



Education Attendance Team

Fast Track Intervention



Introduction

This leaflet is intended for parents and/or carers (hereafter referred to as parents) who are brought into the Fast Track Intervention process due to non/poor attendance of a pupil at school.

The leaflet is intended as a guide to the law issued by the Children, Young People and Learning Department, and does not have legal force.

The aim of Fast Track is to ensure that schools and the Education Attendance Team deal with attendance cases quickly and in the most effective way to get the pupil back into school.

The Fast Track framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent.

Fast Track involves engaging the parent and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 8 weeks).

Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. (Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996) Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time frame, legal proceedings are initiated in the Magistrates Court.

The Fast Track Process

Schools identify pupils with attendance below agreed criteria. (Usually those with attendance of 90% and below, with the majority of absences marked as unauthorised)

The Education Attendance Team writes to the parents of the identified pupil inviting them to attend a meeting in school. This is a relatively formal letter in that it stipulates the legal implications/responsibilities in respect of their child's absence from school. If the parents fail to attend the meeting, legal proceedings may be initiated without further warning.

AT THE MEETING:

Parents are advised that legal action can be instigated at this time. However, if the pupil and parents will agree to address the poor attendance immediately, the prosecution can be deferred for 8 weeks. They then have the opportunity to give reasons for the poor attendance. The school will attempt to resolve any school-based issues raised.

The only statutory defences to the offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 are:

- The child was absent due to medical reasons
- The LEA failed to provide transport when required to do so
- The absences were due to Religious Observance
- The absences were 'authorised by the school', or due to an unavoidable cause

Pupil and parents are informed that a significant improvement in attendance must be demonstrated during the 8-week period.

Pupil and parents are then asked to sign an acknowledgment that they are participating in Fast Track

After four weeks:

The pupil's attendance is checked. If this shows the appropriate improvement, the parents will be informed by letter. If, however, there are more than four half-day absences then legal action will be commenced.

On completion of eight weeks:

The pupil's attendance is again checked. If the attendance has met the Fast Track criteria of showing a significant improvement, parents will be informed of this in writing. If, however, there is insufficient improvement during the 8-week period, legal action will be commenced.

Following an improvement and a decision not to proceed to court, if the pupil's attendance subsequently deteriorates, the school will re-refer to the Education Attendance Team who, after making relevant enquiries, may instigate legal action.

Your child missing school can:

- Disrupt their own learning opportunities and that of other pupils
- Affect friendship patterns with peers
- Encourage disaffection and harm longer term prospects

Your child must not be away from school:

- To look after brothers or sisters
- To visit relatives
- To mind the house
- To have a long weekend
- To go on a shopping trip
- To celebrate a birthday or special occasion

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they:

- Disrupt your child's learning pattern
- Can affect examination and test results
- Could lead to a Penalty Notice or legal action being taken against you

School leaving age

A young person reaches the end of compulsory school age **on the last Friday in June in the school year during which he/she becomes 16**. Although your child will be issued with a National Insurance Number, several months prior to this date, he/she is not able to leave school and take up employment until then.

Further information

Useful information is available from:

- [The Department for Education on GOV.UK](#) where there is specific information for parents
- [The Children's Legal Centre](#), Tel 0345 345 4345