

Date: 1st July 2024

Dear Parents,

Re: New DfE Guidance for Fixed Penalty – What you need to know

The DfE are introducing a new national framework which will mean all Local Authorities have the same rules in place for when we need to consider a fine for holidays during term time or Persistent Absenteeism.

Every moment in school counts and days missed add up quickly. Evidence shows that pupils who have good attendance enjoy better wellbeing and school performance than those who do not.

There are only a few circumstances where a child is allowed to miss school, such as illness or where the school has given permission because of an exceptional circumstance. However, if your child misses school without a good reason, the Local Authority and schools can intervene, and you may be issued a fine.

How much could I be fined if my child misses school?

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days, per parent, per child**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500.

How can you be sure parent fines are fair?

Fines are a last resort, and parents will be offered support to help improve their child's attendance first. Most fines for unauthorised absence (89%) are issued for term time holidays.

What if my child needs to miss school?

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.

What happens if my child misses' school without a good reason?

If your child is absent and you have not received advance permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school, the school and local council may take action.

Before that, your child's school and your local council are expected to support you to improve the child's attendance before any measures are put in place.

These measures can include:

- **Issue a fixed penalty notice, otherwise known as a 'fine'** – your local council can give each parent a fine. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days, you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.
- **Seek an Education Supervision Order from the family court** – if the council thinks you need support getting your child to go to school but you are not working with the school or appropriate support services, they can apply to a court for an Education Supervision Order. A supervisor will be appointed to help you get your child into education. The local council can do this instead of, or as well as, prosecuting you.
- **Prosecute you** – this means you have to go to court. You could get a fine, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months. The court could also give you a Parenting Order.

It is important that your child is in school every day, not just for your child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development, and their mental health.

We want to continue to support families in attending school if you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Sherifa Prince
Statutory School Attendance Manager