PSA SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN

Welcome to the PSA safeguarding bulletin. These will be sent out regularly with the latest news. It is our collective responsibility to keep your children safe, in and out of school, from any harm. We would encourage you to speak to your children regularly about the items featured in this bulletin. Thank you in advance for your support in promoting these messages.

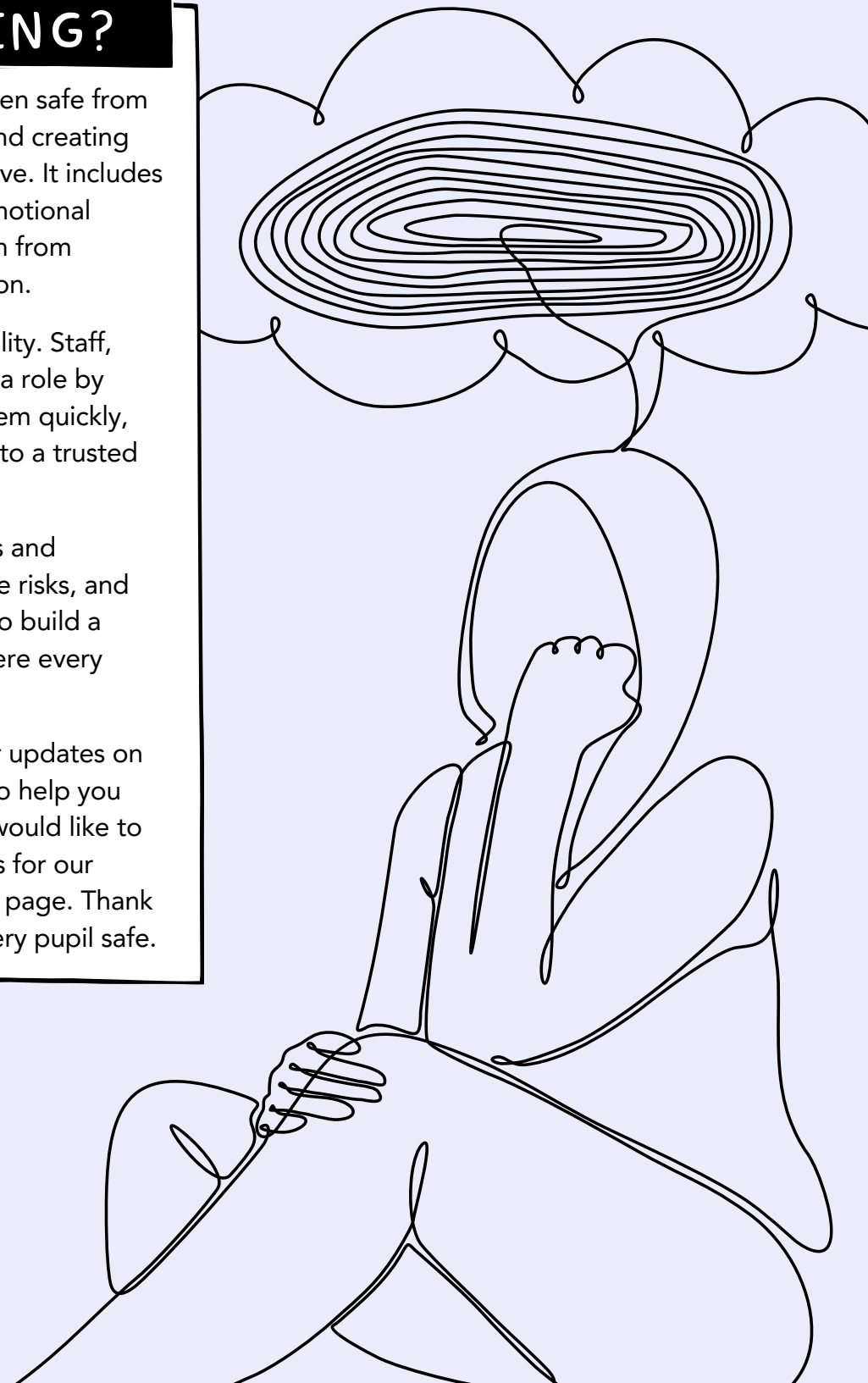
WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING?

