

Every Day Counts.....

Somerset County Council is committed to providing all children with the best start in life and works hard to ensure that all children in Somerset attend school regularly.

Reducing absence from school is a key priority both for Somerset and the Government. The majority of parents in Somerset ensure that their children attend school regularly.



Tackling Absence:

- Increases children and young people's opportunities;
- Increases children's attainment and achievement;
- Makes children safer;
- Reduces anti-social behaviour;
- Reduces the risk of children becoming involved in crime;
- Reduces the risk of children getting involved in alcohol and substance misuse;
- Makes Somerset a safer place for everyone.

Further Information:

Somerset County Council's Education Attendance Officers offer support and advice about your child's school attendance.

To get in contact with your Education Attendance Officer please contact your child's school or contact Somerset Direct on:

0845 345 9122

The Education Attendance Officer

Information for Parents and Carers

Produced by the Children & Young People's Directorate, Somerset County Council.

For additional copies, please visit:

www.somerset.gov.uk

This leaflet was produced in September 2010



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Introduction

Education Attendance Officers (EAOs) help to ensure that all children attend regularly and punctually the school at which they are registered.

The Education Attendance Officer

Each Somerset school has an allocated EAO who will visit each of his/her schools on a regular basis in order to inspect registers, meet with teachers and identify any children who might be experiencing attendance difficulties. Should the school's own attempts to improve a child's attendance not be successful and if there is not a satisfactory reason for the child's absences then the school may refer a child to its EAO. The EAO will then act as a link between home and school, working together with teachers and parents to assist the child's rapid return to regular attendance. (In this leaflet where reference is made to parents this should be taken to mean parents and carers.)

Supporting Schools

As well as working with individual children and families EAOs also support schools to improve overall attendance.

Guidance and advice on school attendance policies are given, Attendance Audits are undertaken, staff training is offered and materials on attendance matters are provided.



Working with Children and Families

When a school refers a pupil to the EAO he/she will contact the parents. Should a meeting be considered necessary this will usually take place either at the family home or at school. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the reasons for the child's non-attendance and to agree on a plan of action which will lead to the child's rapid return to regular attendance.

The EAO may:

- advise and assist the parents on specific issues which may be causing concern;
- set up a programme of support for the child;
- arrange a further meeting involving staff from the child's school;
- involve another agency, for example Children's Social Care, Health, other Local Authority Services, etc.

The ultimate aim of the EAO's intervention will always be to encourage and enable the parents to ensure their child's rapid return to regular attendance.

In a small number of cases parents are unable or unwilling to ensure that their child returns to regular attendance. In these circumstances, the parents could be subject to a penalty notice fine of £50 or could be prosecuted in a Magistrates Court and fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisoned for up to 3 months. A Court may also consider making the parents the subject of a Parenting Order.

Working Together

There may be a variety of complex reasons why a child experiences attendance problems such as family breakdown, financial difficulties, health issues, bullying, learning difficulties and so on. In order to tackle these problems successfully EAOs will always aim to work together with professionals from a variety of other services and agencies, for example, GPs, child psychiatrists, social workers, teachers, the police, etc.

Other Education Attendance Officer Responsibilities

School-Age Employment

EAOs monitor and enforce the regulations relating to the employment of children. EAOs help ensure that children who work do so safely and legally. EAOs will also visit businesses/premises which may be employing children.

Child Protection

EAOs have a very important role to play in ensuring that the County Council's Child Protection procedures function effectively. EAOs attend Child Protection meetings concerning children with whom they are working and may act as the Education representative when a child's school is unable to attend a meeting, for example, during school holidays.

Missing Children

EAOs work with the Children Missing from Education (CME) Team to trace children whose parents move into or out of the county and fail to register their children at a new school.