



# **Working together to improve school attendance**

## **Key Information for Parents/Carers**

*Based on statutory guidance from the  
Department for Education.  
Applies from: 19 August 2024*

# Working together to improve school attendance

## KEY MESSAGES

Attendance is one of the biggest challenges facing the school system today. Since the pandemic, there has been a worldwide rise in school absence and persistent absence. In response to this, the government are pressing ahead with tougher attendance rules, with new statutory guidance in place from August 2024.



- All schools to hold electronic registers and **share their daily attendance data with the Department for Education and the Local Authority.**
- Attendance improvement to be a priority, with schools **monitoring attendance data rigorously** and working with families to address poor attendance.
- Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. "A need or desire for a holiday" does not constitute an exceptional circumstance. **(Statutory Guidance August 2024)**



- Every moment in school counts. It is **essential that children arrive at school on time** to ensure academic success and to enable children to form good habits. Where school has concerns about lateness, we will get in touch to discuss what support is needed.
- In order to safeguard pupils, **a reason must be given for any absence**. This should be done following school's absence procedures, and must be done on the first day of absence. Failure to inform school of reasons for absence may lead to welfare visits, unauthorised absences, and possible legal intervention.
- If your child is **at risk** of becoming 'persistently absent', **school will alert you** to this via email with an offer of support. If these concerns continue, and/or your child's attendance drops to 90% or lower, school will invite you in for a **meeting to explore any barriers** your child may be facing.



- Attendance at school is not just important for your child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development and their mental health. **For children who face complex barriers to attendance, school can offer a range of pastoral support and advice** and, if needed, can access support from external services - we are here to help.
- **It is usually safe for children to attend school with mild illnesses**, like a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat. However, children should stay at home if they have a high temperature of 38C or above. The **NHS has published guidance** to help parents/ carers decide whether their child is well enough to attend school.



- If school has raised concerns about a child's attendance and offered support, but there is limited/no improvement, the **Local Authority will intervene**, offering formal support or, the case may be escalated to legal prosecution.
- The revised guidance from the Department for Education dictates that if a child has 5 or more days of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks, a **Fixed Penalty Notice** may be issued.
- From August 2024, the **first FPN is £160** (reduced to £80 if paid within 28 days), a **second FPN is £160** to be paid within 28 days, a **third FPN cannot be issued** within a 3 year period. **Legal action may result.**, for example, prosecution.

# WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE

## EXPECTATIONS

As a school we aspire to **high standards of attendance** from all pupils and parents and strive to build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full time education. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. **Good attendance is a learned behaviour so it is important to develop good patterns of attendance from the outset.**

### Did you know?

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

## MONITORING

The DfE expects schools to **monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends in order to intervene and support where attendance does not meet the required level. School has clear procedures in place to monitor attendance.**

**If your child is absent from school, you should contact school before 9am, select option 1 and leave a message providing the child's full name, reason for absence and the anticipated length of the absence.**

### School Monitoring:

**Daily:** If your child has not arrived before 9.30am and there is no reason provided for absence then you will receive a text to prompt you to contact school with a reason for absence. If by 10am you have not contacted the school with a reason then you will receive a phone call. If absence continues without explanation further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding, this may involve a home visit.

If after 5 days no reason has been provided, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'. **Unauthorised absences may lead to enforcement action by the Local Authority.**

**Fortnightly:** As a school we systematically analyse school attendance data to identify pupils that may need support. Where school begins to have concerns about a child's attendance we will initiate school-led support.

## SCHOOL LED SUPPORT

**When a pattern of poor attendance is spotted, school will agree how all partners can work together to resolve them. Good attendance is essential for children to achieve well academically and for their wider wellbeing.**

You will be invited to discuss any possible barriers and school will make an offer of support. Hopefully this will positively impact attendance and no further intervention will be needed.

Where absences persist and school continue to have concerns you will be invited to an in-school meeting to discuss further support.

## FORMAL SUPPORT

If School Led Support is not working or parents and carers are not engaging, a meeting will be held with a **Local Authority Attendance Improvement Officer** to look at a more formal plan of support.

### Important Notes:

**For any leave of absence**, parents are required to complete a request form available from the School Office. School can only grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

**School may require parents to provide medical evidence** for any absences due to ill health in order to authorise these absences. Where this is the case you will be notified of this.