Safeguarding means keeping children safe from harm, promoting their wellbeing, and creating an environment where they can thrive. It includes not only physical safety, but also emotional health, online safety, and protection from bullying, exploitation or radicalisation.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Staff, parents, carers, and visitors all play a role by staying alert to concerns, raising them quickly, and encouraging children to speak to a trusted adult if they feel worried.

As a school, we follow clear policies and procedures to prevent harm, reduce risks, and respond effectively. We also work to build a culture of respect and kindness where every child feels supported and valued.

These newsletters will share regular updates on safeguarding and practical advice to help you support your child at home. If you would like to talk to someone, the contact details for our Safeguarding Team are on the final page. Thank you for working with us to keep every pupil safe.



TERM-TIME ABSENCE: HONESTY MATTERS

We understand that families have different circumstances and that, on occasion, children may need to be absent from school. However, parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure regular attendance and to provide accurate and honest information about any absence.

Taking children out of school during term time, particularly for holidays, can have a significant impact on their education. Even a few days away can mean missing important teaching and learning, making it harder to catch up and potentially creating gaps in knowledge.

It is also essential that parents are completely honest with the school about the reason for an absence and their child's whereabouts. Knowing where children are when they are not in school is a fundamental part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Providing false or misleading information about an absence is a serious matter. If a child's whereabouts cannot be established, the school may need to make further enquiries or, where appropriate, refer the matter to the local authority under Children Missing from Education (CME) procedures.

This is not simply about attendance, it is about safeguarding children, supporting their education and knowing they are safe.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Building resilience in children means helping them understand that not every minor illness, tired morning or small complaint needs to result in a day away from school. Of course, children who are genuinely unwell should stay at home, and parents should seek medical advice when necessary.

Sometimes a child may feel unwell first thing in the morning but quickly improve. If your child is well enough to attend school, please bring them in. NHS guidance can also help parents decide whether common illnesses require time away from school.

Every day missed is a day of learning lost. Children can miss new concepts, important explanations, assessments and opportunities to practise their learning. Repeated absence can create gaps in knowledge and affect academic progress.

Good attendance is also an important safeguarding responsibility. When children are in school, we know they are safe and receiving their education.

Before keeping your child at home, consider: Are they genuinely too unwell to attend, or could they manage a normal school day? Supporting them to attend when they are well enough helps build resilience, independence and positive habits for the future.

FREE LIVE WEBINARS

The Buckinghamshire Mental Health Support Team have free live webinars coming up on children's mental health. To sign up to them, click the links below:

Topic	Date	Link
Common Mental Health Challenges - Primary	Wednesday 14 October 2026	Register
Common Mental Health Challenges - Secondary	Thursday 12 November 2026	Register
Childhood Anxiety - Primary	Tuesday 17 November 2026	Register
Adolescent Anxiety - Secondary	Monday 7 December 2026	Register



THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

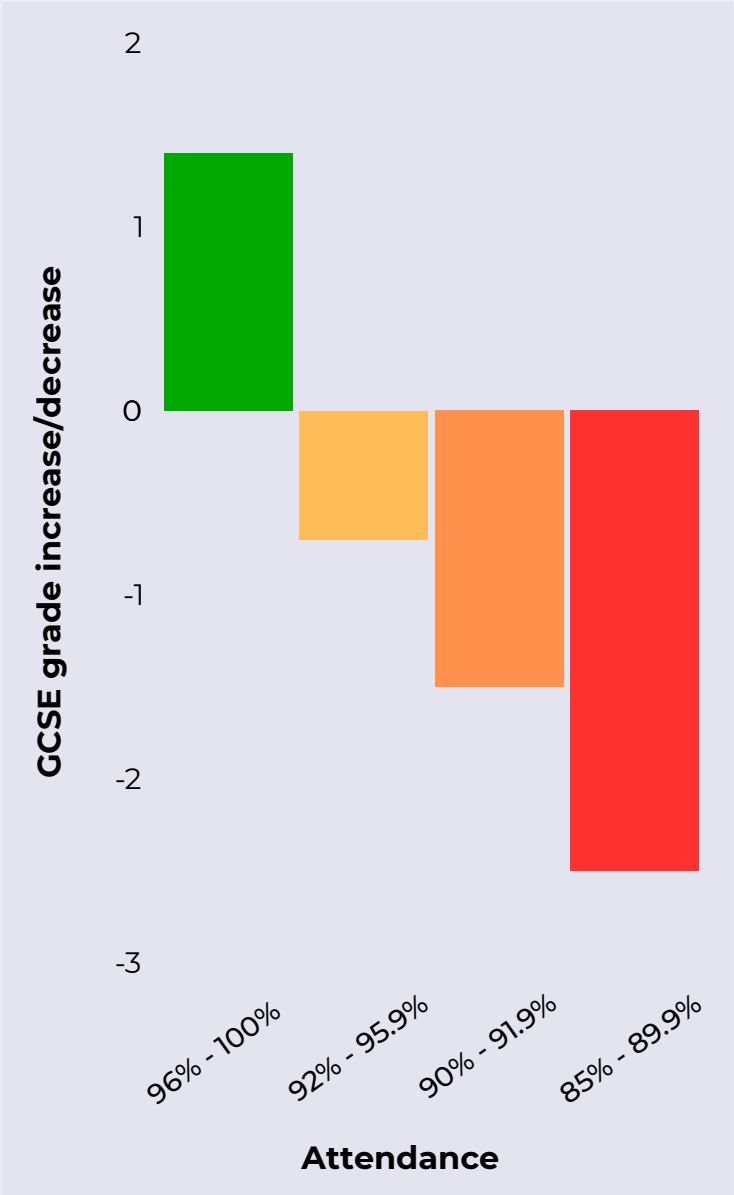
It all adds up...

Every late arrival

\+

Every absence

= **A lower grade**

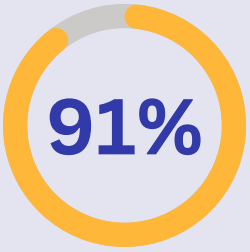




Arriving 15 minutes late every day adds up to two weeks absence a year, that's **55 hours of lessons missed**.



95% attendance means 50 hours of lessons missed, meaning your child missed about two weeks of lessons.



91% attendance or lower = **one grade lower** across all subjects.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

School avoidance refers to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. In 2022-23, more than one in five children in England were found to be absent from school over 10% of the time. This guide focuses on school avoidance with an emotional basis, offering expert mental health advice. However, it's important to remember that school avoidance is a hugely subjective experience which requires a tailored, individual approach.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include tummy aches, headaches, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

MANAGE OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

Acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss coping strategies together to help them manage difficulties. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk. This helps them understand that you are working together towards a common goal, and that these strategies can be used when bigger feelings arise.

FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and spent away from screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

RECOGNISE POSITIVE STEPS

Drawing attention to a child's successes – be they big or small – can help to give them some much-needed confidence and motivation. Celebrate these daily victories – such as getting out of bed on time or completing school work – and don't hesitate to let the child know when you're impressed or proud of them. Such an approach can go a long way.

Meet Our Expert



With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.

#WakeUpWednesday®

The National College®

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 17.05.2024

PSA SAFEGUARDING TEAM

Should you have any concerns / issues regarding safeguarding, you can talk to the following designated safeguarding leads or any other trusted adult in the school. You can also email safeguarding@psa-bucks.com.



Miss Day
DSL



Mrs Summerell
DDSL

Follow us on social media: