

# **Why is school attendance so important and what are the risks of missing a day?**

Being around teachers and friends in a school or college environment is the best way for pupils to learn and reach their potential. Time in school also keeps children safe and provides access to extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care.

That's why school attendance is so important and why the Government is committed to tackling the issues that might cause some children to miss school unnecessarily.

The higher a pupil's attendance, the more they are likely to learn, and the better they are likely to perform in exams and formal assessments.

## **What are the risks of missing a day of school?**

Every moment in school counts, and days missed add up quickly. For example, a child in Year 10 who is absent for three days over a half term could miss 15 lessons in total.

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## **What if my child needs to miss school?**

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure your child gets a full time-education. Usually, that means going into school from the age of 5 to 16.

There are only a small number of circumstances where missing a school day is permitted. Your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on a specific day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot go to school on a specific day because they are observing a religious event.
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it's not available or has not been provided yet.
- Your child does not have a permanent address and you are required to travel for work. This exception only applies if your child attends their usual school or another school where you are staying as often as possible. This must be 200 half days or more a year if they are aged 6 or older.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

### **What counts as an exceptional circumstance?**

School leaders are responsible for deciding what counts as an exceptional circumstance when it comes to a child missing school.

They should look at each application individually, considering the specific facts and background context. If a leave of absence is granted, the school will decide how long the pupil can be away from school.

Holidays are very rarely an acceptable reason for a school absence and are unlikely to be treated as an exceptional circumstance.