

Penalty Notices FAQs for parents/carers 2024/2025

Why is attendance important?

Every day in school counts and days missed add up quickly. Evidence shows that pupils who have good attendance enjoy better wellbeing and achieve better outcomes than those who don't.

Can I get help if my child is not attending school?

Yes. Your child's school is always available to offer support and should be your first step in getting any additional help you may need.

The County Attendance Team can provide help and support directly to the school and as part of a multi-agency plan.

Children with long-term medical or more serious mental health conditions and those with special educational needs and disabilities may face additional barriers.

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, schools and the local authority will work with parents to offer support to ensure they are able to access education and attend school.

What is a Penalty Notice?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if their child fails to attend school regularly, and the absences are classed as unauthorised. Such cases may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court, whilst still securing an improvement in the pupil's attendance.

What are the costs?

From August 19 2024, under the new national penalty notice framework, all schools will be required to consider a penalty notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons.

This means from September 2024 the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

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/per child will be capped to two within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached a prosecution may be considered.

If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could be fined of up to £2,500.

Can a penalty notice be paid in instalments?

No. A penalty notice must be paid in full.

Can a penalty notice be appealed?

There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a penalty notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

What happens to the money raised from paid fines?

Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.