

RE: School Attendance and Issue of Penalty Notices

The percentage of half days missed due to school absence remains higher in Knowsley than the national average and the key cause of this higher level of overall absence is a higher rate of half days missed due to unauthorised absences.

Our current attendance stands at 95.8% against a target of 97.0%. If the unauthorised absences had not taken place this would have improved our attendance by at least 0.5%.

The Law:

As you may be aware, from 1st September 2013 the Department of Education changed the regulations regarding requests for family holidays during term time. The law states that there is no legal entitlement for parents to take their children on holiday during term time and that Head Teachers can only authorise leave during term time in exceptional circumstances. Going on holiday during term time is not classed as exceptional circumstances.

For exceptional circumstances, the leave must be approved in advance by the Head Teacher.

School attendance officers monitor school attendance and work with the school and parents to ensure children regularly attend school. If your child continues to miss school, legal action, such as a fixed penalty notice, a fine or imprisonment, can be taken against you.

Combined with the renewed focus and ongoing instruction by Knowsley Council of improving school attendance and the new legislation, the School Governing Body has decided that it will use the full range of sanctions available where leave of absence is taken without the permission of the school with effect from **Wednesday 2nd September 2015**. The Council will regularly monitor school absence during term time and will work with the Head Teacher to ensure parents adhere to the new legislation.

The rationale behind adopting these new measures is that regular and punctual attendance at school is not only a legal requirement but essential for our pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

When are Penalty Notices used?

- In cases of clear and open truancy (including pupils found during truancy sweeps).
- In cases where a parent / carer actively allows the absence.
- In cases of persistent late arrival at school
- In instances of unauthorised absence taken in term time where leave of absence has not been granted by the Head Teacher and the pupil concerned has lost at least ten sessions (5 school days) to unauthorised absence during one term.

The liable parent / carer shall receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued, and shall be given a maximum of 15 school days to effect an improvement, except where:-

- Leave of absence is deliberately taken in term time without or against school permission creating a period of unauthorised absence of 10 consecutive sessions or more. In such cases the local authority will move direct to issue of a Penalty Notice without any warning period.

How is a Penalty Notice issued?

By post to your home address.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

- Payment within 21 days of a notice is £60.
- Payment within 28 days of a notice is £120.
- Non-payment may result in a fine of up to £2,500 for each child who is not attending school and / or imprisonment for up to 3 months.

If you have a query regarding your child's attendance, please contact the Head Teacher or:-

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
School Attendance Service,
School Services (Inclusion Standards & Effectiveness),
Cordingley Building,
Scotchbarn Lane,
Prescot,
L35 7JD.

Telephone: 0151 443 5147

Please be assured that this decision has not been taken lightly by the School Governing Body and full research and guidance has been undertaken with the appropriate parties.

As the school's Governing Body it is our responsibility to ensure that the necessary steps are taken since poor school attendance damages educational achievement and the future progress of our young people. Promoting and supporting good attendance at school is essential to learning and attainment.

Alison Foulkes
Chair of Governors