



BALLAKERMEEN HIGH SCHOOL

PARENTS/CARERS GUIDE TO IMPROVING YOUR CHILD'S ATTENDANCE

JULY 2024

Working together to improve school attendance being in school and having the best attendance possible underpins all the many benefits of school for your child, such as their learning, wellbeing and wider development.

There is a clear link between high levels of attendance, academic success, and student wellbeing.

For some children, attending school every day will be harder than for others. This is why we are committed to working together with families to solve problems and support your child's school attendance.

This guide covers two areas:

- Parents' responsibilities for school attendance and what you need to do when your child needs to be absent
- How we will work with you to support your child's attendance

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE?

As a parent, you are legally responsible for making sure your child gets a suitable full-time education, usually from the age of 5 to 16.

For most parents, this will mean making sure your child is in school every day except when:

- Your child is too ill to go to school
- You have permission for a leave of absence from your child's school for them not to attend
- Your religious body has a day especially for religious observance

There are also some other circumstances, for example where the school might be officially closed such as in the case of inclement weather.

Whilst some absence is unavoidable, it is important that your child is in school every day they can be for their learning, wellbeing and development.

IF MY CHILD NEEDS TO BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL, WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

You should contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence to explain why. If you do not, we will contact you to find out why your child is not in school.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school and you will need to submit a Leave of Absence form. The Head Teacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and for how long your child can be absent.

MY CHILD HAS A SHORT-TERM ILLNESS. DO THEY HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL, AND WILL I BE PENALISED IF THEY DON'T?

If your child is ill, read the NHS advice here to help you decide whether they can go to school:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

If they are too ill to attend, you are not breaking the law and will not be penalised. You should let the school know as soon as possible on the first day of absence and school will record such absences as authorised. If the absence due to illness is ongoing or frequent you should speak to us to see what support can be put in place.

If your child is absent for a long period of time and you have not given a satisfactory reason, we will contact you in the first instance to work with you and support your child. If we are unsuccessful in contacting you then the case may be passed on to the Department of Education and Children who may make a welfare visit to your home.

DO I NEED TO PROVIDE MEDICAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S ILLNESS RELATED ABSENCE?

If your child is too ill to attend school, we will record the absence as authorised. In the majority of cases medical evidence is not needed, but we may ask you for evidence where:

- Your child is regularly absent because of illness, to assess how we can help your child by putting the right reasonable adjustments in place
- In a small number of cases we may have reason to believe your child was not too ill to attend school and a conversation has not resolved the issue

If you are asked to provide evidence this does not need to be a letter from your doctor or consultant, and doctors will not usually provide such letters. It can, instead, be appointment cards, prescriptions, or notes of previous consultations.

A lack of written evidence must not prevent the right support being put in place or the absence being authorised if you can demonstrate your child was, or is, unable to attend, or is awaiting treatment. If

you are asked for evidence you cannot provide, a conversation between the school, child and parent can help to resolve the issue.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD NEEDS A DENTAL OR MEDICAL APPOINTMENT IN SCHOOL TIME?

To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day whenever reasonably possible. When they are, you should notify the school in advance for a leave of absence and collect them as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day afterwards.

ACCESSING SUPPORT TO HELP YOUR CHILD ATTEND SCHOOL

MY CHILD IS STRUGGLING TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF AN ISSUE IN SCHOOL – WHO CAN HELP US?

The first step is to talk to your child's tutor about why your child is missing school, and ask what help the school can give. You should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible whilst waiting for help and support to be put into place.

If your child is struggling to attend because of something that is happening at school, we aim to work with you (and your child) to overcome the issues. We would aim to agree a set of joint actions with you to support your child. This will often include a commitment to support you and your child by working together or help you to access support services in exchange for an agreement from you to take part in the support offered. We will also arrange times for us to come together to review these actions and your child's progress.

MY CHILD IS STRUGGLING TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF AN ISSUE AT HOME OR GETTING TO SCHOOL – WHO CAN HELP US?

We realise that every case is unique so talk to us and let's see what we can do. Let's see if we can help you access the support you need whether that is in school or from other agencies who are there to help.

MY CHILD HAS A LONG-TERM ILLNESS, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, OR A DISABILITY, THAT IS IMPACTING THEIR ATTENDANCE – WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

If your child is regularly absent from school because of illness (regardless of whether it is mental or physical) or special educational needs or a disability, they have the same right to a suitable full-time education as any other child. You should work with us to discuss the reasons and make sure the right support is in place.

All schools are expected to provide support in these cases.

We would aim to:

- Work with you to make reasonable adjustments to help your child attend. These could include adjustments to uniform, transport, routines, access to support or lunchtime arrangements
- Ensure your child receives the right pastoral care and in certain cases consider a time-limited phased return to school where appropriate, for example for those who have anxiety about school attendance
- Work jointly with other services where appropriate
- For pupils with a long-term medical condition – either physical or mental – we aim to make attendance support a key feature of any individual action plan

WHERE CAN I GET HELP IF MY CHILD IS TOO ANXIOUS TO GO TO SCHOOL?

Attending school usually helps to protect your child's mental health, for a range of reasons including giving them a chance to be with friends and to benefit from learning. However, some children can be anxious or worried about going to school, particularly around the start of the New Year or joining a new class. This is a normal emotion, and not necessarily indicative of an underlying mental health condition.

If their anxiety continues and becomes an attendance issue, you should speak to us together with your child about why they are anxious and what can be done.

SUPPORT ISN'T WORKING – WHAT CAN I DO?

Your first step is to discuss it with us to see if extra support can be given.

It is important that you don't take your child out of school in the meantime.

WHO DO I CONTACT?

In the first instance always ask for your child's tutor or Head of Year to contact you to arrange a meeting either online, by telephone or in school. Please remember not to use social media to contact the school or a member of staff.

The school office:

Telephone: 648700

Email: BHSEnquiries@sch.im

Senior Leader responsible for attendance:

Mark Redmayne (Assistant Head Teacher)

mark.redmayne@sch.im