

Attendance Service

Information for parents and carers

The Lewisham Council attendance service has statutory responsibilities for school attendance, children missing education, child employment and performance and legal prosecution.

In the UK, education is compulsory for every child between the ages of 5–16 and they must remain in education or training until they are 18.

When a child's attendance does not improve despite support and intervention provided by the school, the following will happen:

- The parent or carer will receive a court warning letter.
- An attendance panel meeting will be arranged as a final opportunity to address and support schools and parents to improve attendance.
- A parenting contract will be drawn up. This is a voluntary written agreement stating that the parent or carer will work with the council and school to improve the child's attendance.
- If attendance does not improve, legal action will be considered. This could be a penalty fine or prosecution.

Please call or email us for more information

Email: aws@lewisham.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8314 6272



Why is attending school important?

Good school attendance gives your child the opportunity of success and helps develop skills for life. Your child should attend school every day unless there is an unavoidable cause such as illness. Missing school can be damaging to your child's learning, social development and life opportunities.

Children who miss many days from school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up.

A child who misses school just twice per month will lose out on 18 days' education across the school year – that's nearly four weeks.

Most of the work missed through absence is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in learning.

Friendships can also be affected by persistent absence. It can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form and maintain relationships with their classmates.

What counts as good attendance?

An attendance rate of 95% is generally considered good; this allows for children to miss 9.5 days



across the school year. Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below.

How is school attendance calculated?

Schools count each school day as two sessions, one morning and one afternoon, making a total of 10 sessions over a full school week.

What to do if your child is unwell

All children will have days when they are too unwell to go to school.

If your child is too ill to go to school, you must telephone the school on the morning of the first day of absence. You must provide a reason for absence and expected date of return to school.

If the school disputes the authenticity of their illness, or if your child's

attendance is below 90% they could ask you for medical evidence such as a doctor's note, an appointment card or a copy of their prescription.

What happens when attendance does not improve?

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child attends school. If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't phoned in your notification, you'll be contacted by the school to find out why they are absent. The school will offer opportunity to meet with you to discuss any difficulties and to offer you support.

If your child remains persistently absent, following the meeting with the school, you may be referred to the Council's attendance service.



Attendance and the law

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child does not attend school regularly and the absence is not agreed by the school (i.e. the absence is unauthorised).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

Penalty notice

The penalty is £60 payable (per parent, per child) within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution; it does not require a court appearance, but still aims to improve school attendance. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.

Prosecution

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution could result in a criminal record and fines up to £2500 and/or three months imprisonment. A range of other outcomes are also available such as Parenting Orders or Education Supervision Orders.