Can my child have a day off school?
The headteacher of your child’s school should only authorise the absence if your child is genuinely ill and unable to attend school. In exceptional circumstances, he/she may agree to authorise other absences, such as absence due to a family bereavement.
The examples given below are not exceptional circumstances:
- to take him/her out for new shoes
- to collect relatives from the airport
- to care for other family members
- to interpret for me
- because it is his or her birthday

What happens if the head teacher refuses to authorise the absence?
The absence will be recorded as ‘unauthorised’, and this will be noted on your child’s attendance record. The school will also be required to make a referral to the Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) if your child has high levels of unauthorised absences. You may as a consequence be liable to legal action being taken by the Local Authority, which could mean a prosecution in Magistrates Court or the issue of a penalty notice, payable by each parent for each child.

As my child’s parent/carer, why can I not authorise the absence?
It is for the head teacher of your child’s school to consider whether the pupil’s absences are justified (The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 as amended).

It is important that parent/carers contact schools as soon as their child is ill and follow this up with written notification of the reason for absence when their child returns to school.

The school will be required to investigate all cases of pupils who have high levels of absences.

If my child is absent from school on a regular basis, what will happen?
If your child is genuinely ill, and there is more than an average level of absence, it may be wise to obtain confirmation that he/she is unfit for school from your GP, or provide evidence of any prescribed medication.

If the absence is considered unjustified, the school will contact you to discuss the situation and agree measures for reducing the absences.

In the event that your child has excessive absences from school that are not supported with medical evidence, the school will be expected to make a referral to the AASSA. You may as a consequence be liable to legal action being taken by the Local Authority.
If meeting with the school doesn’t bring about improvement, what next?
If the absence appears to result from school-related difficulties and the issue has not been resolved through consultation with the class teacher/form tutor, it will be advisable to contact a senior member of school staff to discuss your concerns and consider how the situation can be resolved. It is also possible to contact the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies for advice on school issues.

From time to time, pupils can experience problems at school due to:
- bullying
- learning difficulties
- friendship problems
- relationships with staff
- initial difficulties in settling in new situations

Pupils may also bring into school concerns about family issues, such as illness or bereavement. It is important that schools are made aware of such issues. All of these concerns can be managed sensitively and successfully, when schools and families work together.

Should additional support be deemed to be appropriate, the school will be asked to assess the situation and complete a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form, which will highlight any problems experienced by your child. The assessment will be done with your agreement and this form will allow your child’s situation to be discussed by a multi-agency panel of professionals, in order to identify additional support.

What do I do if my child refuses to attend school because he/she is being bullied?
In the first instance, you should remain calm and get all the details from your child. If your child remains anxious following this sensitive discussion with you, the first line of enquiry should be his/her class teacher/tutor, who will make every effort to resolve the difficulty in school.

If this fails, and you feel that the problem is more complex, you can ask to meet with the head teacher (primary school), or head of year/head teacher (secondary school).

As a legal requirement all schools will have an anti-bullying policy. You may request that the school provide you with a copy. If your child is affected by bullying and needs additional support, the school will be asked to assess the situation and complete a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) form. It is extremely important that your child remains in school whilst issues relating to bullying are investigated and appropriate action taken.
Will the Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP) help me to get my child into school?
A wide range of interventions are adopted by the AASSA. The AAP will work with you and the school to try to address the cause(s) of the non/poor attendance.

AAP’s can also offer support on making referrals to outside agencies, when problems are complex or specific (e.g. drugs, mental health, severe social difficulties etc.) Most of these services may be accessible via a CAF referral.

AAP’s liaise between home and school, providing support and advice where necessary but it is the responsibility of the child’s parent/carer to ensure that the child attends school on a regular basis.

How will I know if my child is truanting?
If your child is of secondary school age, you should make a point of asking to see his/her contact book/homework diary every evening and signing the book at the end of the week. In this way, you will know what homework they should be doing and whether they have attended lessons.

Some schools operate a ‘first day absence calling procedure’ whereby either by text or voice messaging, the parent/carer is contacted if their child is not at school. Other schools permit parents/carers to have online access to the school’s website to check if their child is in school on that day. You may wish to check if your child’s school operates any of these systems.

If your child is absent from school, you will be contacted by the school to provide an explanation for your child’s absence. If your child has been absent without explanation for ten school days or more, this will automatically result in a referral to the AASSA.

Medway Council operates truancy patrols in partnership with the police. If your child is stopped by the truancy patrol and they do not provide an acceptable reason for their absence, they may be returned to school. You will be informed should this occur.

If you suspect that your child is truanting from school, you are advised to contact a member of school staff responsible for attendance issues (attendance officer / class teacher / head of year) at the school to ensure that your child is attending. In cases of persistent truancy the school may agree to place your child on an attendance report to monitor their attendance.

What happens if I cannot control my child?
The law specifies that it is the responsibility of the parent/carers to ensure that their child/children attend school regularly and punctually. In law, parental failure to ensure a child’s regular attendance at school is treated as an absolute offence and defences can only be presented in relation to the child
and not the parent/carer. This means that parent/carers will be held liable and at risk of prosecution if their child is not attending school on a regular basis. The Local Authority only uses legal action as a last resort, and parent/carers will be supported to ensure that their child attends school regularly by offering guidance on difficulties resulting in poor/non-attendance.

It is important that positive habits relating to regular school attendance e.g. being organised at the start of the day and arriving at school on time are formed at a very early age. If your child is generally beyond your control, there are support agencies, which may be in a position to counsel your child to uncover the underlying reason for their unacceptable behaviour or to offer family support.

**Will I get taken to court if my child does not attend school?**
If your child’s absence from school is unacceptable and fails to improve, despite involvement by the school and AAP, consideration will be given by the Local Authority to progress the matter to court or through the issuing of a Penalty Notice (PN).

Each case will be considered individually. Legal action will be taken in cases of persistent poor attendance where the parent/carer has not co-operated or despite the AAP offering support/guidance this has not resulted in a parent/carer ensuring that their child is attending school regularly.

**What will happen if my child is frequently late for school?**
Getting to school punctually every day and in time for registration is an important part of the school day. Your child will miss out on important learning, which could affect their achievement. They don’t have the social time to settle into class. It can be embarrassing for them, and they may disrupt the rest of the class.

If your child arrives after the school register closes, the session is classed as an unauthorised absence. High levels of unauthorised absence can result in a referral to the AAP, and legal action may be taken against you, or you could be subject to a penalty notice.

**What can you do?**
- Find out what time the school starts, and how long it takes for your child to get there
- Have a regular routine for the start of each day
- Help your child get their clothes and equipment ready before they go to bed
- Set a reasonable bedtime to make sure they get enough sleep
- Get your child to school on time. If they start late they have a bad start to the day.
What will happen if I want to take my child on holiday during term time?
There are 38 weeks in the year when schools are open, and 14 weeks when
families can take holidays. Taking your child out of school during term time for
holidays is likely to impact on their attainment. Government Guidelines
prohibit the taking of holiday during term time for anything other than
exceptional circumstances. It is the headteacher that will decide if the request
for holiday meets the exceptional circumstances criteria.

If your child takes unauthorised holidays or is absent for longer than the time
agreed by your child’s headteacher, this absence will be recorded as
unauthorised. This may result in:
- Your child losing their school place
- You receiving a penalty notice for each parent/carer per child
- You being subject to legal action by the authority that could result in a
  fine of up to £2500 per child.

What can I do if I want to make a complaint about my child’s school?
Complaints about schools are dealt with by the schools themselves. The
procedure within the school will normally include an escalation whereby your
complaint is considered by the Governors.