

At Finchale we have high standards in all areas, including attendance. To help achieve this we work with parents, carers and, when appropriate, other services to ensure children can maximise their attendance at school. We believe that good attendance means that children are less likely to fall behind with their work and ultimately are more likely to do well in exams. This leads to more choices and better opportunities.

The Department for Education provides guidance regarding attendance, set out in the document, *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (WTISA, 2024) which can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eedcd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf

This clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of schools, parents/carers and the Local Authority. Briefly:

- ✓ It is the role of the school to promote and monitor attendance, support parents and carers to achieve this and to take action if parents fail to send their child to school without good reason. It expects schools to work with parents and carers if a child is anxious or finds it difficult to attend or is a school refuser.
- ✓ It expects parents and carers to ensure that children do attend school and for them to work with the school and, where appropriate, additional services, to ensure this happens.
- ✓ It is the role of the Local Authority to support schools and parents and carers to help children attend school.

As attendance at school is statutory, schools and Local Authorities should fine parents who prevent their children from attending, for example, by taking them out of school to go on holiday. Whilst a school can authorise an absence, this should only be in very exceptional circumstances. From August 2024, schools should consider whether to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to parents when the threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions (that is 5 school days) is met. Further explanations around issuing fines or a Notice to Improve can be found in pages 56-61 within the DfE document *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* which can be accessed through the link above. For this reason, parents and carers need to be aware that action will be taken where 10 sessions or 5 days of absence within a

10 week rolling period occurs. This may be a fine, requirement to work with the school/local authority with the view to improve attendance, a Notice to Improve or even legal action.

“Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.” WTISC (2024) p18

WHAT IMPACT DOES ABSENCE HAVE?

Every day at school there are, on average, between 4 and 5 lessons taught. This means that if your child misses 2 days of school, they will miss 9 lessons. In everyday life, 90% or 95% might indicate a high level of success. However, when it comes to attendance, the impact of absence from school can be seen in the table below:

Attendance in a School Year	Equivalent Days Missed from School	Equivalent Sessions Missed from School	Equivalent Lessons Missed from School
95%	9.5 days	19 Sessions	43 Lessons
90%	19 days	38 Sessions	86 Lessons
85%	28.5 days	57 Sessions	129 Lessons
80%	38 days	76 Sessions	172 Lessons
75%	47.5 days	95 Sessions	215 Lessons
70%	57 days	114 Sessions	258 Lessons
65%	66.5 days	133 Sessions	301 Lessons

As you can see, 95% attendance means that a pupil will miss, on average, **43** lessons, across a range of subjects. This is a lot of learning that they will have to make up. Staff at school will always do their best to help children catch up but it is impossible for teachers to repeat all the lessons a child may have missed. A lot of teaching is sequential and we know that gaps in knowledge can impact on the ability to learn more. In some lessons, what is covered will form the building blocks for future learning. If these building blocks are not there, then it can be hard for children to learn effectively and they can fall further behind.

Children can miss school for a variety of reasons, including:

- An illness that prevents them from attending eg. diarrhoea
- A mental health or wellbeing issue eg. anxiety
- Attending a medical/health appointment
- Parents preventing their child from attending eg. holiday.

Schools can authorise absence if the reason for absence is considered as legitimate or unavoidable. Absences can hide problems that school and home could be working to sort out together. If your child does not want to come to school please let us know so we can help. Mrs. Rice, our Wellbeing Co-ordinator is very skilled in supporting families to ensure children can attend school. Addressing issues and alleviating concerns can lead not only to improved attendance but also to happier children!

The DfE document *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* states that:

“Good attendance is a learned behaviour, and the most effective schools recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset.” WTISC (2024) p14

At Finchale we want all our children to attend school whenever possible and we are committed to supporting families to achieve this. If you require help to ensure your child attends, please contact the school by telephone on 01913865187 or email us on finchale@durhamlearning.net. Alternatively you can contact our Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Mrs. Rice, directly by emailing her at wellbeing@finchale.durham.sch.uk and she can provide support or signpost you to agencies who can offer help.

Remember:

- Every day lost from school means a child has missed 4 or 5 separate lessons. A week away from school is a loss of around 22 separate lessons.
- If the threshold of 10 unauthorised absences is met within a 10 week rolling period, schools can issue a Fixed Penalty notice, issue a Notice to Improve or take legal action.

Attendance is Everyone's Business



Attendance Guidance

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional **legal duty** to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

DfE (2024) p8

Every Day Counts