



Dear parents / carers

New DfE statutory attendance guidance: 'Attendance Counts'

You will probably be aware that there has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. Attendance is not just important for children's learning, but also their social and personal development. Absence creates gaps in their education, putting them significantly behind their peer group and creating anxiety and pressure for children.

To help address their concerns, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced new statutory guidance from August 2024, called ['Working Together to Improve School Attendance'](#), aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend. We have summarised this below:

Support first

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, encouraging the school, parents and other agencies to work together to understand why a child is not attending school and put in place effective solutions to address them.

As such, if you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact Mrs Bradford, our attendance officer as soon as possible so that we can better understand the issues, and ensure appropriate support is put in place to support you, your family, and your child to prevent further absences.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary 'support first' has not been effective, or it has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including Gloucestershire County Council, to formalise and intensify the support, this could include one of the following measures:

- **Notice to Improve**

If a pupil has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks, you may receive a '*Notice to Improve*' notification, sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by Gloucestershire County Council. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence, where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place;
- arriving late after the register has closed; or
- a combination of these, with holidays taken during term time.

These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings, such as transitions to secondary school or in-year school changes.

Example: if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in July (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, you may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested and issued by the school and County Council to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Penalty Notice

As stated above penalty notices will usually be issued when a notice to improve has not been effective, however, they may also be issued directly for any holiday-related absence that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks.

Schools are *not* permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and must consider each application for a leave of absence individually, before making a decision.

From September 2024, the penalty fine is £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a three-year, continuous period, the fine is £160 and there would be no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including, for example, step-parents with day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be issued with a Penalty Notice and fined, and this applies to each child who is absent.

Example: If two adults take two children out of school the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21 days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, Gloucestershire County Council may proceed the case to Court.

Our revised school attendance policy in line with these requirements can be found here

<https://www.castlehill.gloucs.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=2703&type=pdf>

If you would also like more information, please visit Gloucestershire County Council's public attendance pages: [Attendance and absence from school | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

Sarah Bradford
Attendance Officer

Philip Haslett: Head of Strategy and
Inclusion

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