



National Changes to Attendance Guidance from 19th August 2024

We are writing to you regarding changes to attendance guidance that have been shared by the Department for Education with schools and Local Authorities, and which will become statutory and implemented after 19th August 2024. The changes must be made by all schools and Local Authorities across the country to create a consistent approach towards attendance for all school-aged children. We will of course continue to work hard with our children and families to ensure that all of our children have excellent attendance, and as a result make effective progress.

Changes to attendance guidance have been made in four areas:

1. A new National Framework for Attendance Penalty Notices

Attendance penalty notices (fines) issued after the 19.08.2024 will be issued in line with the new guidance and regulations. Fines may be issued for term time leave (holidays) and irregular attendance/punctuality.

The new Penalty Notice regulations include:

- For a first offence a fine amount of £160.00 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days. The fine will be reduced to £80.00 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days.
- Each parent/carer will be issued a separate penalty notice for each child who is absent. *For example, 2 parents and 3 children – each parent will receive x3 penalty notices for £160.00, with a family total of £960.00 in fines.*
- The next time that an offence occurs, within 3 years of the date the first penalty notice is issued, the fine amount will be £160.00 per parent, per child, to be paid within 28 days with no reduction.
- The third time an offence occurs this will be presented to Magistrate's court with no penalty notice issued.

For irregular attendance – Each school day is made up of two sessions - a morning and an afternoon session. Where a child has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more in any 10-week period, the school will consider the reasons for absence, any support already offered and the engagement of pupils and their families when making decisions about attendance, before considering referral for prosecution. Please note that the 10 sessions could be made up of term time leave, unauthorised late marks (given after registers close in a morning or afternoon session) and/or unauthorised absence.

It is very important to notify school every day that your child is absent, providing a reason, and where appropriate evidence of medical appointments and/or prescribed medication. You might wish to refer to 'Is my child too ill for school?' – NHS (www.nhs.uk) when deciding if your child can attend school. You can also ring your school office staff for advice.

2. Updates to the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance document

The Department for Education have updated the 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance (which applies from 19.08.2024) and is available to view on the DfE website. This clarifies the expectations for parent/carers, schools and the Local Authority to promote the importance of regular attendance at school and to provide ideas for support and interventions when a young person is not attending school on a regular basis.

3. Regulation changes to school attendance registers

Changes are being made to the attendance coding that schools use for attendance registers. The H code for authorised term time leave (holiday) has been removed and Headteachers can no longer authorise term time leave unless there are exceptional circumstances covered by the C code. There is a requirement that an attendance penalty notice must be requested if there are 5 or more days of unauthorised absence.

4. Regulations will come into force on the 19th August 2024 to mandate attendance data sharing by all state funded schools

This means that your child's attendance will be shared with the Department for Education and the Local Authority every day. This will allow the Department for Education to provide schools with the tools to monitor and improve attendance and will allow the Local Authority to provide further advice and support. It will also allow tracking of attendance trends e.g. a child reported as ill the same day each week/week of each year or a certain pattern of absence. As always, these changes aim to support children to access school each day and ensure that they have any reasonable adjustments and/or interventions in place to support their success and engagement in learning.

If your child is finding attending school difficult, is feeling anxious about attending school or needs further help in accessing their learning, please don't hesitate to make contact with your child's teacher or other staff in school. They will be able to discuss with you any reasonable adjustments and support that can be put in place for your child. Children with higher levels of attendance tend to have improved experiences in school, with fewer gaps in their learning and improved outcomes. By working together, we have improved the attendance of a number of children across our schools this academic year and we will continue to work hard and in partnership with you and multi agencies to ensure that all children can experience attendance success.

If you have questions regarding any aspects of this guidance or your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to contact your school. Alternatively, you may wish to speak to our Trust Attendance Lead on 01709 718640 (option 4). You can also look online on the DfE or local authority website and search 'attendance' for further information.

We hope you have a wonderful summer holiday, and look forward to starting another exciting school year in September.

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The Diocese of Sheffield Academies Trust