

# MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 2023 – HALF TERM 1

Welcome back, we hope you had a restful Summer Break. This bulletin is a brief update, please remember to check ESI (Essex Schools Info) for supporting forms and documents you may find useful.

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## Information and Guidance:

### Working Together to Improve School Attendance DfE:

The DfE guidance '[Working Together to Improve school Attendance](#)' published for use from September 2022, remains the key piece of guidance available to help schools, academy trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance, including information on roles and responsibilities. This document replaces all previous guidance on school attendance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities except for the existing statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures.

### DfE Attendance toolkit updates and tips on combating the ambiguity of what is 'too ill to attend'

In addition to the '[Working Together to Improve school Attendance](#)', the DfE have other useful documents schools can access to help encourage improved attendance, including the recently published [Communicating with families to support attendance](#) document and a letter from health professionals to support schools regarding absence related to mild illness which can be found [here](#).



We would like to remind schools that although parents can report their child absent, the authority to authorise an absence remains with the headteacher and/or their designate only. To aid the relationship between school and home, it is important schools communicate with transparency. Setting clear expectations in terms of attendance will alleviate some of the ambiguity around what is considered 'too ill to attend'. We would encourage schools to adopt our newly updated resource as above, encouraging your families to refer to this resource prior to making their decision to keep their child off school, but equally schools can also use this guidance to inform their decision on whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised.

What it's called?	What it's like	Going to school	Getting treatment	More advice
<b>Asthma flare up</b>	Worsening of usual symptoms	➡	Follow your care plan	Stay off school if feeling too unwell
<b>Chicken pox</b>	Rash begins as small, red, flat spots that develop into itchy fluid-filled blisters	➡	Pharmacy	Back to school five days after on-set of the rash, or when all lesions are crusted over
<b>Common cold</b>	Runny nose, sneezing, sore throat	➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
<b>Conjunctivitis</b>	Tearry, red, itchy, painful eye(s)	➡	Pharmacy	Try not to touch eye to avoid spreading*
<b>Flu</b>	Fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose, headache, body aches and pain, exhaustion, sore throat	➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene*
<b>German measles/Rubella</b>	Fever, tiredness, redness, red, rash that starts on the face and spreads downwards	⚫	GP	Back to school four days after the rash has started, if feeling well enough. Please let the school know, as pregnant members of staff may be affected.
<b>Glandular fever</b>	High temperature, swollen glands, sore throat; usually more painful than any before	➡	GP	Attend school while monitoring symptoms
<b>Hand, foot &amp; mouth disease</b>	Fever, sore throat, headache, small painful blisters inside the mouth on tongue and gums (may appear on hands and feet)	➡	GP	Attend school while monitoring symptoms
<b>Head lice</b>	Itchy scalp (may be worse at night)	➡	Pharmacy	Back to school when lessons start or 48 hours after start of antibiotics
<b>Impetigo</b>	Clusters of red bumps or blisters surrounded by area of redness	⚫	GP	Back to school when lessons start or 48 hours after start of antibiotics
<b>Measles</b>	Fever, cough, runny nose, watery inflamed eyes, rash	⚫	GP	Back to school four days from on-set of rash, and if feeling well enough
<b>Ringworm</b>	Red ring shaped rash, may be itchy, rash may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty	➡	Pharmacy	Back to school after first treatment
<b>Scabies</b>	Itching rash, commonly between fingers, wrists, elbows, arms	➡	GP	Back to school after first treatment
<b>Scarlet fever</b>	Fever, unwell, red tongue, sandpaper rash	⚫	GP	Exclusion period during first 24 hours of antibiotic*
<b>Shingles</b>	Pain, itching, or tingling along the affected nerve pathway, blister-type rash	⚫	GP	Only stay off school if rash is weeping and cannot be covered
<b>Sickness bug/diarrhoea</b>	Stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea	➡	Pharmacy	Contact GP if symptoms persist after 48 hours
<b>Threadworms</b>	Intense itchiness around anus	➡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
<b>Tonsillitis/ Strep throat</b>	Intense sore throat for more than 1 day	➡	Pharmacy	See GP if temperature lasts more than 48 hours or cannot swallow. Only need to stay off school if feeling too unwell
<b>Whooping cough</b>	Violent coughing, with a 'whoop'	⚫	GP	Exclusion period during first five days of antibiotics
<b>Covid</b>		⚫		Visit <a href="#">www.heschools.gov.uk</a> for latest guidance

➡ Go to school; if needed, get treatment as required  
 ⚫ Some restrictions for school attendance  
 ⚫ Don't go to school and see the GP

\*Attend school while monitoring symptoms. This information is a guide and has been checked by health professionals. If you are unsure about your child's wellbeing, we recommend you contact your pharmacy or GP to check.

Should my child go to school/nursery today?  
 Hertfordshire and West Essex Healthier Together for further information  
<https://www.heschools.gov.uk/parentsocers>

Working in partnership with  



## Keeping children safe in education 2023:

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) statutory guidance for schools and colleges should now be used in place of the previous 2022 version.

### **Early Intervention:**

The first two weeks of the Autumn Term are pivotal in settling pupils into school and embedding strong foundations for a solid and positive start to the Academic year. A study recently found that “Overall, around 36% of Year 1-6 and 58% of Year 7-11 pupils who missed school at the start of the year went on to miss at least 10% of sessions across the whole academic year”. The full article can be read [here](#).

