



Ensure your child attends school every day and on time

The law

Parents have a legal duty to secure education for their children of compulsory school age whether at school or otherwise (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996). If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, a parent is guilty of an offence (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996). A parent is defined to include all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child (Children Act 1989).

Role of a parent

Going to school regularly is important for your child's future. It is helpful for a school if you ring on your child's first day of sickness and do not keep them away any longer than necessary. Always provide a note to their teacher on their return. Absence for shopping and birthdays is not acceptable. Never take holidays during term time or assume that a request to take your child out of school for any other reason will be granted.

Role of a school

It is a school that decides whether to authorise an absence. You may be asked to provide medical evidence if your child has a health problem that is affecting their attendance. Your child's school may use a range of strategies to assist you to improve your child's attendance, such as setting targets, presenting awards, offering incentives and making referrals to other agencies for additional support.

If there is no improvement in your child's attendance over a period of time the school will discuss your child's attendance with their link Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Some schools manage their own attendance and refer to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) at stage two if a case meets Brent's legal threshold.

Role of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will take referrals from schools where a pupil has 85 percent or less attendance, with a significant amount of absence recorded as unauthorised and where attempts by the school to improve a pupil's attendance have been unsuccessful. If your child's attendance falls into this category you will be provided with the contact details of an EWO linked to your child's school and they will arrange to meet with you to discuss your child's absence. In some cases the EWO may make an unannounced home visit. If you are not at home, a calling card will be left. If your child has unauthorised absence of 10 percent or more, there then follows a 10 week timetable of casework that is set out on the next page. The EWS will arrange a translator for all meetings if required.

Stage one meeting

The EWO will invite you to a meeting at the school. School staff and other professionals supporting your family will be invited. The aim of the meeting is to allow the EWO and school to find out why your child has a lot of absence and what you can do to make sure they have regular attendance. The EWO will explain to you what needs to be done to comply with your legal obligation and the timescales

to achieve this. Even if you do not attend this meeting you will be notified of the outcome within five days. Some schools will arrange their own stage one meeting. At the end of 8 weeks monitoring and interventions you may be issued with an Education Penalty Notice.

Stage two meeting

In very serious cases of poor attendance you may be invited to a stage two meeting at Brent Civic Centre. The case will be reviewed and you will be notified in writing within five days of the final decision, even if you did not attend. The EWS may take no action, issue you with a formal warning or Education Penalty Notice or in very serious cases prosecute you.



Complex cases

Complex cases, where a family is receiving extra support for social or health needs, may take longer than 10 weeks to conclude.