

PERSISTENT ABSENCE

The Department for Education is changing the definition of “persistent absence” to deal with the reality of pupil absenteeism in schools and its impact on their learning.

The Department is reducing the threshold at which a pupil is defined as “persistently absent” to 15 per cent, down from 20 per cent now.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. Research also shows that habits of poor attendance in Primary School continue into High School.

The way the figures are calculated throughout the year means that some children will hit the threshold in the early part of the school year with only a relatively small number of absences, as the table below shows

THRESHOLDS AT WHICH A CHILD WILL BE CLASSED AS A PERSISTENT ABSENTEE

Deadline	No of school sessions missed (half days)
By October half term	7
By the Christmas holiday	14
By February half term	20
By the Easter holiday	25
By May half term	31
By the Summer holiday	38

As you can see, over the whole year, missing 38 sessions (19 days) will be enough to trigger a serious cause for concern, and if a child has missed 7 sessions (3.5 days) in the first half term, they are in line for that.

Governors are therefore reminding parents that:

- All cases of absence due to genuine illness must be reported to the school office on the first day of absence
- Governors will not authorise any holiday taken in term time
- The Education Welfare Officer will be monitoring the attendance of any child, where absence hits the new threshold.