



June 2024

Dear Parent/Carer(s),

Changes to the Statutory Attendance Guidance

I am writing to all parents and carers on behalf of Sunderland City Council to inform you of changes to the Statutory Attendance Guidance from the 19th August 2024. These changes must be made by all schools and Local Authorities across the country, with the aim of ensuring there is a consistent approach to attendance.

Firstly, I would like to thank all parents and carers who work hard in partnership with our schools to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually. Excellent school attendance has been linked to better educational outcomes but it has also been shown to promote good social and emotional development for all children.

The changes from August have been broken down into four categories:

1) A new National Framework for Attendance Penalty Notices

Any attendance penalty notices issued after the 19th August 2024 will be issued in line with the new regulations. The new Penalty Notice regulations are:

- Each parent will be issued a separate penalty notice, for each child who is absent.
For example, 2 parents and 3 children, each parent will receive 3 penalty notices for £160 each, with a family total of £960 in fines.
- The fine amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- This will be considered your first offence.
- The next time an offence occurs, within 3 years of the date the first penalty notice is issued, the fine amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, with no reduction.
- The third time an offence occurs this will be presented to Magistrate's court with no penalty notice issued.

This will include Term Time Leave fines, and Irregular Attendance. Term time leave does not just include holidays. Where a child is absent and it is believed they are absent due to term time leave, schools will be expected to carry out a home visit and see the child on or before the 3rd school day of absence.

For irregular attendance - where a child has unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in any 10-week period, the school must consider escalation to prosecution. Sessions refer to each half a school day, with most schools having 2 sessions each day. The school must consider the reasons for the absence, the support already offered, and the engagement of the parents/carers and young person. These 10 sessions could be made up of term time leave, unauthorised late marks, or unauthorised absence.

It is therefore important to continue notify school every day, via the school office, that your child is absent, providing a reason, and where appropriate evidence of medical appointments or prescribed medication. Schools will consider NHS guidance [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-protection-in-children-and-young-people-settings-including-education) and [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-keep-child-at-home/) when making their decision whether to authorise absence due to illness.



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2) Updates to the Working Together to Improve Attendance Guidance

The Department for Education have updated the [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) available on the DFE website. This clarifies the expectations for parents, schools and the Local Authority to promote the importance of regular attendance at school, and to provide ideas for support and interventions when a young person is not attending school on a regular basis.

3) Regulation changes to modernise school attendance and admission registers.

The predominant change is around the use of attendance coding for schools to use on their attendance register. This may mean that you see different marks on your child's attendance certificate, including sub codes for example C2 for a reduced timetable, or Y4 for school closed due to weather conditions. The H code for authorised term time leave (holiday) has been removed, therefore Head teachers can no longer authorise term time leave, unless there are exceptional circumstances covered by the C code and must request an attendance penalty notice if there are 5 or more days of unauthorised absence.

Another change to these regulations is that parents must accept the school place offered prior to their child going on school roll. Therefore, if you have been offered a school place that was not one of your preferences you must either accept the school place or notify the Local Authority how you intend to educate your child.

4) Regulations will come into force on the 19th August 2024 to mandate attendance data sharing by all state funded schools.

This means that your child's attendance data will be shared with the Department for Education and the Local Authority every day. This will be live data. This will allow the DFE to provide schools with the tools to monitor and see improvement in attendance, and will allow the Local Authority to provide advice, support, and Early Help services. It will also allow tracking of attendance trends for example a child reported as ill the same week each year, or a certain year group or cohort with patterns of absence.

A diagram showing the summary of the changes is included for you.

With all of these changes, the priority is to support every child and young person to access school every day. Balmoral Learning Trust will continue to support our schools to prioritise good attendance and support parents or children who are anxious about attending school. Our aim is that all children achieve the best education and enjoy their school life fully.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Bell
Chief Executive Officer