



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

June 2024

Dear Parent / Guardians

Changes to Penalty Fines for Unauthorised Absence

I hope this message finds you well.

We are writing to inform you of recent changes made by the government regarding penalty fines for unauthorised absence / non-attendance in schools, and to emphasise the crucial importance of regular school attendance for your child's academic success, overall development and wellbeing.

The government has taken a proactive step to reinforce the significance of consistent attendance, by implementing stricter and higher penalties as part of their commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students during their educational journey.

Academic Progress

Regular attendance allows students to keep up with their lessons, participate in discussions, and complete assignments on time which is essential for their academic progress and success.

Social and Emotional Development

Schools provide structured environments where students learn social skills, build friendships, develop emotional resilience, all of which are crucial for their overall development.

Prepare for the Future

Regular attendance creates habits of responsibility and discipline that are invaluable as student's transition into higher education or the workforce.

Legal Obligations

Parents/Guardians have a legal obligation to ensure their child/ children attends school regularly and arrives on time for their lessons. All Schools must follow the National Guidance in regards to unauthorised absences.

We understand that various factors may occasionally impact your child's ability to attend school, such as illness or family emergencies and in such cases please communicate with your child's school promptly to allow for them to provide appropriate support and guidance

Fixed penalty fines effective 01 September 2024 will be issued per parent per child.

- **1st Offence**
£80 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days
If payment not received within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 and must be paid within 7 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.
- **2nd Offence within 3 years**
£160 fine – will be issued and would need to be paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine of £160 within 21 days will result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.
- **3rd Offence within 3 years**
Where a family is identified to be fined on a 3rd occasion within a 3-year period, these cases will be referred straight to the magistrates' court for prosecution.

Cross Borough Checks

In cases where your child has moved between local authority areas the authority for that area will be contacted to check whether a penalty notice / prosecution has been actioned.

Co-parenting

A penalty notice can be issued to each parent or guardian liable for the attendance offence. This means if a child is residing with a parent and is taken on unauthorised leave with another parent or guardian, both would be issued with a penalty notice fine regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence.

National Threshold

If the local authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate in an individual case, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met.

We encourage you to partner with us in fostering a positive attitude towards education and reinforcing the value of regular attendance with your child. Together, we can create an environment where every student has an opportunity to thrive academically and personally.

Should you have any questions or concerns around attendance please speak with your child's school attendance officer.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr Trevor Cook
Assistant Director Education Services