

## **Penalty Notices**

This letter alerts you to the introduction of penalty notices for unauthorised absences from school from January 2015.

The local authority believe that any absence from school, for whatever reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities, so should be avoided if at all possible. Reducing absence from school is a key priority, both nationally and locally, because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution with the aim of seeking to secure an improvement in the pupil's attendance.

A penalty notice can be requested by the school, the police or from within the local authority's Education Welfare Service in relation to unauthorised non-attendance at school. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, then it is the headteacher's decision to accept, or not accept this, and ensure that the register is marked appropriately.

If a notice has been requested, the parent/carer will receive a warning letter that gives them 15 days to provide evidence to the local authority that the unauthorised absences are not justified and that the register should be amended. If the unauthorised absences are due to taking a holiday in school time then a warning will not be issued. Please note that there is no limit to the number of formal warnings which can be issued

If evidence is not provided or evidence not accepted by the school then the penalty notice will be issued. Payment of £60 will be due in the first instance which will rise to £120 if not paid promptly. If the penalty is not paid then the local authority will consider issuing prosecution proceedings against parent(s) for the original offence, which is 'failure to ensure regular attendance at school of the registered pupil' under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Please remember that if there are reasons why your child is missing school then you can seek support and guidance from staff at your child's school. Please do ask before the non-attendance becomes an issue.