

School Attendance Support Service

Penalty Notices & Prosecution



School Attendance

Every child is entitled to a fulltime education. Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and is essential if pupils are to maximise their educational opportunities. The expectation of schools and the Local Authority is that children attend school every day the school is open.

Acceptable reasons for absence (authorised)

It is the parent/carers responsibility to supply medical evidence to enable the school to authorise absence.

- Sickness (Where medical evidence has been supplied)
- Sent home from school
- Unavoidable medical appointments (Where medical evidence has been supplied)
- Religious observance (Maximum 3 days per academic year)
- Exceptional circumstance

An exceptional circumstance is a one-time unavoidable/emergency, which may be authorised at only the Headteacher's discretion.

Unacceptable reasons for absence (unauthorised)

- Truancy/school refusal
- Holidays in Term Time
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Looking after siblings
- Non-urgent medical appointments
- Continued illness (Where no medical evidence has been supplied)

Children must arrive at school on time as punctuality is just as important to give your child the best start. Where a child has arrived late after the school register has closed, it is coded as an unauthorised absence and will affect their attendance levels and academic outcomes.

The Impacts

Irregular school attendance may leave children vulnerable to

- Safeguarding concerns including:
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CME)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- Grooming
- Youth Crime (drugs/gangs/knife)
- Anti-Social behaviour
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Underachievement at school
- Disaffection and reduced opportunities
- Unemployment
- Social exclusion
- Mental Health issues

A pupil who misses 10% or more school sessions due to authorised or unauthorised absence is classified as a persistent absentee, and a pupil who misses 50% or more is a severe absentee. As defined by the Department for Education (DfE).

0 days of school	100%	Perfection
Equates to 2 days off school each year	99%	Excellent
Equates to 5 days off school each year	97%	Good
Equates to 10 days off school each year	95%	Slight Concern
Equates to 20 days off school each year	90%	Concerned
Equates to 30 days off school each year	85%	Very Concerned

Penalty Notices

Sections 444A and 4441B of the Education Act 1996 Empowers designated Local Authority (LA) Officers, to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

The School Attendance Support Service has a statutory duty to remind parents of their legal responsibilities regarding ensuring their children are receiving the full-time education to which they are entitled. Where a parent has failed to ensure the regular attendance the School Attendance Support Service will consider issuing Penalty Notices, in line with the Local Code of Conduct and the National Framework for Issuing Penalty Notices. The purpose of the Penalty Notice is to prevent the escalation of unauthorised absences and to avoid prosecution. There is no power of appeal.

Penalty Notices for a first offence are £160 per parent per child. Parents have 28 days to pay the full amount. If paid within 21 days, the fine is reduced to £80 per parent per child. Penalty Notices for a second offence are £160 per parent per child. Parents have 28 days to pay the full amount.

The Penalty Notice can be an alternative to prosecution. Payment of a Penalty Notice enables parents to discharge what is potentially the liability of a criminal conviction. If attendance fails to improve alternative tools such as legal action will be considered.

Prosecution

Under existing legislation parent/carers commit an offence if a child has failed to attend school regularly. Where parent/carers have failed to ensure the regular attendance of their child/children, legal action will proceed under Section 444(1) or(1a) of the Education Act 1996.

All cases are heard at a Magistrates Court. Where parent/carers are found guilty they will receive a criminal record, which must be declared to their employer as well as being at risk of receiving much higher fines, community orders, rehabilitation orders or probation.

Hounslow School Attendance Support Service

The School Attendance Support Service has a statutory duty to ensure that referred children receive their full educational entitlement in terms of attendance in line with the Working Together to Improve School Attendance statutory guidance, to ensure they are safe and to enable them to achieve to their full potential. We aim to improve school attendance by working in partnership with schools, Children's Social Care, Police, and other agencies. To give parents and children the same message regarding the importance of regular attendance at school. Where this message is not made clear at an early age it can lead to problems for parent/carers when their children become teenagers.

The School Attendance Support Service work alongside schools to monitor the attendance of referred children where attendance levels are 90% and below; where a child has been absent from school for 3 consecutive days and no contact has been received from the parent/carer and where unauthorised Term Time leave has been taken.

When attendance is below the expected level the School Attendance Support Service will follow procedures and send out Penalty Notice Warning Letters and Notice to Improve/Local Authority Attendance Meeting appointment letters, telephone parents and conduct home visits to discuss the attendance and any difficulties they are experiencing.

All Hounslow schools have a named School Attendance Support Officer, who can offer advice and strategies to parent/carers when difficulties with school attendance arise. Our partnership working with other services allows us to make referrals and signpost parent/carers for support to help improve their child's school attendance.

If you require advice, please contact

School Attendance Support Service

SASS Duty 0208583 2622

(08:30am – 4:30pm)

SASSDuty@hounslow.gov.uk

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