



Spring Term 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

Our first letter focuses on the importance of attendance, building on the work of Cambridgeshire Local Authority to raise attendance in the region.

Why is attendance so important?

Face-to-face education is important in helping pupils to fulfil their potential, and attending school every day is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development.

Research shows that pupils with higher attendance in Key Stage 4 typically achieve higher English and maths GCSE grades. In 2019, pupils with an attendance rate of above 96% were more likely to have secured a strong pass in both English and maths than pupils with a lower attendance rate.

- Pupils that achieved Grade 9 to 5 in English and maths = **96.3% Attendance**
- Pupils that achieved Grade 9 to 4 in English and maths = **94.8% Attendance**
- Pupils that **did not achieve a pass** in English and maths = **91.2% Attendance**

This highlights how important attending school can be. On average, students that achieved a Grade 9 to 5 in English and maths attended school for 19 more days during Year 10 and Year 11 than those students who did not achieve a pass in both subjects.

This is why schools, and local authorities work closely together and with parents and pupils to make sure attendance is as high as possible.

Schools are also required to have robust processes in place to monitor, manage, and improve attendance. Your school will have an Attendance Policy that will explain the attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence, and informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence.

Schools are also required to report certain periods of unauthorised and illness absence to the local authority.

What are the responsibilities of parents and carers?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends school every day that the school is open. Local authorities can fine or prosecute parents who do not meet these legal duties.

There are only a small number of circumstances where absence can be authorised:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances (e.g. medical appointments, study leave or interviews)
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.

- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school.

If your child needs to be absent, you should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why. All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school for exceptional circumstances.

Where can I get support to help my child attend school?

Children may struggle to attend school for a wide range of reasons. And, importantly, our schools will want to work with you to explore the reasons and discuss what help can be put in place to help you overcome the barriers they are facing. This can include referring you to other sources of support.

In most cases, if your child's attendance level is falling, the school will contact you to discuss this. However, our schools would also welcome and encourage you to contact them if you are aware of any barriers or possible issues before their attendance becomes affected.

Ultimately, schools across Cambridgeshire want to work with our parents, pupils and communities to help as many children as possible attend school each day.

Term-time holidays

As teachers, we know how frustrating holiday price rises can be during the school holidays.

However, a term-time holiday is generally not considered an exceptional circumstance. Since the start of this school year, it is no longer possible for a school to authorise a term-time holiday.

This means that term time holiday absences will be classed as 'unauthorised' and must be reported to the local authority.

Fines and Prosecution

In most cases, schools and local authorities will try and provide support to help you improve your child's attendance first, but if this isn't effective or the absence is for unauthorised term time holiday, you may face paying a fine.

It's the responsibility of the local authority to decide when to issue fines to parents. However, under the national rules, a fine must be considered when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country are £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

If you have any questions or would like help with your child's school attendance, please do contact your school.

Yours faithfully,



Andy Christoforou and Helena Marsh – Co-Chairs of Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads