

Popular misconceptions about attendance records.

Over recent terms we have heard parents discuss many different issues concerning attendance, authorisation of attendance and local authority fines. The following is an attempt to get some of the issues straight.

Buxton Infant school wants you to send your child into school even when they are ill.

FALSE: If your child is properly poorly then the best place for them is obviously at home. We will always phone you if your child is taken ill at school. We will also happily administer calpol according to our medicine policy if you bring some to the school office and complete a parent permission form. Attendance of 95% over the school year can still be achieved with **9 days absence for sickness or medical appointments** over the year. Clearly though, if your child has missed school for other unauthorised reasons it's tricky to maintain that good level of attendance when they really are ill.

If my child is absent for more than one day I need to let school know each day.

TRUE: In order to authorise absence from school we need to be informed by a parent or carer each day and the reason for the absence given. Unfortunately we are unable to authorise absence if we don't hear from you.

The fining system for term holidays is a money making scheme for the school.

FALSE: The only reason that the governing body refers unauthorised term time holiday absence to the local authority is to try to deter term time holiday and maximise school attendance. Children should aim to be in school 95% of the time over the year (9 full day's absence in the year). Fines incurred are retained by the local authority NOT the school.

Children don't need to be in school until the term in which they are five

TRUE: Some parents make the decision to send their children to school on part time basis until the term in which they are five. On the rare occurrence that this is requested it is for summer born children. These arrangements are made with a school **before** the child is admitted to the reception class so that the teachers know when they will be attending and can maximise learning opportunities.

School attendance in reception doesn't matter because the children aren't five.

FALSE: It is important for all children to establish patterns of good attendance (95%) from the beginning of their education. The better the child's attendance the more likely they are to secure good progress, be happy in school and form good relationships with children and adults. It is true that the DFE don't collect attendance data until the term in which the child is five (due to some summer born parents having arranged part time timetable from September) but school does.

I can bring my child into school later in the day even if I have phoned them in sick earlier.

TRUE: Sometimes an ill child can pick up by lunch time after some more sleep and some calpol. It is absolutely fine to bring them into school later in the day.

I've had a letter telling me that my holiday hasn't been authorised but I won't get fined because it's only two days.

FALSE: If you have received a letter from the governors telling you that your application has not been authorised you **WILL** receive a penalty notice from the LA. This will be the case even if it's two days **OR** another school has told you that won't be referred. Unfortunately, although guidance about not authorising term time holidays is clear, different schools have decided on their own thresholds for referral to the LA. Buxton Infant school has a policy of referral for unauthorised holidays regardless of the number of days.

It's better to be honest and tell school if you're taking them out-you may be fined anyway

TRUE: An absence will be recorded as unauthorised at any time that we do not have a concrete reason why your child is not in school. If your child is telephoned in sick over a number of days but then returns to school and tells us that they have been on holiday the absence will be unauthorised and the absence **will be referred**. Please consider what kind of role model you want to be to your child. Asking them to lie about absence is not a good thing to ask any child to do.

School will tell social care if your child's attendance is poor.

TRUE and FALSE: We will **ALWAYS** work with you to try and help you get your child to school if you have difficult circumstances. On a **temporary** basis we can pick children up and drop them off and we can work closely with you if your child is reluctant to come to school for any reason. We will **ALWAYS** make you aware if attendance is dropping or below **90%** (persistent absenteeism) and it is always possible to get your child out of this category by the end of the school year if we make improvements soon enough. **Persistent absenteeism is 19 or more full day's absence over a whole school year-this is almost 4 school weeks absence.**

If, in spite of regular support with transport to school and other help, your child's attendance remains at persistent absentee level and your child is very regularly absent without a confirmed medical diagnosis then we do have a statutory duty to involve the educational welfare officer. This is a last resort **BUT** you have **legal obligation** to have you child in school.