

Attendance & Punctuality

All children are entitled to a full-time education that meets their needs. Children must get an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16.

Attendance is directly correlated to high academic outcomes and therefore the attendance of children in care in schools is monitored on a daily basis by the Virtual School. Good attendance equates to 95% attendance or higher throughout the academic year. Data shows that children in care typically underperform academically; each day of non-attendance for a child in care is therefore significant.

[School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Non-attendance at school and the law - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

[Cambridgeshire Attendance Support Team - Learn Together \(camblearntogether.co.uk\)](https://camblearntogether.co.uk)

In any case where the child has been absent from school for more than 10 days, the social worker should liaise with the school, the child, the carers and any other relevant person to address:

- The reasons for absence
- How to ensure the child returns to education as soon as possible
- Whether and how the child can be helped to catch up on what they have missed.

Where necessary, the Children Missing from Care Procedure should be followed.

What absences are not acceptable as authorised?

- There is no entitlement and therefore it is not acceptable for a foster carer to take a child out of school for a holiday during term time. This will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Schools are not allowed to send a child home for part of a day; this is an illegal exclusion and should be challenged.

When would an absence be authorised?

- Absences due to sickness/ill health.
- Where possible CiC meetings and appointments which involve the child should be made outside of the school day. These include medical appointments, meetings with guardians/IROs. If it is not possible to undertake these outside of the school day then the school will be expected to authorise the absence.
- When a child moves into a pre-adoptive placement, time out of school may be necessary to prioritise bonding with the new family. This should be planned and time-limited.
- Post-adoption celebration hearings should be authorised.
- Other reasons for absence (such as bereavement, exceptional circumstances) may be authorised and schools will make individual decisions regarding such cases.
- Unavoidable causes such as bad weather conditions.
- Religious observance where applicable.
- For an interview at a place of employment or different education provider.

Reduced timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for a child to attend school in a reduced capacity as part of a re-integration package.

A reduced timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision. In agreeing to a reduced timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

The Virtual School and appropriate LA partners should be involved if a reduced timetable is to be considered and a plan to ensure that the child is reintegrated into full time education must be in place.

Exclusion

Exclusion from school should be a last resort for Children in Care, who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion. Therefore, it is important to work with the school and carers to intervene as soon as there is a cause for concern. Schools should co-operate proactively with carers, the local authority that looks after the child and the virtual school.

Where a school has concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion, of a child in care, it should, in partnership with others (including the local authority as necessary), consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required.

If a child is excluded (suspension or permanent exclusion), schools are required to comply with DfE guidance. Where a Child in Care is excluded from school, the child's social worker must inform the Independent Reviewing Officer with responsibility for that child.

Emotionally Based School Refusal

Emotionally based school refusal (EBSR) is the refusal to attend school due to emotional distress. School refusal differs from truancy in that children feel anxiety or fear towards school, whereas children who truant generally have no feelings of fear towards school but may feel angry or bored instead. School refusal or truanting requires a holistic approach with home, school, social care and any other relevant professionals working together. If a child is refusing or truanting from school then the Virtual School should be made aware at the earliest opportunity.

Pregnancy

Becoming pregnant is not in itself a reason to stop attending school, nor to cease education.

Where a young woman becomes pregnant, the social worker, in conjunction with the Virtual School must ensure that the young woman remains in education if at all possible and arrange for her to receive support from the LA for the area in which she lives and / or the school she attends.