

School Attendance – Covid Update September 2020

A very important message for all parents/carers

September 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

This is a message about school attendance.

Fairfax Academy is working in partnership with parents and Birmingham City Council to encourage children back into school following several very difficult months for parents and schools. We would like to thank parents for the work you have done in ensuring your children have received education during this period.

In March 2020 the government made it clear that no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school at that time due to the Covid 19 outbreak. Schools were then closed to all but a specific group of pupils; those of key workers and vulnerable children.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We know that children have missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. ***School attendance is therefore compulsory again from the beginning of the autumn term.***

This means from September 2020 (unless parents are formally notified of a local lockdown where schools are closed), the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability of local authorities to use legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

If you are worried about your child attending school the first port of call is to discuss your concerns with the school directly. The school has specialist staff who may be able to help, and all schools work closely with health and council teams who may also be able to help if needed.

In addition, this is not the time to take your child out of school for a family holiday or other term time leave. It is unlikely that any leave will be authorised by the Head Teacher after so much enforced absence from school. The more your child is in school, the more they will catch up.

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members.

No school or local authority wants to take legal action, and every attempt to resolve parents' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal action is considered.

After so much disruption to your child/ren's education over recent months, the most important thing is that the school and parents work together to get children back into school. The school is ready to listen so please contact them if you have any worries and they will try to help you.

We wish you and your child all the best for the coming academic year.

Kind regards

Education Legal Intervention Team
Birmingham City Council