



Northamptonshire County Council

Please ask for: Jonathan Lewis
Tel: 01604 367960
Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 25th April 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

The county council and its schools are very keen for all pupils in Northamptonshire to have the very best educational outcomes that are possible. Northamptonshire is currently under performing against to this expectation and following the launch of our 'Race To The Top' programme, we are reviewing all areas of how our schools perform to ensure this aspiration is met.

School attendance is a key area. In line with government expectations, the council firmly believes that for pupils to progress and achieve their full potential that they need to attend school. Changes to legislation in 2013 mean parents are no longer entitled to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for absence must only be in exceptional circumstances and the headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.

In Northamptonshire, 39,672 days were missed from primary schools and 57,781 days from secondary schools without permission across the autumn term 2013 and spring term 2014. To date, despite changes in government legislation in 2013, the council has only chosen to issue a penalty notice after 10 days unauthorised absence. However to achieve our aspiration for the very best educational outcomes, we are proposing to issue penalties when children miss five consecutive school days or the equivalent of 5 days within a six week period from June 2016. This brings Northamptonshire in line with the majority of other Local Authorities.

The attached leaflet explains the policy and procedure in more detail and if you have any queries please contact the Educational and Inclusion Partnerships team at the following email address attendance-admin@northamptonshire.gov.uk

County Hall
George Row
Northampton NN1 1ED
w. www.northamptonshire.gov.uk
t. 0300 126 1000
e. attendance-admin@northamptonshire.gov.uk



Race to the Top
Aspiring • Improving • Achieving



I realise that the vast majority of parents do not have unauthorised absence in term time as they recognise the significant impact this can have on their child's education. We hope you will continue to support us by not planning a leave of absence during term time.

I am sure you will be supportive of this decision which along with a range of other measures should lead to improvements in educational attainment and life chances for all pupils.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Lewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jonathan Lewis
Assistant Director Learning, Skills and Education

Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team

A Brief Guide to Penalty Notices

Sections 444 Education Act 1996

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

NCC have changed its timescales for issuing Penalty Notices (PN) for unauthorised absence from school. This leaflet offers you a brief summary about the (PN) scheme and what it could mean for you.

What is a PN?

A penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and required the parent(s) to pay a fixed amount as a fine for their child's irregular attendance and avoid a court appearance.

It is issued per parent, per child. Please note **only** a Head Teacher can authorise absence from school.

Who issues them?

In Northamptonshire the Local Authority issues them through the Educational Inclusion and Partnership team

When are they used?

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 6 school week period or 5 consecutive days; a school day is two sessions AM and PM.

This includes; any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken and is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

An absence in term time which has not been authorised by the Head Teacher.

The Government has directed Head Teachers may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.

PNs can also be used during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

Please note

If the school refers a period of absence that is longer than 15 consecutive school days; the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team may consider a PN is not appropriate.

In these instances the matter may proceed to a prosecution.

Determination about whether it is appropriate to use a penalty notice will be based on

the individual circumstances of each case.

If a parent knows that their child is failing to attend school regularly and there is reasonable justification for not ensuring that their child attends then it is for the parents/carers to prove that reasonable justification.

How much is the PN?

The PN is issued with an invoice for £120 and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty.

If the PN is paid within the first 21 days the amount payable is reduced to £60.

How do I pay?

The information on how to pay is included on the PN. Payment cannot be made in part or by installments.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within the 28 days the Authority will consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If proven this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order and also costs.

Can I appeal?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Fixed Penalty Notice?

You cannot be prosecuted for the period of absence identified in the Fixed Penalty Notice. You may subsequently be prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absence from school. Each case is considered on an individual basis

**** REMEMBER ****

School staff would much rather work with parents/carers to resolve poor attendance than resort to enforcement actions like Fixed Penalty Notices or Court

For further information please contact

Educational Inclusion & Partnership Team
attendance-admin@northamptonshire.gov.uk

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/EducationandLearning/Parents/Attendance/Pages/truancy.aspx>