

Guidance - School Attendance in West Berkshire

Why is it important for children to attend school regularly?

Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life. Being on time is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher, and the other children in the class. It is not only the academic work missing out on the social side of school life, especially at primary school, can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships, a vital part of growing up.

What about authorised absences?

Of course there may be times when your child has to miss school because she or he is ill. This is to be expected and for the odd day off sick you should follow the school's procedures for notifying illness.

What is unauthorised absence from school?

Only the Headteacher can authorise a pupil's absence from school. Unauthorised absence is when a pupil is absent from school when they should have been in school, or school have not been given a reason for the absence.

Headteacher's follow the Department of Education guidance when deciding whether absence is authorised or not - www.education.gov.uk.

Education Welfare Service 01635 42400

www.westberks.gov.uk WBC/ED/HR/0113

What happens if my child does not attend school regularly?

Your child's school is responsible by law for reporting poor attendance to the Local Authority. If your child is not attending school regularly, an Education Welfare Officer may visit or write to you. Education Welfare Officers work with parents to address their child's attendance difficulties.

In West Berkshire the Education Welfare Service has the duty to consider legal action regarding unsatisfactory school attendance. It is the duty of a parent of a child of compulsory school age to secure his/her education by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a parent fails to fulfil this duty imposed by the Education Act 1996, such a person commits a criminal offence.

The Local Education Authority has a duty to consider legal action against parents where their children have unauthorised absence from school. Prosecution in the Magistrate's Court may be pursued, or the case could be put before the Family Proceedings Court where Education Supervisor Order maybe imposed or both. The maximum financial penalty for a parent of a child of compulsory school age under the Education Act 1996 is currently £2,500. Imprisonment for up to 3 months can also be considered.

Some parents may be trying but finding it hard to get their children to attend school. The Education Welfare Service can be contacted during office hours for advice on school attendance.

