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**What can parents do?**

Talk to your child and try to understand the reason for their absence or their opposition to going to school. It is important that parents are clear that going to school is a duty and that you cannot stay at home. Make being at school with headaches, stomach aches, etc. harmless. Avoid that the child has access to tempting activities such as TV, internet and digital games, if they are at home during school hours. Contact the school early if you start to feel that your child does not want to go to school. If the child shows signs of anxiety or depression, it is important to get the right health care. Also consult a doctor if the child often complains of diffuse ailments, such as stomach ache, nausea or headache. If the parents apply for the child time off for long periods of time, it is the parents' responsibility that the child is allowed to keep in touch with classmates and the school environment. This can help to reduce the threshold for returning. It is important that the parents are aligned in the decisions and agreements that are made. This also applies to those students who have several residences.

**Who develops prolonged, worrying school absences?**

Worrying school absences occur regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic background, ability level and gender.

Worrisome school absences can develop gradually or occur suddenly. Long-term worrying school absence can occur throughout the school year, but is at increased risk at the start of school, transitions, changing schools, or after longer holidays and sick leave.

Pupils who does not want to go to school may have difficulties on several levels:

* **Individual:** vulnerability, trauma, mental or physical disorders, substance abuse problems, learning disabilities, etc.
* **Family:** conflicts in the family, lack of structure, illness, lack of communication, changes in family situation, violence or substance abuse, etc.
* **Social**: challenges related to friends/lack of friends, lack of belonging, bullying, etc.
* **School:** frequent teacher changes, high teacher absence, lack of structure and predictability, poor classroom environment, undifferentiated instruction, etc.
* **In the local environment**: trends and attitudes towards school, local environment with little room for otherness, etc.
* **Social and cultural conditions**: strong focus on achievement, "generation perfect", etc.

# **WORRYING SCHOOL ABSENCE**

**Follow-up and collaboration**

**Information leaflet**

**to parents and pupils**



**Worrying school absence**

Senja and Sørreisa municipalities have chosen to use the term worrying school absence to refer to school absence that requires measures. There is no lower limit to the extent of absenteeism before it is called worrying. Kearney (2008) has described different degrees of school refusal behaviour, so that it is easier to assess whether there is ongoing worrying school absence:

1. The student shows up at school after pressure, but asks to be let go.

2. Repeated problem behavior in the morning (or the night before), to avoid going to school.

3. Repeated morning delay followed by attendance.

4. The student has periodic Absences, or absences from individual lessons.

5. Repeated absence or absence from single hours, mixed with attendance.

6. The student is completely away from school for periods of time.

7. The student is away from school for an extended period of time.

**Documented and undocumented absence**

A natural division of school absence may be absence with or without a "valid reason"

DOCUMENTED ABSENCE

Is illness, granted leave or absence that is excused, the pupil and the parents do not have control over

UNDOCUMENTED ABSENCE

If the student is absent without the parants knowledge and concent, it will be considered an undocumented absence. In addition, each absence is considered undocumented until the school has been notified by parants of the reason and and the school has difined the reason for the absence as valid.

A high level of absenteeism, for whatever reason, requires follow-up from the school. Although the reason is clearly defined, many students will need help both academically and socially. It is also important to be aware that children's health is closely linked to their psychosocial environment, both at school, in the family and in their spare time. Among students with a lot of short-term absence, it is important to consider whether it is related to the student's school situation or life situation in general, even if parents document the absence. The most common causes of absenteeism are truant, school refusal, diffuse ailments (headache, pain, "aches") or that the student is actually sick and has to stay at home (Havik, 2018).

**Prevention of school absence**

There are a number of protective factors against worrying school absence in schools:

* Positive relationships between adults and children
* The adults' ability to lead class and groups
* Good cooperation between school and home
* Good routines and attitudes towards school absence
* Action plans in the event of high absenteeism
* Early involvement of other agencies

The pupil's development and learning is the goal of the cooperation between home and school, with a focus on the academic learning, and the social and personal development. Parents are a crucial resource in the work to create a good school environment. It has a positive effect on well-being and learning when school and home collaborate and communicate the same values and positive expectations to the students.

**Right and obligation to primary and lower secondary education**

[Section 2-1 of the Education Act](https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61/KAPITTEL_2#KAPITTEL_2)