



Heatherside Junior School
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Headteacher: Mrs H Dunn

5th September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

As you may have heard in the news, the Government have issued new attendance regulations for schools and parents. These are statutory changes issued by the Department for Education which came into force on 19th August 2024. These changes govern how schools and local authorities manage attendance and issue penalty notices for unauthorised school absences. These changes are being implemented to address national concerns around school attendance and to improve outcomes for children, both in terms of their welfare and academic success.

At Heatherside, our attendance rates are very good and we really appreciate your support in helping ensure your child/ren attend school every day and arrive on time. However, the national regulations have been strengthened and we have a duty to contact parents as soon as we have any concerns about punctuality or attendance so that plans and support can be put in place. Details of parent, school and Local Authority responsibilities are detailed on the Government website [here](#).

We will be updating our Attendance Policy and website to reflect these changes in due course but in the meantime we wanted to summarise the main changes here:

Summary of changes applicable to absences from 3rd September 2024 onwards:

1. Threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period met for first time

An increase in the amount of the penalty notice payable from £120 to £160 per child per parent* if paid within 28 days. If paid within 21 days, a reduced rate of £80 per child per parent* is payable.

Penalty notices are issued for unauthorised term-time absences of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) or more within a rolling 10 school week period. In practice, this means term-time holidays. Penalty notices are also considered in other cases of unauthorised absence when this threshold is met, although we would be already working with you on relevant support measures if this was to occur.

2. Threshold met for second time (within 3 years)

The penalty notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 per child per parent* (reduced rate not available).

3. Threshold met for third time or more (within 3 years)

Rather than a penalty notice being issued, the case will be referred to the Legal Intervention Team at Hampshire County Council to consider alternative legal intervention, including prosecution.

If you do have any questions about this statutory guidance, please contact us via the school office.

**in this guidance "parent" includes all parents involved in failing to secure the pupil's attendance e.g. who they were living with on the dates of the offences, or which parents went on the unauthorised holiday. The meaning of parent in relation to a child includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996.*

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Dunn and Mrs Bate (Headteacher Heatherside Infants)

FAQs (Frequently asked questions taken from the new statutory guidance)

If I have been issued with a penalty notice before 19th August 2024, will this be counted if I am issued with another penalty notice from September onwards?

No, the new limits come into effect from 19th August 2024.

If I have already booked a holiday for next year, could I receive a penalty fine at the new higher rate?

Yes, if the absence has not been authorised by the Head Teacher of your child's school. Remember, only a Head Teacher can agree whether an absence can be authorised in exceptional circumstances

Who can be issued with a penalty notice?

- Each parent can receive a fine for each child who has had unauthorised absence from school.
- In education law, anyone who lives with a child and who has day-to-day care of the child is also considered to be a parent whether they are the biological parent or not. For example, this will include stepparents and partners.

Do the new rules only apply to holidays during term time?

No, it applies to all unauthorised absence from school including holidays. Unauthorised absence includes other absence that has not been agreed such as truancy, arriving late after the register has closed and failing to provide reasons for absence.

How do I request for my child to have leave granted during term time?

You must submit an Absence Request form at least 2 weeks before the proposed absence. It will be for your child's Head Teacher to decide as to whether there are exceptional circumstances that will allow them to grant the time off. Do not assume that the absence will be granted until you have received confirmation from the school.

Do the 10 sessions of unauthorised absence have to be taken all at the same time before a penalty fine is issued?

No, a penalty fine can be issued for any combination of absences over a 10-week rolling period. They can be consecutive or non-consecutive and can span over two terms.

What happens if I am issued with a penalty fine and I do not pay it?

Unauthorised absence from school is an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996. A penalty fine is an opportunity for you to settle out of court. If you do not take this opportunity, you can be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance.

What should I do if I am worried about my child's attendance?

In the first instance you should contact your child's school and ask for advice on how they can support you to improve the situation.