WHEN ARE PENALTY NOTICES USED?

Penalty Notices may be used where absence is unauthorised and a pupil has 10 or more sessions (1 day = 2 sessions) of unauthorised absences within the previous 10 school week period, for example:

- Unauthorised holiday (G), for example a parent has taken their child on holiday during term without authorisation.
- A pupil regularly arrives late for school after the register has closed (U)
- Odd days off which have not been authorised by the school (O)
- Enquiries at school after a truancy sweep show the pupil's absence at that time as unauthorised.

CAN I BE PROSECUTED IF I PAY THE PENALTY NOTICE BUT MY CHILD IS STILL ABSENT FROM SCHOOL?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice as payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, depending upon the circumstances, a prosecution might be considered for further periods of unauthorised absence not covered by the Penalty Notice. It is vital that you work closely with your child's school and any support agencies such as the Education Welfare Service.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE EWS?

education.welfare@bristol.gov.uk

0117 3521438

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

INFORMATION LEAFLET



Education Welfare Service

WHY IS GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

Good school attendance gives your child the opportunity of success and helps develop skills for life. Your child should attend school every day unless there is an unavoidable cause such as illness.

Missing school damages a pupil's learning and grades (research shows that missing school often leads to a drop in GCSE grades), disrupts routines and can make children vulnerable to crime.

Pupils should never miss school for reasons like shopping, birthdays or to wait in for a repair person.

Missing school can seriously impair learning and affect life opportunities.

This leaflet is for parents and carers so they are aware of the need for their child to attend regularly and on time to achieve their best.

It is important parents and carers promote regular school attendance, understand their responsibilities and the consequences of their child having absence from school.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS ABSENT FROM SCHOOL?

Telephone the school as early as possible on the first morning of each absence to give the reason.

Ensure you follow the school's attendance policy with regard to your child's absence.

Make routine dentist and doctor appointments after school or during school holidays. If you have to make an appointment during school time, help your child to be at school for most of the day and let the school know about the appointment.

You may be asked for medical documents or an appointment card if your child is regularly absent due to illness or dental/medical appointments.

If your child has an ongoing diagnosed illness you are advised to inform the school and keep copies of letters from health professionals and also appointment cards or prescriptions.

CAN I GET HELP IF MY CHILD IS NOT ATTENDING REGULARLY?

Yes, from your child's school. It is very important that you speak with the school at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance. Request a meeting with your school's attendance lead. The Education Welfare Service can also give you advice.

WHAT IF I WANT TO GO ON HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME?

Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. You must ask permission from the Headteacher and check the school policy. You might be at risk of a Penalty Notice if you go on holiday in term time and the absence is not authorised.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS STRUGGLING TO ATTEND SCHOOL?

You must:

- Talk to your child - try to find out why.
- Meet with a member of school staff to discuss the situation and look for solutions.
- Contact the Education Welfare Service for advice (details overleaf).
- Try to understand what is happening for your child and help them resolve the problem.

Education is key to your child's future success so it is important to solve issues as quickly as possible.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND THE LAW:

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child does not attend school regularly and the absence is not agreed by the school (i.e. the absence is unauthorised). A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

1. Penalty Notice. The Penalty Notice (per parent, per child eg, 3 siblings absent for unauthorised absence during term time would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines) is £80 payable within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution; it does not require a court appearance, but still aims to improve school attendance. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.

2. Prosecution. Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Prosecution could result in a criminal record and fines up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. A range of other disposals are also available such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences.

3. Further Unauthorised Absence. If further unauthorised absences occur within a 3-year period, the fine will be £160 and you will not have the opportunity to pay at the lower rate. A third offence occurring within a 3-year period will result in automatic prosecution.