



FAQ on School Attendance Policies and Procedures

- 1. What constitutes "Persistent Absence" and "Risk of Persistent Absence" in schools?**
Persistent absence is defined as a pupil's attendance rate being 90% or below, meaning they have missed 10% or more of their school sessions. "Risk of Persistent Absence" doesn't have a set threshold, but generally applies to pupils whose attendance is consistently low, with schools often flagging concerns at around 10 days or more of absence.
- 2. What are some examples of absences that would be considered unauthorised?**
Unauthorised absences include: truancy before or during the school day; absences without a proper explanation; arriving at school after the register has closed; absence due to shopping, looking after other children, or birthdays; day trips and holidays taken during term time that have not been agreed by the school; and leaving school for no valid reason during the school day.
- 3. What is the purpose of a penalty notice regarding school attendance, and how much does it cost?** Penalty notices are an alternative to prosecution and are intended to prevent the need for court action by encouraging improved attendance. A penalty notice costs £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid within 28 days. A second notice within a rolling 3 year period for the same child is always £160. These fines are set nationally and should be adhered to by all state-funded schools.
- 4. How many penalty notices can a parent receive for the same child, and what happens if that limit is reached?** A maximum of two penalty notices can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period. If the national threshold is met for a third time within that period, alternative actions, which may include prosecution, are to be considered instead.
- 5. Under what circumstances can a school grant a leave of absence?** Schools can grant leaves of absence for specific circumstances which are: taking part in regulated performances or employment abroad with the correct license; attending interviews for further education or employment; study leave for public examinations (but not mock exams); a temporary part-time timetable for exceptional reasons with agreed end date, where parent/carer and school agree. Leave may also be granted for medical appointments, religious observance and in other exceptional circumstances at the school's discretion. However, holidays during term time are not considered exceptional circumstances and are generally not authorised by schools.
- 6. What is a "Notice to Improve" and when is it used?** A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for parents to engage with support and improve their child's attendance before a penalty notice is issued. This notice is used when the national threshold for penalty notices has been met, support is deemed appropriate but the school has not had any engagement from the parents or the support has not worked. However, schools and local authorities may decide to issue a penalty notice immediately in cases where support is not appropriate (for example in the case of a holiday during term time).

7. **What are the primary reasons a pupil's name might be deleted from the school admission register, particularly for pupils of compulsory school age?** A pupil's name can be lawfully deleted from the register only in specific circumstances. For pupils of compulsory school age, this includes registering at another school; if a school attendance order has been changed to name another school or revoked; a student has been permanently excluded from a school; if the pupil has died; or if the pupil is detained under a sentence of detention. Consent from the local authority is required for removing a pupil from a special school register.

8. **What is the role of the local authority in supporting school attendance, especially when a child attends school in a different authority than where they live?** The local authority has a wide range of responsibilities in supporting attendance and providing intervention when deemed necessary. This can include issuing penalty notices, prosecution, monitoring attendance data, working with home and school local authorities. Both the authority where the child attends school and the authority where they live work together to support the pupil. The authority where the child resides is responsible for assessing and putting in place any early help or multi-agency support plans.