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# DORNEY SCHOOL



**RESPECT \* COLLABORATE \* GROW**  
Headteacher: Mrs Lee

Dear parents,

Below is some important information from Buckinghamshire Council regarding pupil attendance and the current system of penalty notices, taken from the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024).

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_-\\_August\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

Alongside this information is a handy poster for easy reference.

## National framework for penalty notices

Attendance at school is essential for children's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development.

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and will only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has been provided and has not worked or been engaged with or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

## The circumstances that penalty notices may be issued

The circumstances that penalty notices may be issued include:

- irregular school attendance
- parentally-condoned absences
- unauthorised holidays in term-time
- being in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion
- persistent late arrival at school



Headteachers are unable to agree leave of absence during term time unless they are satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances. The fundamental principles for defining ‘exceptional’ are rare, significant, unavoidable, and short”. And by ‘unavoidable’ it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

### **When it is appropriate to issue a penalty notice**

To ensure consistent delivery of penalty notices the following criteria will apply:

- there have been at least 10 sessions (equivalent to **5 school days**) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). Please note that each school day is equivalent to two sessions
- if a headteacher does not authorise a request from a parent/carer for term time leave and the parent takes the leave. (School must advise parents of this and how the action conforms to the school’s attendance policy).
- **persistently late after the close of the register** (coded U).
- in certain circumstances, including where ten sessions of absence comprise of unauthorised leave of absence in term time, a penalty notice can be issued without a formal warning having been issued previously.
- where a child who has been excluded is present in a public place during the first five days a penalty notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate.
- a penalty notice may also be issued without a formal warning if a formal warning has already been issued to the parent/carer previously.

Following the landmark case of [Isle of Wight Council v Platt](#), parents who take their children out of school, even if their child has regular attendance, can be prosecuted if they do not have permission from the headteacher.

### **Our procedure for issuing penalty notices**

Within Buckinghamshire, the responsibility for issuing penalty notices and managing arrangements for their payment and the collections of monies rests with the **County Attendance Team**.



This ensures that all procedures relating to penalty notices are consistently applied, that enforcement action is not duplicated and that any subsequent court action is integrated into the existing attendance procedures.

Penalty notices will only be issued within the terms of the Code of Conduct. The County Attendance Team will ensure that penalty notices are properly issued and only issued for offences where the Buckinghamshire Council is willing and able to prosecute.

Penalty notices will not be issued in person but either by post or hand delivered.



## **What does this mean if your child attends Dorney School?**

The school carefully monitors attendance. The information and data are automatically checked by the local authority through a national database. We will notify you in the first instance of our concerns regarding your child's attendance. This may be an initial conversation with the class teacher.

A reminder letter may be sent to you if no improvements are noticed, and a meeting will be arranged with a member of the senior team if change is not sustained. With the new legislation, penalty notices may be discharged by the county attendance team when attendance has not improved following the information above.

At Dorney School, our aim will always be to support children, and their families. We will try our best to understand your circumstances and help your child if attendance is affected by illness or additional needs. We will always consider sanctions as a last resort if we believe that parents have not taken active steps to improve their child's attendance.

The school's attendance policy can be found on the school website for your reference.

Mrs Sharifah Lee  
Headteacher  
Dorney School

