

FAO Parent/Carers in Halton

Dear Parents and Carers in Halton,

The guidance issued by the Department for Education in 2022 in relation to School Attendance ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)) has now been updated and becomes statutory from 19th August 2024.

The guidance outlines the responsibilities and expectations of schools (including governing bodies), and Local Authorities in relation to school attendance as well as reminding parents of their responsibilities.

In supporting all of our schools to improve their attendance we would like to highlight the expectations on parents in relation to school attendance within the new DfE guidance and encourage you to work with your child's school if there should be any concerns or issues impacting on attendance.

Information on the school's procedures and who to contact regarding attendance will be available on your child's school website over the coming weeks as they prepare for the guidance becoming statutory in August 2024.

The expectations on parents are:

- That you will ensure that your child attends school regularly (as defined by the Supreme Court in 2017 as every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies) and that you notify the school as soon as possible when your child has to be unexpectedly absent
- That you only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and that you do so in advance (it is the Headteacher's decision on what is deemed 'exceptional' as the priority is for your child to attend school every day but generally, the DfE does not consider a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.
- That where possible you book medical appointments around the school day but when this cannot be avoided and your child has an appointment in school time you notify the school in advance (and if your child attends the appointment in uniform, they can return to school afterwards)
- That you work with your child's school and the Local Authority to help with the understanding of any barriers to your child attending school regularly. (Please contact your schools attendance team in the first instance, who will



be happy to help and offer any advice or support with barriers you may be facing.)

- That you engage with support offered, such as through our [Family Hubs](#) or attending meetings to prevent the need for more formal support.

In addition to outlining the expectations on parents, schools and Local Authorities, the Department for Education has also made changes to penalty notices: The cost of each penalty notice will increase for any offences committed after 19th August to £160 (£80 if paid within 21 days) for the first offence.

One of the changes introduced from 19th August is that where a parent takes the child out of school and commits a second offence within a rolling three year period the penalty notice amount will automatically be set at the £160 (with no reduction for early payment). For any third offence in the rolling three year period there will be no penalty notice but there will be a prosecution.

Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child.

These changes do not take away the possibility of the Local Authority going straight to prosecution for a second offence where a penalty notice has been issued previously and not paid, resulting in a prosecution.

Halton Local Authority will continue to work closely with school leaders, families and support services across the borough to ensure that every child has the best opportunity to achieve their potential.

On behalf of school leaders and our school attendance support services, I want to thank you in advance for your understanding and co-operation as the new guidance is implemented to support the best school attendance for every child in Halton.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Holmes', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Benjamin Holmes
Acting Director of Education
Children's Services
Halton Borough Council