

6th September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer of <<Fullname>>

Important Information About Attendance

I hope you and your family had a good summer break and that you are settling back into the school routine. If your child is a new starter with us, we hope they are enjoying being part of our school community and adjusting to a new routine.

As a school, we are committed to helping your child develop into a high achieving, confident, healthy and resilient person, creating a pathway to support their future aspirations, independence and contribution to society. In order to do this, we know that every day your child is in school counts. Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows missing school for even a day can mean a child is less likely to achieve good grades, which can have a damaging effect on their life chances.

Our aim is to work with parents and carers to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

New regulations which came into force on 19th August 2024 require us to share attendance data with the local authority and the Department of Education on a daily basis.

Please see below important guidance and legal information which Norfolk County Council have asked us to share with you.

Norfolk County Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence - Guidance for parents

The important legal information – New from August 19th 2024

The Government have introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1st penalty notice. The national framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Norfolk, where a pupil's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

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A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. There is no reduced sum available in this instance. Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Requests for leave of absence

Working Together To Improve School Attendance advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

Thank you for taking the time to read the important information from Norfolk County Council.

We know that sometimes our pupils cannot come to school because they are really unwell - and that's the right thing to do for them and other students. However, medical advice is clear that children with mild illness will often be well enough to attend - for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance [is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-a-z/when-is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/) is designed to support parents in their decision making about mild illness.

With all of these changes our priority is to support your child to attend school every day, ensuring they have the reasonable adjustments, interventions and early help to engage in their learning.

If your child is finding attending school difficult, is feeling anxious about attending school, or needs help to access their education, please contact the Attendance Manager, Mrs J Bryant, jbryant@acle.norfolk.sch.uk, so that we can discuss any issues and provide you with any support you may need.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Helen Watts
Principal

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