

**Education Welfare**

**Stoke-on-Trent City Council**

**ST4 1HH**

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Dear Parent/Carer,

The Department for Education have shared with the schools and Local Authorities changes to attendance guidance that will become statutory and must be implemented after the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. These changes must be made by all schools and Local Authorities across the country, with the aim to ensuring consistent approaches.

These changes have been broken down into 4 categories.

**1) A new National Framework for Attendance Penalty Notices**

Any attendance penalty notices issued after the 19<sup>th</sup> August 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 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 the 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, no reduction will be offered.
- The third time an offence occurs this will be presented to Magistrates court; no penalty notice will be issued.

This will include Term Time leave Penalty Notices and Irregular Attendance. Term time leave includes requested unauthorised holidays and suspected unauthorised holidays (if suspected of a Term Time leave the onus is on the parents to prove they were not on a Term Time leave.

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 school day, with most schools having 2 sessions per day. The school must consider the reason for the absence, the support already offered and the engagement of the parents/carers and young person. These 10 sessions can be made up of term time leave, unauthorised late marks or unauthorised absence.

It is therefore important to notify the school everyday that your child is absent, providing a reason and where appropriate evidence of medical appointments or prescribed medication. Schools will consider NHS guidance when making their decision whether to authorise absence due to illness.

## **2) Updates to the Working Together to Improve Attendance Guidance**

The Department for Education have updated the [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) 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 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 predominate 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 a school closed for weather conditions. The H code for authorised term time leave (holiday) has been removed, therefore Headteachers 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.

## **4) Regulations will come into force on the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 improvements 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 is reported as ill the same week each year, or a certain year group or cohort with a pattern of absence.

With all of these changes the priority is supporting a young person to access school every day, ensuring they have the reasonable adjustments, interventions and early help to engage in their learning.

If your child is finding school difficult, is feeling anxious about attending school, or needs help to access their education speak to school, arrange to meet and discuss reasonable adjustments and the support available to your child.

Every school day matters.

Kind regards

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