

Is your child missing out?

# Attendance Matters A Parent's Guide




Musselburgh  
Area Partnership

# WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SO IMPORTANT?

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow your child to fulfil their potential and for them to have the best possible start in life.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children attend school:

- To learn
- To have fun and make new friends
- To understand responsibility
- To experience new things in life
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religions, ethnicity and gender difference
- To achieve
- To gain qualifications
- To develop new skills
- To build confidence and self-esteem
- To grow as individuals.



In Primary 1 children learn new phonics every week – these are the building blocks for all future learning.



Young people who regularly miss school without good reason<sup>1</sup> are more likely to become isolated from their friends, underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

<sup>1</sup>Authorised absences are cases where the school has been informed of the reason why your child is off, and the school is satisfied there is a valid reason – see page 4.

# EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

Consider the following:

<b>100% Attendance</b>	0 Days Missed	Excellent	Gives your child the best chance of success and gets them off to a flying start.
<b>95% Attendance</b>	9 Days of Absence 1 week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory	
<b>90% Attendance</b>	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor	Less chance of success. Makes it harder to progress.
<b>85% Attendance</b>	27 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Almost half a term missed	Very Poor	Serious implications on learning and progress.
<b>80% Attendance</b>	36 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed Half a term missed	Unacceptable	
<b>75% Attendance</b>	45 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed Almost 1 whole term missed	Unacceptable	



If your child has 90% attendance they will have the equivalent of:

- ½ a day off per week,
- 19 days off per year
- 247 days off over their school career of 13 academic years, equivalent to over 1 year of lost education.

Consider what this means for 80% or even 75% attendance

# IS IT EVER ALRIGHT FOR MY CHILD TO BE OFF SCHOOL?

Your child can be off school if<sup>2</sup>:

- They are ill
- They are attending a doctor or hospital appointment
- They are going to a meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children's Hearing, case review or court
- If they are involved in an activity and the school agrees in advance
- Someone close to your child has died
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in your family
- They are going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them
- You are a Gypsy/Traveller family and while you go travelling you keep in touch with your child's teacher
- Your family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative.

As long as you have informed the school of the reason why your child is off, and the school is satisfied that this is a valid reason, these would be called authorised absences.



<sup>2</sup>Source: 'A guide for parents about school attendance' Smarter Scotland Scottish Government.



Research shows that children who regularly miss more than 2 weeks of school throughout their Primary years tend to under-perform in their 4th year exams.



## AVOID TAKING FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING THE SCHOOL TERM

You can demonstrate your commitment to your child's education by not taking holidays during term time. A day of school missed is a missed opportunity for important learning and personal development.

Holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.



There are over 175 days a year available for holidays to be arranged outside term time!

# EDUCATION IS NOT AN OPTION – IT'S COMPULSORY

Consider your legal responsibility.

Under Section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980

*'It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education for him suitable of his age, ability and aptitude either by causing him to attend public school regularly or by other means'.*

Under Section 35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980

*'Non-attendance at school without reasonable excuse is an offence'.*

If the school becomes concerned about attendance for a child in your care they will initiate East Lothian's Staged Assessment Process. At the first stage parents/carers will be invited to meet with school staff to discuss the problem and look at what support the child and family needs to get the child to school. If this does not result in improved attendance, a Stage 2 multi-disciplinary meeting will be called. This meeting will include staff from social work, health and possibly the police, all of whom can work with the family to address the issue.



Across East Lothian in 2013/14 42,000 days of learning were lost due to unauthorised absences – an average of 3 days for every school pupil!

If their attendance falls to 90% a child is likely to be missing 1 out of every 10 words they read or that are spoken by a teacher.

# MAKE EVERY DAY COUNT: WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Be aware of the impact of regular absences – missing school is missing out.
- Take family holidays outside term time.
- Try to arrange non-urgent dental and medical appointments outside school hours and if an appointment must be made within school hours, try to ensure your child is back at school as soon as possible.
- Establish a good routine in the mornings and evenings so your child is prepared for the school day ahead; build-up good habits of punctuality and attendance.
- Be involved with your child's education and school – ask questions.
- Inform the school if your child is absent due to illness or other reason.
- Discuss any problems or difficulties with the school: staff are there to help and will be supportive.

## What should I do if my child is anxious or worried about going to school?



Your child has a right to an education and to be safe and happy at school. But sometimes children and young people can be anxious or worried about going to school due to many possible reasons.

You may feel letting your child stay off school is an effective option, but unfortunately, this will not help find a solution. It's important to talk to the school if this kind of problem arises.

Your first point of contact should be the school. However there are also a number of agencies and services that can provide you with professional help and advice. (Contact details can be found on the following page).

# SUPPORT, INFORMATION AND ADVICE

## ParentLine Scotland

At some time all parents find that parenting can be difficult or stressful. ParentLine Scotland is the free, confidential, telephone helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small.

Phone: 0808 800 2222. On line at: [www.children1st.org.uk/parentline-scotland](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline-scotland)

## Parentzone

Parentzone provides information for parents and cares about how you can support your child's education. On line at: [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone)

## Childline

Children and young people can get confidential help about any question, concern or worry.

Phone: 08001111. On line at: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## Citizen Advice Bureau

Your local CAB can provide information and support about rights and responsibilities when it comes to schools and education.

Information and advice on lots of areas at: [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) where you can also find your local CAB.

## Enquire

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning and operates a helpline for parents, carers and practitioners. An interpreter can be arranged upon request.

Telephone helpline Phone: 0845 123 2303. E-mail: [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)

On line at: [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk)

## ABEL

ABEL is a voluntary organisation that developed out of the strong desire of parents to do something for themselves to overcome the devastating effects that bullying can have on children, their families and their community. ABEL offers information and support to the young person being bullied and their family and the young person displaying the bullying behaviour and their family.

Contact them through their website at

[www.antibullyingeastlothian.org.uk](http://www.antibullyingeastlothian.org.uk)

## National Parent Forum of Scotland

Provides parents with information and advice on understanding the new curriculum and supporting their child's education. On line at: [www.parentforumscotland.org](http://www.parentforumscotland.org)



Versions  
of this leaflet are available  
on request on audiotape, in  
Braille or in your own language.  
Phone the Public Information  
Officer on 01620 827199

This leaflet has been produced by parents and community members involved in the Musselburgh Area Partnership to draw attention to the importance of regular school attendance for children. We would really like to know what you think of it. If you have any comments, ideas or suggestions for improvement please send them to [Musselburgh-AP@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Musselburgh-AP@eastlothian.gov.uk)