Herefordshire Council

Attendance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ has been developed using the Department for Education's attendance guidance and the Children's Commissioner's guide for parents. It is intended to help families understand attendance expectations and the support available.

1. Why is attending school every day so important?
Being in school supports your child's learning, wellbeing, friendships, confidence and future opportunities. Good attendance helps children feel part of their school community and gives them the best chance to achieve their potential.

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2. What attendance level should my child aim for?
Our ambition is for every child to achieve **100% attendance**. While some absence due to illness or exceptional circumstances is unavoidable, regular attendance gives children the best opportunity to succeed.
Attendance below **90%** is classed as persistent absence and can significantly impact educational progress.

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3. What should I do if my child is ill?
Please contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence and follow the school's absence reporting procedures.
For advice about common illnesses and whether your child is well enough to attend school, please refer to the NHS guidance: **"Is my child too ill for school?"**

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4. Should my child stay off school with a cough, cold or minor illness?
Not usually. Many common illnesses, including mild coughs, colds and minor sore throats, do not necessarily prevent a child from attending school.
If you are unsure, please check NHS guidance or contact the school for advice.

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5. What happens if my child becomes unwell during the school day?
If your child becomes too unwell to remain in school, we will contact you and discuss the most appropriate next steps.
We will always try to support children to remain in school where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

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6. What if my child is anxious or reluctant to come to school?
Please contact us as early as possible.
Children can sometimes experience anxiety linked to friendships, learning, transitions, health needs or other circumstances. The earlier we understand any concerns, the sooner we can work together to identify solutions and put support in place.

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7. What support will the school offer if attendance becomes a concern?
Our approach is always **support first**.
We will seek to:

- Understand the reasons behind the absence.
- Listen to the views of the child and family.
- Work collaboratively to remove barriers.
- Agree appropriate support and adjustments where needed.
- Involve other services if additional help would benefit the family.

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8. My child has SEND or a medical condition. Will attendance be viewed differently?
We recognise that some children face additional challenges in attending school regularly. Schools are expected to be particularly mindful of pupils with SEND, physical health conditions or mental health needs and to work with families to identify appropriate support and reasonable adjustments where needed.

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9. Can I take my child on holiday during term time?
Parents are strongly advised to take family holidays during school holiday periods.
Parents can request a leave of absence, but schools may only authorise absence during term time in **exceptional circumstances**.
Family holidays, leisure trips and visits to relatives will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances and if taken may be recorded as unauthorised absence. Requests must be made in advance using the school's leave of absence process.

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10. What counts as an exceptional circumstance?
Every request is considered individually.
Exceptional circumstances are generally events that are rare, unavoidable and outside the family's control. The Headteacher will consider the specific circumstances of each application before making a decision.

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11. What should I do if my child has a medical or dental appointment?
Please arrange appointments outside school hours wherever possible.
If this cannot be avoided, your child should attend school before and after the appointment whenever possible. You may be asked to provide evidence of the appointment; this could be an appointment letter or text.

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12. What happens if my child is late to school?
Arriving on time helps children settle into learning and ensures they do not miss important teaching. If your child is late for school, you will be asked to provide a reason. Regular lateness can have a significant impact on learning and may lead to the school contacting families to discuss any barriers and identify support.

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13. How does the school monitor attendance?
Schools are required to keep attendance registers and regularly review attendance and punctuality. Where attendance starts to fall, schools are expected to identify concerns early, speak with families and offer support before difficulties become more significant.

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14. Will the school contact me if attendance starts to decline?
Yes.
If attendance begins to give cause for concern, we will contact you to understand what may be affecting attendance and to discuss any support that may help. Our aim is to work with families, not against them.

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15. What if attendance does not improve despite support being offered?
The vast majority of attendance concerns are successfully resolved through partnership working and support.
However, where attendance remains a concern and support is not successful, schools and local authorities have statutory responsibilities to consider further attendance processes. These are used only when appropriate and after efforts have been made to understand and address barriers to attendance.

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16. How can I help my child attend school regularly?
You can support your child by:

- Establishing good bedtime and morning routines.
- Talking positively about school.
- Encouraging independence and resilience.
- Taking an interest in their learning and friendships.
- Attending school meetings and events.
- Contacting the school early if difficulties arise.
- Avoiding unnecessary absence wherever possible.

Need Further Help?

If you are worried about your child's attendance, wellbeing or ability to attend school regularly, please contact:
Attendance Leads: Ms B Davies, Mrs A Ricketts & Mrs A Tweddell
Telephone: 01981 540254
Email: admin@much-birch.hereford.sch.uk

We are committed to working together with families to ensure every child feels supported, included and able to benefit fully from their education.