



Working Together To Improve School Attendance

Key Information for Parents/Carers

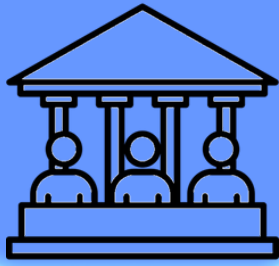
*Based on statutory guidance from the
Department for Education.
Applies from: 19 August 2024*

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.

Government



- 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)**

School



- 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 by telephoning the school office, 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 a letter 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 and why their attendance is low.

Parents/Carers



- 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. The **NHS has published guidance** to help parents/ carers decide whether their child is well enough to attend school and we have a summary guide on our website under the parents tab.

Legal



- 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; this included holiday requests. Therefore we will refer all holiday requests to the Local Authority if they **exceed 5 days**.
- From August 2024, the **first FPN is £160 per child, per parent** (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 telephone call asking for a reason for absence. If you are not contactable, and the absence continues without explanation further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding, this may involve a home visit.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no reason is given to explain your child's absence. **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. If your child's attendance falls below 95%, an amber letter will be sent to parents; if this figure is below 90% you will receive a red letter. 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 a further meeting to discuss further support and an attendance contract.

FORMAL SUPPORT

If School Led Support is not working or parents and carers are not engaging, a meeting will be held with an **Attendance Improvement Officer** to look at a more formal plan of support or you could result in a period of legal monitoring.

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.

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 (please notify the school in advance).
- 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

Usually, 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. You must complete the form available from the school office.

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?

Newcastle City 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. The Gosforth Schools' Trust have agreed that referrals will be made to the Local Authority when unauthorised absence exceeds 5 days; this may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. 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. This applies even if one parent does not attending the holiday.

What happens if I take one holiday for 5 days, and later in the year take another five day holiday?

In this situation a referral would be made to the Local Authority upon your return to school following the second holiday since your child has reached 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence. This could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. If you choose to take multiple short holidays in school time, and the total leave of absence within ten school weeks reaches 10 sessions you may also be fined.

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 as described above.

What if my child is ill immediately after a holiday and is therefore off longer than 5 days?

In this situation you will need to provide medical evidence to explain the child's continued absence such as a letter from a doctor or dated prescription medication. If we believe you are still on holiday and have not contacted school to prove otherwise, the unauthorised absence will be extended which may then result in a Fixed Penalty Notice. In the event of an emergency situation whilst abroad which prevents the child, or parents, being able to return home medical evidence will be required to explain this continued leave of absence.

Parent Guide - Common Illnesses and Length of Absence from School



This information is a guide about attending school. You should always contact your GP or a pharmacist if your child needs diagnosis or medical treatment. In the event of any illness good hygiene, such as hand washing and using a tissue, will help reduce the risk of transmission at home or school.

- 5 days from the onset of the rash and spots have crusted over

Chicken Pox



- Can attend school as normal if they feel well enough

Common Cold



- No need to stay off school but please let staff know

Conjunctivitis



- 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting

Diarrhoea and Vomiting



- Children should return to school when they have recovered

Flu



- Child needs to be well enough to concentrate but can attend school as normal

Glandular Fever



- Children can attend school as normal. Please let staff know

Hand, Foot & Mouth



- No need to stay off school, treat hair and inform school

Head Lice



- Children can return to school when lesions are crusted over, or 48 hours after starting antibiotics

Impetigo



- Return to school 4 days from the onset of rash, if child feels well enough

Measles / German Measles



- Children can return to school 5 days from onset of swelling, if they are well enough

Mumps



- Children can attend school as normal. Treatment should be given and school informed

Ringworm / Threadworms



- Child can return after first treatment

Scabies



- Return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics, if well enough

Scarlet fever / Strep throat



- Child can attend school, let teacher know

Slapped Cheek



- No need to stay off school if they feel well enough to concentrate and attend

Tonsillitis



- Child can return to school 48 hours after starting antibiotics

Whooping Cough



Fixed Penalty Notices for irregular attendance at school

Important information for parents

1. Overview

Regular school attendance is vital for children to reach their full potential. If your child is absent for any reason, it is important that you communicate fully with the school. However new national guidance is to be implemented from September to manage irregular attendance at school.

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 and can be in respect of any unauthorised absence, irrespective of reason.

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 19 August 2024 are shown →

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.

The days/sessions **do not** need to be consecutive for a notice to be issued and can be several periods of leave over a period of 10 school weeks.

4. Amount

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 will be taken and a referral made to Court.**

Each penalty is per parent per child. The above applies within a rolling 3-year period.

5. DfE

Local Authority Attendance team: accessandinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk

For further information please see the [DfE Working together to improve school attendance document](#).

