

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.

Attendance Summary for Parents

Our Expectations of You	What We Will Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your child attends school every day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School start time: 8.50am ○ School end time: 3.30pm ○ The class register will remain open until 9am and pupils arriving before this time will be given a present mark (/). ○ Any child arriving at school between 9am and 9.10am will be given a late mark (L). ○ If a child arrives at school after 9:10am, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. • Notify school as soon as possible if your child is going to be absent. • Only request time out of school if there are exceptional circumstances. https://forms.office.com/e/cEjghbPUB2 • Book any medical appointments outside of the school day when possible. • If a child is going to be absent (eg: in the event of illness) contact the school office before 8.40am so that the reason for absence is known and can be recorded in the register correctly. If the absence continues, parents should contact the office each day, unless a longer period of absence has already been communicated and agreed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear school attendance policy. • Support all pupils to feel welcomed at school. • Contact home by 10am if a child is absent and we haven't had a reason. • Where we have concerns, and we haven't had any contact from home, we may make house calls. • Provide a point of contact for parents to discuss any attendance concerns: Jenny Cook, head@cropwellbishop.notts.sch • Develop a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance e.g. attendance awards, letters.
Actions When Attendance is a Concern	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where attendance falls between 90 and 95% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share attendance information on a termly basis. • We may write to you, letting you know about our attendance concerns and offering support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where attendance falls below 90% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will write to you, letting you know about our attendance concerns and offering support. • We will initially monitor attendance for a 6 week period. • If attendance doesn't improve, we will write to you again to arrange a meeting to discuss our concerns and create an action plan. • We will explain possible legal interventions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where attendance is persistently below 90% and there has been no improvement following support offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate 'Notice to improve' attendance plan or 'Improving Attendance Contract' to be in place for a set monitoring period. • If attendance does not improve, school will refer to the Local Authority for fixed penalty notice or court procedures.
Leave of Absence/Holidays in term time	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School will only authorise leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. • School will not authorise holidays during term time. • The following are examples of reasons not deemed to be exceptional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My work does not allow me to take holidays during the school holiday periods ○ Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term ○ My child needs a holiday at quieter times due to their needs ○ Our holiday has been gifted/arranged by others and we did not have a choice of dates ○ My child has good or 100% attendance ○ Availability of cheaper holidays and travel arrangements ○ We booked the holiday before checking with the school ○ Holiday dates of siblings/family at other schools are different ○ Day trips/Birthday plans ○ It's a special sporting fixture/show/event I want my child to attend • If a child has been reported as unwell and a holiday is suspected, school will report to the local authority for a 	

penalty notice fine. School is expected to carry out home visits.

- School will look at child's overall attendance figures, when considering referring to the Local Authority for issuing of a fixed penalty notice.
- Parents will receive a warning of penalty notice for unauthorised leave.
- School will notify parents of penalty notice, should unauthorised leave of absence be taken (10 sessions over a 10-week rolling period).

Pupils arriving late to school

- Pupils arriving after the register closes will be marked as unauthorised. This is after 9.10am.
- School will look at child's overall attendance figures, when considering referring to the Local Authority for issuing of a fixed penalty notice.
- Parents will receive a warning of a penalty notice for unauthorised leave.
- If a child is late after the register closes for 10 sessions over a 10-week rolling period. School will notify parents of a penalty notice.