



Lunsford Primary School

02 July 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE LAW REGARDING PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE (INCLUDING HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME) FROM SCHOOL

You may be aware that from the 19th August 2024, a new National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence, including unauthorised holiday absence, is being introduced following changes to the law.

Currently, and until the end of July 2024, the amount payable for these penalty notices stands at £60, increasing to £120 after 21 days of issue. If after 28 days the penalty notice remains unpaid, the matter is pursued to Magistrates Court by Kent County Council

What are the changes?

1. From the 19th August 2024, there will be a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for **any** reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period;
2. The first time this threshold is met, a penalty notice will be issued. The amount of the fine will be £80 (currently £60) per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 (currently £120) if paid within 28 days of being issued. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court;
3. If within three years, the threshold is met for a second time, the fine will automatically be triggered at the higher rate of £160 per parent, per child. There will be no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
4. If the threshold is met for a third time in a 3-year rolling period, a Penalty Notice will not be issued. Instead, the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates Court under s.444 of the Education Act (1996) where fines of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be ordered.

The new National Framework has been introduced not only to deter children being absent from school for long periods of time, but also to help prevent persistent patterns of absence, for example, those children who are absent due to holidays every academic year.

Further information on how the new rules may affect you can be found by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Headteacher Mr G Anscombe BA (Hons) PGCE NPQH

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Our process for requesting leave during term time will not change and it will remain the decision of the Headteacher to decide whether the reason provided for the absence is an exceptional circumstance. Only in these circumstances will the absence be authorised. We still ask that you complete an Application for Leave of Absence form via your Operoo account (please contact the School Office for access to this). A letter will be posted to your home address confirming the outcome of this.

It is imperative that you inform the school of any planned absences as soon as possible **before** the start of the absence date, failure to inform the school, not only takes up many hours of investigation to ensure your child is safe and well, but in some cases can result in home visits and reporting to outside agencies.

Excellent attendance remains a priority at Lunsford Primary School, and we will use all tools available to us to support Parents and Carers improve their child's attendance. This includes requesting penalty notices for unauthorised absence where it is deemed appropriate and will be determined on a case-by-case basis, after taking all considerations into account. We thank you for your support with this by ensuring your child attends school every day and on time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Anscombe." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mr G Anscombe
Headteacher