attendance at school

Advice for parents about supporting pupils in school



Attending school regularly is vitally important for pupils – every day counts. Without it, the best efforts of teachers and schools come to nothing. Pupils need to attend regularly to take full advantage of all the educational opportunities open to them. If they do not, their education and career opportunities suffer. Research shows that truants and absentees are more likely to be drawn into patterns of anti-social behaviour, commit crimes or become the victims of crime.

School attendance and the law

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their children go to school regularly and on time. Failure to do this may result in prosecution in the magistrates' court and can lead to fines of up to £2,500 or three months' imprisonment, a parenting order from the courts, a penalty notice or a community order.

In some cases, youth courts can pass educational supervision orders onto pupils.



Is your son/daughter's absence necessary?

The government has set out guidelines to schools on what they should consider to be acceptable reasons (authorised) for missing school and those that are not (unauthorised).

The headteacher decides whether your son/daughter's absence is acceptable. If the headteacher does not consider the absence to be legitimate, the time missed will be recorded as unauthorised.

What are acceptable reasons for missing school?

If a child misses school it must be for a very good reason. Most justified reasons for missing school are clear, for example, if your child is ill. The following list sets out some of the most common legitimate reasons.

- Illness of child
- A medical or dental appointment
- Taking part in a recognised religious event
- The death of a close family member
- An interview with a prospective employer
- College or other school
- Work experience

What about holidays and special occasions?

Taking holidays during term-time is not permitted. Applications for exceptional leave will be considered on an individual basis by the headteacher. Holidays without authorisation may lead to Penalty Notices or to prosecution.

Failure to return as agreed may result in the child being removed from roll. All requests should be put in writing to the headteacher.

Being allowed time off school to attend special occasions will depend on the type and importance of the occasion. For example, a birthday would not be justified.

Punctuality

It is important that pupils arrive at school on time to ensure that classes are not missed and other pupils are not disrupted. However, if a pupil is late – for whatever reason – he/she should get to school as soon as possible and report to reception.

In this way, the minimum number of classes will be missed. Pupils who arrive after the close of registration will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

What should you do if your son/daughter needs to be away from school?

Parents are responsible for letting the school know the reason for their son/daughter missing school, as soon as they possibly can. Please ensure that you are familiar with and comply with all the requirements set out in your school's Attendance Policy.

What happens if your son or daughter consistently misses school?

The school and the Participation Officer monitor the attendance of all pupils. Participation Officers work with parents to resolve individual pupil's attendance problems. In some cases, where a pupil persistently misses school with the knowledge and acceptance of the parent(s), Hillingdon Council may have to consider taking legal action in the form of a penalty notice (currently £60, rising to £120 per parent per child) or a summons to the Magistrates' Court. Your council tax helps pay for your child's education. Help us to help your child receive the best possible education.

What can you do?

- Make sure your child's 'excuses' for not going to school are genuine.
- Take holidays during school breaks.
- Make medical appointments outside school time.
- Take your child to school yourself whenever possible.
- Check where your child is and whom they are with. Police often stop truants and return them to schools.
- When is parents' evening? Take an interest in your child's progress at school.

Would you like to know more?

If you would like more information about how the service can help, please contact:

✉ The Participation Team,
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