

Advice to parents on absences for less serious medical reasons

The majority of absences from school are parentally condoned. This advice mainly concerns repeated absences for less serious medical reasons.

The view of the Department for Education attendance expert is that *“some think they’re being a good parent by keeping their child off school, if in doubt send them to school. There is a difference between minor ailments and the sort of illness that warrants a day off”*

Department for Education guidelines

What is meant by a minor ailment? A useful rule of thumb is whether the illness would keep parents and teachers away from work.

Seeking medical evidence

When a parent contacts school, it is reasonable for the school to ask the nature of the illness, ask the parent the expected length of the absence and to make arrangements for the parent to keep school staff fully informed of developments.

School have the right to consider whether to accept the parent/carers position with regard to medical absence and to address incidences of recurring absence where illness is given as a reason.

Guidance on applying the Pupil Education Registration Regulations

The school may ask the parent for additional evidence such as sight of prescription medication or an appointment card.

10 sessions or more of illness where there are concerns can result in the family doctor being contacted with parents’ permission for their opinion on the issue.

ACE-Advisory Centre for Education (body giving independent advice to parents)

ACE states:

“Only the school, not parents can authorise absence. Schools should not routinely ask for doctors’ letters. However if the absence is long term or REPEATED they may want proof that your child is genuinely unwell and unable to attend school. Keep copies of any appointment letters or medical reports”.

FACT: if children are taken away for a two week holiday every year and have an average number of days off for sickness and appointments, by the time they leave school aged 16 they will have missed an entire year of school!!!!