**The LA may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice if your child has 5 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks.**

# Leave of Absence in Term Time

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **When can my child be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly. This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

### **What do I need to do if I know that my child will be absent from school?**

All parents can request a leave of absence for their child, which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leave of absence must be applied for before your child's absence, and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

### **What does the law say about leave of absence in term time?**

It says Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. 'The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation, to be an exceptional circumstance'. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

### **If my child's school refuses to authorise my term time leave of absence request, will I receive a Fixed Penalty Notice and can I be prosecuted?**

Durham County Council's Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol acknowledges that regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice might be issued include unauthorised leave of absence in term time, or other parentally condoned absence where the absence amounts to five school days or more in a minimum ten rolling school week period. You can be prosecuted if you receive a fixed penalty notice and it is not paid. Under the Education Act 1996, parents commit an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular school attendance. Taking a child out of school for a leave of absence without permission, and where the absence amounts to five school days or more of unauthorised absence in a minimum ten week rolling term is viewed as failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Payment of a Penalty Notice, where offered, is an alternative to prosecution. If unpaid, prosecution for the Education Act offence may therefore ensue. A fixed penalty notice will be issued to each person with parental responsibility for the child / children who are deemed liable for the offence / offences.

### **What happens if I take my child on holiday without completing a leave of absence request form?**

If school has reason to believe that the absence is due to a holiday, a suspected holiday letter will be issued, and the absence will be unauthorised unless medical evidence can be provided for the absence. Unauthorised absences on your child's attendance record may mean that you are liable to incur a Fixed Penalty Notice

**Absences**

Days Absent	Risk of PA
1	Low
2	Low
3	Low
4	Low
5	Low
6	Low
7	Low
8	Low
9	Low
10	Moderate
11	Moderate
12	Moderate
13	Moderate
14	Moderate
15	High
16	High
17	High
18	High
19 or more	Persistent Absentee

**Frequency**

Number of Separate Episodes of Absence	Risk of Persistent Absence
1	Low
2	Low
3	Medium
4	Medium
5	High
6	High

You can view and monitor your own child's attendance on Arbor.

**What Does Good Attendance Look Like?**

Every Day Counts	
100%	0 days missed Excellent
99%	2 days/ 10 lessons missed Very Good
97%	1 week/ 25 lessons missed Good
95%	2 weeks/ 50 lessons missed Beginning to make it hard to make progress - Early Intervention - FPN - Pattern Spotting
94%-91%	11-17 days/ 55-85 lessons missed Cause for concern - Early Intervention - FPN - Pattern Spotting
90%	4 weeks/ 100 lessons missed Persistently Absent - Additional targeted support
80%	7.5 weeks/ 190 lessons missed This much absence over 5 years equates to 1 full year missed
50%	19 weeks/ 485 lessons missed Severely Absent Work with LA – intensify support

## 1 Overview

Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by a head teacher.

The notices are used to prevent the need for court action, for example, when support has not been engaged with or is not appropriate (for example, leave of absence during term time). **Changes from September 2024 are shown below.**

## 2 Leave

Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation **would not** constitute an exceptional circumstance.

## 3 Absence

A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if there are **5 days / 10 sessions** of absence in a period of **10 school weeks** (where absence has not been authorised).

A notice may be issued where the 5-day level of absence has not been reached, for example, if there are several periods of leave.

## 4 Amount

Within a 3-year period:

The first penalty notice is **£160** if paid within 28 days, reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days.

A second penalty notice is **£160** to be paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued. **Legal action** may result (for example, prosecution).

# When should my child return to school?

**Chicken Pox**  
When all spots have crusted over

**Conjunctivitis**  
None\*

**Diarrhoea & Vomiting**  
48 hours from last episode

**Glandular Fever**  
None\*

**Hand, foot & mouth**  
None\*

**Impetigo**  
When lesions are crusted & healed or 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics

**Measles or German Measles**  
4 days from onset of rash

**Mumps**  
5 days from onset of swelling

**Scabies**  
After first treatment

**Scarlet Fever**  
24 hours after commencing antibiotics

**Slapped Cheek**  
None\*

**Whooping Cough**  
48 Hours after commencing antibiotics

**Flu**  
Until recovered

**Head Lice**  
None\*

**Threadworms**  
None\*

**Tonsillitis**  
None\*

\*NO NEED TO STAY OFF BUT SCHOOL SHOULD BE INFORMED.