

School attendance measures September 2020 update

From September the Government are re-establishing section 444(1) of the Education Act which allows for parents to be prosecuted for the failure to secure their child's regular attendance at school.

Government advice on pupils returning to school in September includes the following statements:

We are asking schools and local authorities to:

- communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year
- identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic
- use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance
- work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

We will issue further technical guidance for schools to record attendance and absence, including what data schools will be asked to return to the department.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>

In light of this guidance and in accordance with DCC policy and procedure we would ask that all schools ensure that request for legal action in relation to pupil absence are accompanied by evidence that work has been undertaken with the family to remove any barriers to a pupil returning to school. Where there have been previous attendance concerns it is important that COVID-19 related concerns are addressed, where relevant, prior to renewing requests for legal action.

The Local Authority offer a range of traded Education Welfare services which can be accessed via services for schools: <http://www.services.derbyshire.gov.uk/>

Leave in term time (holidays)

There have been no changes to the term time holiday regulations. As a result of COVID-19 there may be an increased number of parents who request leave as a result of not being able to take previously planned holidays and as before each requests should be considered on its own merit. Schools should continue to

unauthorise leave requests unless there are exceptional circumstances, including COVID-19 related matters.

If unauthorised leave is taken and the headteacher believes is fair and just to do so they should submit to the Local Authority for the issue of a penalty notice in the usual way.

Please note requests for 2 or more consecutive days will be issued routinely, if the request is for 1 day please contact the Education Welfare Service to discuss the circumstances prior to submitting the paperwork.