

National Changes to School Attendance Expectations 2024/2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

The Department for Education (DfE) has introduced new guidance for schools about managing attendance. They have introduced a new national framework for Penalty Notices and changed the law. All schools across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance.

National Framework for penalty notices

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new framework for penalty notices:

What are the two triggers for Penalty Notices?

1. 5 consecutive days of term time leave

- Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time leave of 5 or more consecutive school days.

2. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

- Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-week period.

Please note: 1 session = ½ day (am or pm)

First Penalty Notice

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time leave of poor attendance. The amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days (Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days)

Second Penalty Notice - (Within 3 years)

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time leave of poor attendance. The amount will be:

- £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days

Third Penalty Notice and Any Further Penalty Notices (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time leave or irregular attendance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' **fin**es are per parent, per child

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court may be shown on the parent's future DBS certificate.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

It is important to note that these fines are paid directly to Nottinghamshire County Council. The school does not receive any of the money from the fine.

- Failure to pay the fines may result in court action.
- The fine must be paid in full, there are no payment plans (paying in instalments)
- There is no process to appeal a fine. It must be paid.

Please note as stated above money raised via fines does not come to or benefit the school. It 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.

The DfE states that Head Teachers **may not** grant leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances. **Holidays, family trips, and similar events are not considered exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised**. We understand that family time is important, but it is essential for your child's education that they attend school consistently. When it comes to attendance, our stance is that we *listen, understand, empathise and support – but we are unable to tolerate poor attendance*.

<u>Exceptional circumstances</u>	<u>Does not count as 'exceptional'</u>
The main principles for defining 'exceptional circumstances' are that they are ' rare, significant, unavoidable and short '.	Family holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments , or availability of cheaper fares, or surprise trips, visiting family, festivals, cultural visits
Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad and wishing to spend time with a child.	Days off for birthdays
Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.	Family days out
The death of a person close to the family, but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave.	Trips paid for or gifted by someone
Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement.	
Religious observance –but only for the ceremony and <i>not for extended leave</i> .	
To attend an immediate family wedding (proof is required)- <i>1 day only</i>	
A child with complex special needs where there is a genuine reasons that a holiday cannot be taken in term time.	

You can find the school's full Attendance Policy on the school's website. Attached is *Appendix 2* of the policy, which you might find useful as summary.

Any letters that we use are templates written by officers from Nottinghamshire County Council, which aim to be very clear about the next steps and possible outcomes. The letters are written very plainly so they are not open to interpretation. Samples of these can be viewed in our attendance policy which can be viewed on the school website.

All schools are expected to promote attendance and provide support to pupils not attending regularly. This means that we will raise attendance issues at an early stage, meaning we can offer support to prevent patterns of absence developing. We very much want it to have a supportive relationship where parents/carers work with us to improve attendance.

As a Governing Body this has not been an easy decision, but we are led by the Government and DfE and must be seen to be tackling absence and persistent absence, this is an area as a school we are monitored on to ensure we take action when needed. We understand that this may be unsettling news for some of you, but we hope you can understand the need for us to adopt this system.

Unfortunately, some of our staff have experienced levels of personal abuse when implementing the school's absence policy. We hope you agree that this is unacceptable and that our colleagues have the right to work without being subject to this behaviour. We

value open and honest communication between parents and school staff. However, all communications should be conducted respectfully and courteously.

Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

The Governing Body.