

Improving School Attendance

Information for parents and carers receiving help and support from Southwark Children's Services



It is a legal requirement for you to ensure your children receive a suitable full-time education. We know this is not always easy, and that is why we are here to help.

School attendance is one of the most important parts of a child's healthy development. Even missing a few days

a year can negatively affect your child's achievement. School is also important for social and emotional wellbeing. Getting a good education is one of the best ways of securing a positive future for your child.

The Department for Education requires all social workers and family support workers to prioritise school attendance in their family plans.

Where poor school attendance becomes persistent (usually below 90% for at least 6 weeks), Southwark Council also has a legal obligation to conduct an attendance investigation, and provide help and support to ensure that your children benefit from a full education.

We always seek to resolve the issue of poor attendance voluntarily. **However, it is important that you are aware the council also has a duty to consider whether it should take enforcement action to ensure attendance.**

This could be via the use of parenting contracts, parenting orders, penalty notices and in rare cases, prosecution following an investigation by our **Education Inclusion Team**. The

council will only use these measures as a last resort to prevent serious educational neglect.

I am here to work with you to understand the reasons for poor attendance, and give you and your family the help and support you need.

What will happen next?

Worker's name:
Telephone number:
Email:

I will work with you, your children, and their school to identify and understand the reasons for poor school attendance. We will then agree a plan of help and support to address these factors. Depending on how serious the situation is, we may also ask you to agree a parenting contract with your children's school and the council.

Your plan may include support with other issues affecting your family, such as improving relationships, gaining financial security and ensuring family members are safe from harm.

We know that the reasons for poor school attendance are complex; the solutions not always easy, and that this work may take some time. We will review our plan regularly and if attendance improves, our work together can end and your children's school will continue to monitor attendance.

What happens if I do not consent to help and support?

Unless your children are subject to a child protection plan or other legal order, you have the right to decline help and support to improve attendance.

However, if you do not accept help and support, and attendance does not

improve, I am required to consult with a Senior Welfare Education Officer who may ask you to attend a legal meeting to decide whether to take legal action to improve attendance. The officer will review the help and support that the school and council has provided, and whether you have cooperated with the attendance plan. **I have a duty to provide information on our work to this meeting where requested.**

If your children continue to have poor attendance without a legal justification, you may be committing a criminal offence. This could lead to a Senior Education Welfare Officer interviewing you under caution and ultimately prosecution.

We are committed to working intensively with you to make sure that this does not happen.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information above.

Signed

Print name

Date

Further information and independent advice and guidance on these matters is available at Child Law Advice <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/school-attendance-and-absence/>