

A parent's guide to attendance and punctuality

At The Cumberland School we do everything possible to facilitate regular attendance at school. There are four main reasons for this:

1. All young people aged between 5 and 16 have the right to full time education. Schools and local education authorities have a duty to ensure that they take up this right.
2. A key factor in raising levels of achievement in our school is establishing a regular pattern of attendance and punctuality. Students cannot achieve if they are absent from school.
3. Positive attitudes towards attendance enable students to maximise their opportunities both in school and in later life.
4. The Cumberland School places a high priority on promoting equal access to the curriculum for all students. Irregular attendance may lead to disadvantage and inequality, place students at risk, isolate them from their peers and may result in unsettled behaviour.

How can I help my child attend school regularly?

- Talk to your child about school.
- Take a positive interest in your child's work, including homework.
- Make use of the school planner.
- Keep in touch with school staff.
- Contact school on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend for whatever reason.
- Attend parents' evenings, parents' forums and other school events.

What should I do if I'm worried about my child's school attendance?

The first thing to do is to contact the school to discuss your concerns. We will set up a meeting to discuss any issues, in a sensitive manner.

What are my responsibilities regarding my child's school attendance?

As a parent/carer it is your responsibility to ensure that any child of compulsory school age attends school both regularly and on time. The local authority has a duty to make sure that all parents/carers fulfil this responsibility.

What will happen if my child does not attend school regularly?

The school will contact you in the first instance to raise concerns about your child's attendance. If there is no improvement you and your child will be put on an attendance improvement action plan which requires 100% attendance at school. If there is still no improvement, or there are particular difficulties involved, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

What if my child's school attendance does not improve?

If you continue to fail in your responsibility you may:

- Receive a Fixed Penalty Notice, which is a fine of £60 per parent/carer for truancy, holidays in term time or poor attendance/punctuality.
- Be prosecuted in the Magistrates' Court, which could result in you receiving a Community Order, a fine of up to £2500 per parent/carer or a custodial sentence.

Why should my child attend school regularly?

Every school day counts towards your child's future. Days off school add up to lost learning. In total, there are 175 non-school days a year. This gives families the opportunity to:

- Spend time together.
- Go on family visit.
- Go on holiday.
- Go shopping.
- Go on days out.
- Attend routine appointments.

Holidays in term time

Many parents and carers think that it is okay to go on holiday during term time, but this has a negative effect on their children's learning and ability to achieve. If your child goes on holiday during term time, they are absent.

- 10 days absence means 95% attendance.
- 19 days absence means 90% attendance.
- 29 days absence means 85% attendance.
- 38 days absence means 80% attendance.
- 47 days absence means 75% attendance.

Achievement

Research has shown that achievement is directly linked to attendance. Students with a high level of attendance invariably perform better in class and in examinations

The following facts and statistics underline the importance of regular attendance:

- Your child's attendance will affect the number of GCSEs they will pass at grade 4 or above.
- The number of GCSEs you pass at grade 4 and above will affect the amount of money you can earn as an adult.
- If your child attends school, they are more likely to get on in life. If your child regularly misses school, they are more likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour. Your child's education is your child's future. Don't let them waste it.

Punctuality

Schools are legally required to take a register of students first thing in the morning and at some point in the afternoon. The government advises that schools can keep the register open for up to 30 minutes though the school can set a shorter period of time.

If a child is late but the register is still open they are marked as late. If the register has already closed when a child arrives late and without a satisfactory explanation, it may be classed as an unauthorised absence. This may lead to legal action taken against you for not ensuring regular attendance and punctuality to school.

Your child's punctuality is important for the following reasons:

- If your child is late for school each day, they lose almost 2 weeks of education a year.
- Your child being late disturbs the whole class from learning.
- Arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year.
- 10 minutes late to school each day = 33 hours lost in one year.
- Arriving 15 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 2 weeks a year.
- Arriving 30 minutes late every day is the same as being absent for 19 days a year.
- 19 days lost a year through being late means 90% attendance.
- 90% attendance through school life is equal to a whole year of school being missed!

This document does not replace the school's Attendance Policy. The school's Attendance Policy contains more detailed information about the school's procedures for dealing with lateness and absences.