

support first, before considering issuing a Penalty Notice for a term –time holiday.

For further information please contact the EWO allocated to your child's school, who details can be obtained from School.  
Attendance@suffolk.gov.uk

There are currently 4 types of unauthorised absence codes:

- G Holiday not granted by school
- N No reason for absence given
- O Absent in other or unknown circumstances
- U Arrived in school after school registration closed

### **How Does This Affect Parents?**

There will be three 'offences'

- First Offence £160 per parent, per child payable within 28 days of issue (Reduced to £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days of issue)
- Second Offence £160 per parent, per child payable within 28 days
- Third Offence and any other Offences, the third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case could be presented to the Magistrate's Court. Prosecution could result in Criminal Records and fines of up to £2.500.

Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court may show on a parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Full details of the new National FPN Framework, can be found on Suffolks School Attendance website. [The Parent Hub - Suffolk County Council](#)

The role of an Education Welfare Officer is to improve and maintain children's school attendance by listening to, recognising barriers and offering appropriate support. Some meetings may begin with parents being Cautioned under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984. This measure is to protect parents, schools and the Local Authority, if in very few cases, the matter is escalated to legal proceedings.



## **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**

New guidance from the DfE has been published and affects schools, parents, compulsory school age children and local authorities in England.

The new document is called 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' and came into force from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The guidance sets out expectations for schools, parents and local authorities.

This leaflet has been produced in collaboration with Define Fine & PACT - Parents and Children Together

### **The Document's Expectations**

The document expects schools and local authorities to build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to children's attendance and to work in partnership with families and other services to remove them, being particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their SEN and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support first.

*A parent is classified as an adult who has day to day responsibility for and/or lives with a young person of compulsory school age.*

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child of compulsory school age has access to and receives an efficient, full-time, education suitable to their age, aptitude and any SEN they may have – either at school or otherwise and have a duty to inform school on a daily basis, if their child is absent. Schools and Local Authorities have a responsibility to provide a suitable education if registered at an educational establishment.

Schools are expected to place high importance on attendance and punctuality and are expected to communicate this to parents on a regular basis and offer support in the first instance to improve pupils' school attendance.

### **Pre-Referral Expectations**

Schools are expected to share information with parents about their child's attendance and punctuality regularly. In addition, schools are expected to continually analyse and identify absence patterns and meet with parents and children, to discuss absence levels and patterns. Schools are expected to inform the Local Authority if a child has been absent due to physical or mental illness for 15 consecutive days. Schools have a responsibility to meet individual pupils' needs.

Some children may need an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and some children may benefit from being offered a place at an Alternative Provision (AP) or a Specialist Setting.

### **Absence Codes**

There are two types of absence, authorised and unauthorised. Schools have the definitive ability to decide how to code a child's absence. Long-term or repetitive absences, authorised or otherwise, can be a cause for concern and need to be investigated. Meetings between schools and parents should enable schools to identify, acknowledge and respond to these absences and offer support by referring to other agencies and services who will work collaboratively to remove barriers, and/or make reasonable adjustments in school. However, accessing education should be the ultimate ambition. A full breakdown of the national absence framework of attendance codes can be found on Suffolk's School Attendance website. [The Parent Hub - Suffolk County Council](#)

### **Legal Defences to Non-School Attendance**

- Where an absence has been agreed by school in exceptional circumstances
- Where school has agreed a pupil is unable to attend school due to physical or mental ill health (medical evidence may be requested)
- Where a pupil lives more than 2 miles (in the case of a child under 8) or more than 3 miles (in the case of a child aged over 8) where the Local Authority has failed to provide

transport—unless a parent has chosen to register their child at a school out of catchment

- Where a child is absent for a day of religious observance set aside by the religious body to which their parents belong

### **Part-Time Timetables**

Occasionally, a full time education is unmanageable. In these cases, a part-time timetable could be explored. If agreed, it should be monitored, reviewed and increased regularly, by parents and schools. leading to the return of a full and comprehensive education in an agreed timeframe.

### **EWO Involvement and the Court Process**

The Local Authority would like parents to understand, proceeding to Court is always considered as a last resort. The aim is always to support parents and their children to access the education they are legally entitled to. Cases are only referred to Court if there has been very limited or no parental engagement, or support has been unsuccessfully exhausted.

### **Term-Time Holidays & Unauthorised Absences**

Most parents will be aware of the new national stance with regard to term-time holidays and unauthorised absences. This is a single national threshold where a Fixed Penalty Notice should be considered for by all schools in England, where 10 sessions (usually 5 school days) of unauthorised absence occur in a rolling 10 school week period. These absences do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of any combination of unauthorised absence. The 10 school-week period can span different terms or school years.

*The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence applied for or taken, for the purpose of leisure or recreation, to be an exceptional circumstance and would not expect school to offer*