Identifying potential barriers to attendance at the earliest opportunity is key in preventing issues from becoming entrenched. We suggest schools adopt effective attendance tracking mechanisms and that families are contacted as soon as attendance becomes a concern.

Where letters were previously issued to families from the PA (Persistent Absenteeism) cohort in Half Term 6, at the first unauthorised absence, it is recommended they are invited to attend a school attendance meeting to discuss any barriers and establish an appropriate support plan. This will allow for timely intervention.

### **Statutory Reminders:**

#### **Unauthorised Leave of Absence (September):**

Due to the importance of pupils settling into school at the commencement of the school year, Penalty Notices may also be issued if there have been at least 6 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence during the first two (calendar) weeks of September due to a term-time holiday. Please refer to the [Essex Code of Conduct](#) for more information. Our template letters for unauthorised holidays and leave of absence are available [here](#), and will help make sure you have everything covered should you decide legal action is appropriate.

### **Children Missing in Education:**

Schools must report any child who fails to take up their allocated school place in September 2023. This should be done within 10 school days through completion and submission of the Missing Pupil Checklist. This checklist specifically lists ‘A pupil fails to take up their place at the start of the academic year and the whereabouts of the young person is unknown’ as a reason for submitting the form.

### **Targeting Support Meetings:**

The Attendance Specialist Team will continue to hold Targeting Support Meetings with schools, using attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance to agree targeted actions and signposting to support services where appropriate. In preparation for such meetings, we will continue to request that schools ensure their PA tracking sheet is available to allow us to effectively hold conversations, and record decisions around next steps. We also request schools provide current attendance data to help focus the meeting. If you would like to discuss holding a termly meeting with a member of your quadrant team, please see the appropriate contact details listed below, we look forward to hearing from you. The Attendance Specialist team will also be reviewing priority visits for the Autumn term and contacting your schools accordingly.

### **Reduced Timetables:**

The Education Access Team are responsible for monitoring children placed on a reduced timetable. Following a review of the number of notifications received last academic year, it has been recognised that the system for reporting reduced timetables is both time and labour intensive for schools.

Therefore, as of now (September 2023), schools will be requested to complete a half termly data return, to include all children on a reduced timetable. Schools will be asked to report on start dates, number of hours attending, and provide additional information pertaining to vulnerable groups. The data capture will be managed through an online Achieve Form. Schools will be asked to submit the report at the start of every half term, reporting on the previous half term’s data. There will be no requirement on schools to report any changes to a child’s timetable outside of the reporting period.

The first return of academic year 2023 to 2024 will be due after October half term. Further communication ahead of the first reporting period will be made to confirm reporting arrangements and timescales for completion. Please send any queries to: [APAttendance@essex.gov.uk](mailto:APAttendance@essex.gov.uk)

### **Essex schools Info Link Update and Attendance Resource Pack**

ESI has been updated over the Summer, please ensure the most up-to-date guidance, EPHA model attendance policy, leave of absence form and template letters are being used as appropriate.

We are also excited to introduce a range of new attendance resources that have been developed by the Essex Marketing Team in collaboration with the Attendance Specialist Team. These resources can be printed and displayed to help raise the profile of attendance within your school and include a range of pupil friendly posters and bookmarks. Please also note the 'Lost Learning Hours' and 'NHS advice on childhood illnesses' have also been updated and can be found [here](#).

### **Attendance Specialist Team Training Workshops:**

All workshop sessions will continue to be held online via Teams and are free for schools. Sessions can be booked via [Education Essex Online Booking System](#). This link will take you to instructions on how to register an account for your school. If you already have an account, please click 'Register/Log In' to be able to browse full details and book your space.

If you would like any support with creating an account or booking on training, please contact the Workforce Development team by emailing [WorkforceDevelopment@essex.gov.uk](mailto:WorkforceDevelopment@essex.gov.uk) or calling 03330 139 891.

### **Attendance Essentials Training:**

Our first workshop of the year will be held on Friday 6 October 2023 and is designed for new Attendance Officers, those new to Essex, or Attendance Officers who would just like to refresh their basic knowledge. The training will focus on the basic elements of managing attendance, including information on data, attendance interventions and processes including school-based meetings.

Friday 6 October 2023 – 11-12.30pm

### **Team Contacts:**

**North East Team** (incl. Clacton, Colchester, Harwich)  
[neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:neattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk) / 0333 032 2968, option 1

**Mid Team** (incl. Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon)  
[midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:midattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk) / 0333 032 2968 option 2

**South Team** (incl. Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford)  
[southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:southattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk) / 0333 032 2968, option 3

**West Team** (incl. Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford)  
[westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk](mailto:westattendanceteam@essex.gov.uk) / 0333 032 2968, option 4

### **Early Help Drop-In Sessions**

**Sessions designed to give partners who work with children, young people & families the chance to discuss anonymised cases, gain peer support, be signposted to advice, and help to answer general questions**

**MID:** [Click here to join the meeting](#) – Wednesday's - 12-1pm

**NORTH EAST** [Click here to join the meeting](#) – Tuesday's – 3.30-4.30pm

**SOUTH** [Click here to join the meeting](#) – Wednesday's – 12.30-1.30pm

**WEST** [Click here to join the meeting](#) - Thursdays - 12-1pm

