

National Attendance Framework Changes

A new national framework has been introduced for school absence, including penalties for unauthorised holiday absence. These new Government regulations came into effect **from 19 August 2024** and we are required to follow this guidance as it is a national directive.

What are the changes?

- **Parents/carers can no longer take children out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued.**
- There is a national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period for a penalty notice to be considered.
- If there is a Bank Holiday or Inset day adjacent to 4 days (8 sessions) of unauthorised absence, a penalty notice may also be considered.
- The fine is £80 if paid in 21 days and rises to £160 if paid within 28 days of issue.
- The higher rate of £160 applies immediately if a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period.

FAQs

If I have already booked a holiday, could I receive a penalty fine?

Yes, if the absence has not already been authorised by a head teacher. Only a head teacher can agree to an authorised period of absence and this will only be in exceptional circumstances.

Who can be issued with a penalty notice?

Each parent/carer can receive a fine for each child who has had unauthorised absence from school. Anyone who has day-to-day care of the child is also considered a parent whether e.g. Step-parent or carer.

Do the new rules only apply to holidays during term time?

No, it applies to all unauthorised absence from school as well as holidays. Unauthorised absence includes other absence that has not been agreed such as arriving late after the register has closed at 9.15am or failing to provide reasons for absence.

How do I request my child to have leave granted during term time?

Requests are always to the headteacher who will decide if there are exceptional circumstances to grant the time off. Please do not assume that any absence is agreed or make plans to travel until you have received confirmation from the heads. Any request should be put in writing, ideally at least 20 days before the proposed absence.

Do the 10 sessions (= to 5 days) of unauthorised absence have to be taken all at the same time before a penalty fine is issued to the parent/carer?

No, a penalty fine can be issued for any combination of absences over a 10-week rolling period. They can be consecutive or non-consecutive and can span across two terms or a half-term.

What happens if I am issued with a penalty fine and I don't pay it?

It is legal requirement for child of compulsory school age to attend school and parent/carer has responsibility to ensure regular attendance. If a fine is not paid then this can lead on to prosecution.

What should I do if I am worried about my child's attendance?

If you have any concerns about attendance or any reluctance to come into school, please talk to your child's teacher. Whether it is around friendships, work at school or something at home, please share to see how best school can offer support.

We ask families to **avoid holidays during term-time**, even for less than five days. Any holidays taken during term-time will automatically count towards the 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence in any 10 week rolling period. This also means that the family will be on the pathway to the second higher penalty if a further break is taken within a rolling three-year period.

Schools do not receive any income from penalty notices issued and are keen to work with families to improve attendance and avoid the incurrence of fines. Please contact Tania in the school office or Heads Natalie and Sally if you have any questions about this new framework or regarding attendance.

