

Attendance Information for Parents



Why does school attendance matter?

Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem a big deal, but research shows that it can have a significant impact on children's learning. Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up. Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning.

Poor attendance often starts at primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at secondary school. Pupils who miss between 10 and 20% of school (that's 19 to 38 days per year) stand only a 35% chance of achieving good GCSEs, compared to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days.

Friendships can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates.

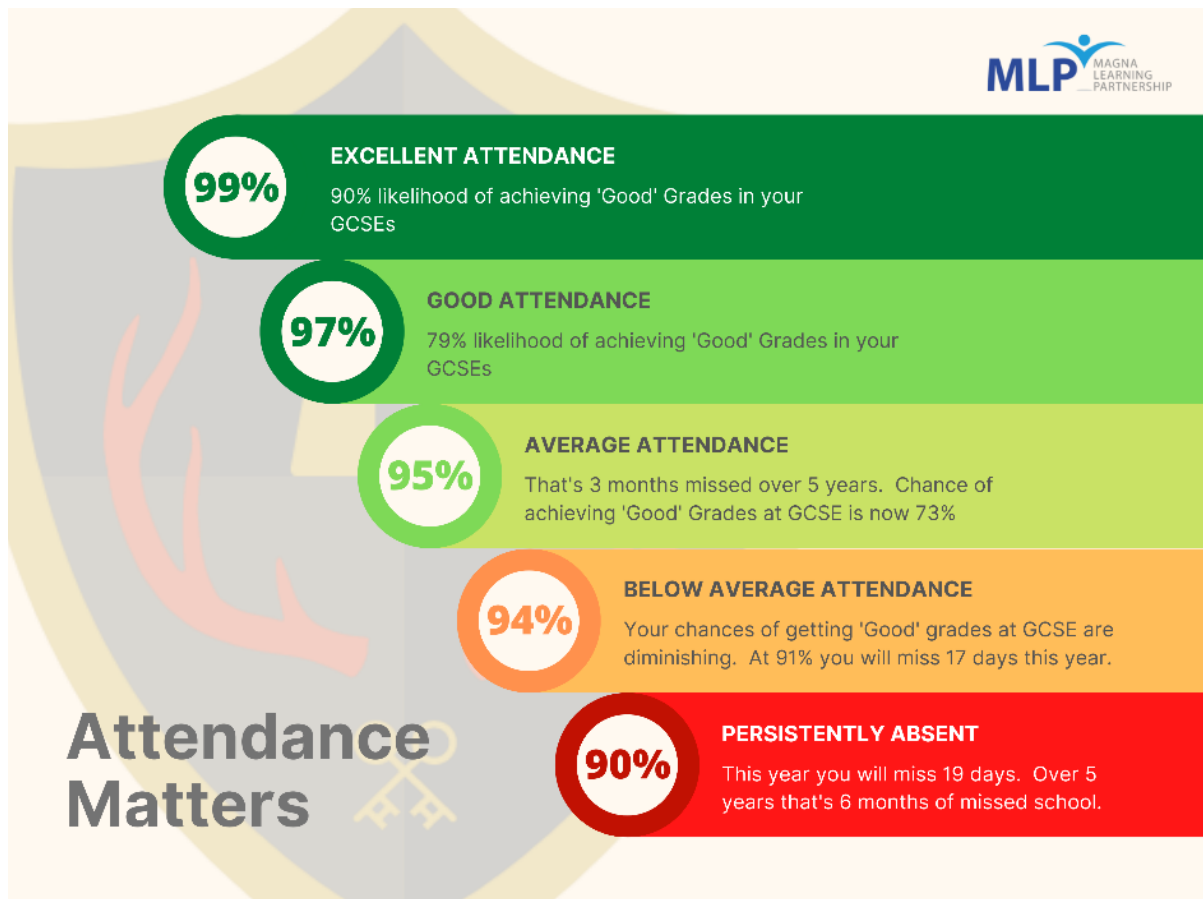
What counts as 'good' attendance?

The Government doesn't set specific attendance targets, but schools are expected to set their own. **An attendance rate of 97% is considered good** at The Trafalgar School at Downton; this allows for children to miss 5 days across the school year.

Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below. That's at least 20 missed school days.

