

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am writing to you from the new Attendance Support Team at Cognus on behalf of the London Borough of Sutton.

All schools in Sutton now have an allocated Local Authority Education Welfare Officer who are working closely with the Strategic Attendance Leads in all schools to support them in their work to improve attendance across the borough.

This year all local authorities are working towards the new duties in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance from The Department for Education in order to support to improve overall attendance. The new duties include the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Targeting Support Meetings: To hold termly conversations with schools, using their attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils.</p> | <p>Communication and advice: To regularly bring schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between schools and trusts within the area.</p> |
| <p>Multi-disciplinary support for families: To provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance.</p> | <p>Legal intervention: To take forward attendance legal intervention (using the full range of parental responsibility measures) where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.</p> |

More details on the new guidance can be found here - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Local authorities are expected to have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services. At Cognus we have built strong relationships with Early Help, the Local Police, the School Nurse Team as well local voluntary organisations in the borough.

Some of the strategies in place in Sutton include:

- A Truancy Sweep with the School Police Team
- Termly Attendance Panel involving all strategic heads of services to problem solve cases of poor attendance where interventions put in place have not had an impact.
- Streamlining of access to educational support for children who are absent from school for medical reasons, where medical evidence has been provided, as schools have a duty to inform the local authority when a child misses education for 15 days or more for medical reasons.

Education

Every child in the United Kingdom has the right to a full-time education, so that they can develop to their fullest potential and gain important skills that prepare them for the future, increasing their life choices.

There are lots of benefits to attending school regularly, including:

- Improved education attainment and progression
- Positive development of friendships
- Positive development of social skills
- Positive development of teamwork
- Positive development of life skills
- Positive development of cultural awareness
- Identification of career pathways

The Law

The law entitles every child of [compulsory school age](#) to a suitable full-time education. Parents/carers have a duty, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child of compulsory school age (5 to 16) receives an efficient full-time education either by attendance at school or otherwise, and so share in the responsibility of ensuring good and regular attendance. It is the legal responsibility of all parents/carers to ensure their child receives that education by full-time attendance at school or otherwise.

The role of Cognus Attendance Support Team: to support schools in their consideration of the best approach, based on the four duties, to working together with families to improve school attendance and overcoming barriers.

Please follow this link [When to keep your child off school for illness](#) for useful chart on Cognus Attendance Support Team website.

Further information on when it is advised to keep your child off school for common illnesses can be found on the NHS website [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Tips for parents on good attendance

It is important to establish regular school attendance habits from the start. This will influence attendance in the future.

- Preparation – help your child to get everything ready the night before.
- Establish a good bedtime routine – when a child gets enough sleep it can make mornings less of a struggle.
- Allow time to travel to school – rushing can be very unsettling for your child and is not a good start to their day.

If you have concerns with your child's attendance, remember you are not alone. By working together to find solutions, little problems won't develop into big ones. Talk to your child's teacher and school attendance officer to resolve any issues early. School will always be there to help support you and your child.

For more information or support with any attendance issues, please visit our website:

<https://www.cognus.org.uk/services/attendance-support-team/for-families/>

Yours sincerely,

Sadie Samal, Attendance Support Team Lead, Cognus