



19th November 2024

Dear Parent/Carers,

We are writing to you because the Department for Education (DfE) have introduced some new guidance for schools and Local Authorities (LAs) for managing school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notices and amended the law. These changes came into effect from the 19 August 2024 and all schools and LAs across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance.

Support first

The importance of regular attendance at school cannot be stressed enough. All schools and LAs are expected to promote school attendance and provide support to remove barriers where a pupil is struggling to attend school. This may mean that we will raise the issue of attendance even if your child has only had a couple of days off unwell. This is not because we do not believe you. By working with you, we can step in early to help to prevent patterns of absence developing. We may identify other underlying issues that are making your child reluctant to attend school and be able to help you and your child. For this to be successful parents and carers need to work collaboratively with us. Where it can be demonstrated that a parent/carer is not fulfilling their parental responsibility to ensure that their child receives a suitable full-time education then we may consider requesting that the LA take further action. This can be in the form of a penalty notice, prosecution, or the school may suggest other formal interventions such as the involvement of Early Help and Children's Social Services.

National Framework for penalty notices

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new national framework for when schools and LAs believe that they have exhausted all offers of support and the parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school. The threshold for when a school should consider next steps is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of **10 school weeks**. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be made up of any form of unauthorised absence including late after close (attendance code U) of register and odd days of unauthorised absence (attendance code O) which add up to 5 days within a 10-week period. Our registers close at 9.15am and, after this, a child is recorded as absent and this is unauthorised.

At this point, we will consider if it is likely that the attendance will improve with further support. We may then decide to refer the case to the LA for formal monitoring. This may proceed to legal action if the attendance does not improve. Education Penalty Notices are issued to parents of statutory school age children. They can be issued to each parent or carer who is deemed liable for the child's absence from school. The new costs and process is outlined below.

First Offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years) - The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years) – The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court.

Term time holidays

Pupils should not be taken out of school during term time unless it is unavoidable. Schools are required to consider requests for leave of absence in term time and should only approve the leave if there are exceptional circumstances. If a request for leave is denied and the pupil is absent for 5 days or more then the school is expected to refer the case to the LA. The LA will issue a penalty notice with no requirement for a formal warning to be issued. Penalty notices can also be issued where a pupil is absent for repeated incidents of unauthorised leave in term time that fall below the 5-day threshold. In every case, the request for the Penalty Notice comes in from the school to the LA for the process to be completed.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

For any child's attendance that falls to 95% or below they will be identified and be part of a conversation with the school's leadership team. This takes place on a three weekly cycle.

A letter will be sent to parents and improvement is expected over a reasonable amount of time (normally 15 days/3 school weeks). If a child's attendance falls below 90%, further absences will not be authorised, unless supported by medical evidence.

Where the level of absence has not improved, it is below 90% and there are unauthorised absences, the school could make a referral to the KCC using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

New registration codes

You might find that your child's attendance report looks slightly different next year. The DfE have amended some of the codes to include numbers as well as letters. These new codes are to enable schools, LA and the DfE to better understand the reasons for absence. For example:

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance.

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance.

The important thing for you as a parent is still the C which means that the absence was authorised. There is also a new code which has been introduced for pupils who are on the school roll but are temporarily being provided with an alternative education by the local authority, such as a home tutor.

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority.

Full details of all of the changes can be found by visiting the Government webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-schoolattendance>

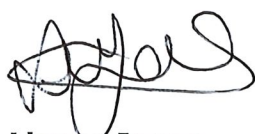
We appreciate that there are a lot of changes for September and for many of you these will have little or no impact. However, if your child is anxious about attending school, please speak with our Family Liaison Officer, Mrs Hill or a member of the Senior Leadership team. They are there to explore what support can be provided to help your child to attend school regularly.

Should you have any questions regarding these changes, please contact us via the school office.

Best wishes,



Matthew Green
Headteacher



Lianne Jones
Deputy Headteacher