Attendance	Number of days absent	Approx. time missed in 5 years
99%	2 days	10 days
97%	6 days	2 months
95%	9.5 days	3 months
90%	19 days	6 months
85%	28.5 days	9 months
80%	38 days	1 year

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Factors to support good attendance

Building good routines

Having consistent good attendance helps students develop a positive view of school and the importance of attendance. Routines can help families with the busyness of the mornings during the school week. Set an early bedtime to ensure rest for the school day. Follow a night time routine:

- Set a consistent alarm, leaving extra time for unexpected delays
- Lay out clothing and supplies for the next day
- Place school bag and shoes near the door
- Have a back-up plan in case of transportation challenges

The importance of sleep

There are any number of studies show that students with better sleep patterns and sleep routines attend better and achieve better in school. Building good routines and 'bedtimes' is crucial.

Arrival – The importance of punctuality

The first lesson of the day starts at 8.35am. which is preceded by a warning bell at 8.30am. We expect all students to arrive at school by 8:30am. and to be at the classroom for their first lesson before 8.35 am.

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Students must additionally ensure that they are punctual to all lessons as poor punctuality to lessons can result in a truancy late mark.

What happens if a student is late for school?

Students who arrive after 8.35am. are deemed late and must report to the School Reception where a member of staff will record the lateness. Students arriving late without good reason, e.g. a bus issue beyond their control, will be given a lunchtime detention on the same day. Parents will be notified through ClassCharts that a detention has been set.

What happens if a student arrives after 9.00am.?

The am. register will be closed at 9.00am. and an unauthorised absence mark will be recorded.

What absences can be authorised?

The Department for Education (DfE) states that you can only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from the Headteacher.

The following types of absence will be marked as authorised:

- Leave of absence authorised by the Headteacher (such as time off due to bereavement).
- Illness: you must notify your child's school on the morning of their first day of absence.
- Medical or dental appointments, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- Religious observance but only if absence is requested in advance
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence when the family is travelling for occupational purposes.
- Offsite educational activities: this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event. Approval is at the Headteachers discretion.

What absences are not authorised?

Certain types of absence will be marked as unauthorised. Unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher. Time off for holidays is always unauthorised and a fixed penalty notice may be sought.

- Absences where the parents haven't given the school a reason are also recorded as unauthorised.
- If your child is late to school and the registers have closed (after 9.00am.), they will be marked as an unauthorised absence, even if they turn up later in the day.

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What happens if your child's absence is not authorised?

As a parent, it's your responsibility to make sure your child is at school, unless they have a long-term health problem. If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't contacted the school, you'll be contacted by the school to find out why they're absent.

If your child's attendance continues to fall you will be contacted firstly by your child's Tutor, then Head of House, then by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, then by the School Attendance Officer. If your child is persistently absent, you will then be contacted by the Wiltshire Council Local Education Welfare Officer.

They will discuss your child's attendance with you, and help you come up with a plan to make sure they get to school. The emphasis will be on providing support to help you improve your child's attendance. At all times we will 'Listen, understand, empathise and support – but not tolerate'.

You may be asked to sign a Attendance Contract: a voluntary written agreement stating that you will work with the Academy to improve your child's attendance.

Ultimately, if your child continues to miss school, legal action can be taken. Consequences include a parenting order compelling you to do what the court says to improve your child's attendance; a fine of £60, rising to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days; and prosecution, which could lead to a community service order, a fine of up to £2,500, or a custodial sentence of up to three months.

What to do if your child is ill?

If your child is too ill to go to school, you must provide a **detailed** reason for their absence. You can provide this information on ClassCharts.

If the school disputes the authenticity of their illness, they could ask you for medical evidence such as a doctor's note, an appointment card or a copy of their prescription.

Some children miss long or recurrent periods of school due to health issues. In this case, the local council is responsible for them getting a suitable education. This could include home tutoring or a hospital school or teaching service.

How long should your child stay off school with an illness?

The NHS gives the following advice on how long children should stay off school if they are unwell.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

As a general rule, your child should return to school when they feel well enough to do so.

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What is my child suffering with Mental Health difficulties?

As a school we will always support our students and are very aware that some students can struggle to get into school for a variety of reasons, including their mental health. Not being in school can exacerbate anxiety and add to a student's struggles.

In most cases a calm approach at home and in school and a consistent routine help those students to feel settled and more positive about school. Sometimes students need a tough but loving message to get them into school. Once they are through the doors we will support them in whatever way they need.

We also work with external professionals to ensure that every one of our students can achieve and we have an expectation that all of them can attend well and be successful.

With everyone working together, students invariably feel more successful and their attendance improves.