

# Working Together for Your Child

What parents and carers need to know about attendance and safeguarding



We value the close partnership between school and home. This leaflet explains what the law requires of parents and carers, and how we can all keep children safe and in school.

## Your Child's Attendance

### The law and what it means for you

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires the parent of every child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have — either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If your child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, the school named in that plan has a duty to admit your child under section 43 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

### As a parent or carer, you are responsible for:

- Ensuring your child attends every day school is open, on time and ready to learn
- Contacting the school before 9.00 am on any day your child is absent, giving the reason
- Providing evidence of illness when requested (e.g. a letter from your GP or appointment card)
- Discussing any concerns about attendance with the school at the earliest opportunity
- Not booking holidays or other activities during term time without prior agreement from the headteacher

### What can happen if attendance falls below expected levels

The school will always try to support you first — we want to understand any barriers.

Where unauthorised absence reaches 10 sessions (5 school days) within a rolling 10-school-week period, the local authority must consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. The first fine is £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days (rising to £160 if paid between days 22–28). A second fine within three years is £160 with no discount. Prosecution under the Education Act 1996 is possible after two fines.

We will always work with you before any formal steps are taken.

### Authorised and unauthorised absence

Only the headteacher can authorise an absence. Providing a reason does not automatically mean the absence will be authorised. If you are unsure, please speak to the school office before your child is absent.

## Holidays During Term Time

### Why term-time holidays matter for your child

We know family life is busy and holidays are important. However, taking your child out of school during term time has a real impact — not just on attendance figures, but on your child's learning, routines, and progress.

### The legal position

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, which came into force on 19 August 2024, make clear that headteachers may only grant leave of absence during term time in 'exceptional circumstances'. There is no longer any automatic provision for holidays. A family holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance.

If leave is not granted and your child is taken out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024, a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued by the local authority. Fines are issued per parent, per child. The first fine is £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22 and 28. A second fine for the same child within a rolling three-year period is charged at a flat rate of £160 with no reduction. After two fines, the local authority must consider prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a court fine of up to £2,500.

## The impact of lost learning

For pupils at our school, consistency and routine are particularly important. Many of our children thrive on predictability — every day away from school can disrupt progress that has taken considerable time to build.

### What missed days really mean

Even one week away from school means missing ten sessions of education, therapy and structured learning — time that cannot easily be made up.

For pupils with complex needs, re-settling after a break can take several additional days. Skills, routines and communication strategies that are carefully built up in school need reinforcement — gaps make this harder.

We ask families to consider the full impact on their child before requesting term-time leave.

### If you need to request leave

- Submit a written request to the headteacher as early as possible — ideally at least four weeks in advance
- Explain clearly why the request is being made and why it cannot take place outside term time
- Wait for a formal response before making any bookings
- Understand that approval is not guaranteed and that the headteacher's decision is final

We will always consider requests fairly and individually. However, in most cases we will be unable to authorise holidays during term time, and we ask for your understanding of the reasons why.

## Keeping Children Safe

### Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Schools have a legal duty under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Education Act 2002, and statutory guidance — Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) — to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils.

As a parent or carer, you also play a vital role. You know your child best.

### Your responsibilities include:

- Sharing relevant information with the school that may affect your child's safety or wellbeing
- Informing the school promptly of any changes to your child's home circumstances
- Telling the school if your child discloses anything that causes you concern
- Ensuring adults other than yourselves who care for your child are known to the school
- Engaging with any support put in place by the school or external agencies

### The Prevent Duty

All schools in England must comply with the Prevent duty (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015). This means we have a responsibility to protect children from radicalisation and extremist influences, whether online or in person. If you have a concern, please speak to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### If you have a safeguarding concern

Contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

To make a referral to children's social care, contact your local authority's children's services.

You can also contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.

## How We Work Together

We understand that families sometimes face difficult circumstances. We will always aim to support you and your child rather than simply apply rules.

We ask that you:

- Keep contact details up to date with the school office
- Tell us as early as possible if something is affecting your child at home
- Respond promptly to any communication from the school
- Attend any meetings the school requests to discuss your child's wellbeing or attendance

**If you are worried about anything, please contact us. We are here to help.**

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*This information is provided in accordance with the Education Act 1996, Children Act 1989 and 2004, Children and Families Act 2014, School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), and DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024).*

## What happens if absences go unauthorised?

*The national escalation process under the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024*

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### Notice to Improve

Where a pupil has a pattern of unauthorised absence and support is appropriate, the school may issue a Notice to Improve before requesting a penalty notice. This gives the family a formal opportunity to engage with support and improve attendance. Please note: for unauthorised term-time holidays, a penalty notice may be issued directly without a prior Notice to Improve.



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### First Fixed Penalty Notice

£80 if paid within 21 days  
£160 if paid between days 22 and 28

Per parent  
per child

▼ *Further unauthorised absence within three years*

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### Second Fixed Penalty Notice

£160 flat rate — no reduced option available  
Still within the same three-year rolling period

Per parent  
per child

▼ *Third offence within three years*

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### Prosecution

No further penalty notice can be issued. The local authority must consider prosecution at the Magistrates' Court.

**A court conviction can result in a fine of up to £2,500.**

**We will always speak with you before any formal steps are taken. Our aim is to support families, not to penalise them.**

Source: Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 | DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)