



Information regarding compulsory school attendance

1. What does compulsory school attendance mean?

Compulsory school attendance means that children are obliged to attend a school.

A child is officially obliged to attend school in the year in which he or she reaches the age of six by 30 September. Compulsory school attendance always remains in force over a 10-year period. At first, children attend primary school (grades 1–4) and after that secondary school (grades 5–10).

For young people who are not involved in vocational training, compulsory school attendance lasts until the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 18.

For young people who are involved in vocational training, compulsory school attendance lasts as long as a vocational training relationship exists that has been commenced before the age of 21.

Pupils are obligated not only to attend lessons regularly but also to participate in other mandatory school events (e.g. school festivals, school trips, sports lessons, swimming lessons, etc.). In addition, they are obligated to participate actively in lessons, doing preparatory and follow-up work, and also to do homework.

You, as parents, are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school.

In the event of illness, if your child is below the age of 18, you must notify the school immediately (no later than on the second school day), either verbally or in writing.

Adult students can notify the school themselves.

It is subsequently necessary for you to notify the school in writing of the reason why your child was not able to attend classes. If the pupil has been or is ill, a statement mentioning “illness” is adequate. The type of illness in question need not be specified.

If there are any doubts as to whether a child is not attending school for reasons of health, the school can require that the parents submit a medical certificate or, in the case of adult students, that the students submit one themselves.

Reasonable doubts may arise, for example, through frequent unexcused absences.

School holiday dates must be adhered to, i.e. the holidays may not be arbitrarily shortened or extended. Before and after the holidays, leave of absence is prohibited in practically all cases. Exceptions to this rule may only be made for substantial reasons.

An extension of the school holidays or cost savings for outward or return journeys in the case of a vacation trip do not constitute substantial reasons.

2. What happens if the obligation regarding school attendance is violated?

If your child fails to attend school despite the fact that he or she is not ill and, if no other substantial reason applies either, you as parents (or the students themselves, if they are of adult age) will first of all be requested in writing by the school to excuse the absences concerned by giving a reason for them.



After that, the teaching staff will try to have an educational impact on the pupils (e.g. by giving them advice).

You, as parents, are asked to ensure that your child attends classes regularly and also participates in other school events. The attention of adult students is drawn to their obligation to attend lessons. It should, furthermore, be noted that there is the option of having the police or the public order office forcibly conduct the pupils to school or that of misdemeanour proceedings being initiated.

If misdemeanour proceedings are initiated, the parents or students will be given the opportunity to voice their opinions in the course of a formal hearing to be conducted within a two-week period. If the prerequisites for a penalty notice are met, a fine of up to €1,000 may be imposed.

In the case of adults, an unpaid fine will be recovered initially by means of enforcement. Further costs (reminder fees, the bailiff's fees) will be incurred as a result of this. If enforcement should not succeed, enforcement detention can be ordered by the Court. In the case of young people and adolescents, instead of payment of the fine a motion can be filed for them to do a number of hours of community service work. This will be ordered by the Court. If the community service is not accomplished, a motion for juvenile detention can be filed.

If you are uncertain or have any queries, speak to the school.

Further information on the topic of compulsory school attendance is to be found on the website of the Münster Bezirksregierung (district government) (www.brms.nrw.de/go/schulpflicht).