



HARROW COUNCIL ATTENDANCE Leaflet – Questions & Answers

Why am I being sent this leaflet?

This leaflet is being sent to every parent/carer so everyone is aware of the need for their child to attend regularly and on time in order to achieve their best. It is important parents and carers understand their responsibilities and the consequences of their child having unauthorised absence from school.

What should I do if my child is off school?

Telephone the school as early as possible on the first morning of their absence to give the reason. Make routine dentist & doctor appointments after school or during holidays. If you have to make an appointment during school time, help your child to be at school for most of the day and let the school know about the appointment. You may be asked for a medical certificate or appointment card if your child is regularly absent due to illness or dental/medical appointments.

Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?

Yes, your child's school will give you advice and support if you need help with your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

Why attend every day?

Good school attendance gives your child the opportunity for success and helps develop skills for life. Your child should attend school every day unless there is an unavoidable cause like illness. Missing school damages a child's learning and their grades. We know that 6 in 10 young people who miss school for 17 days or more do not get good GCSE grades. However, more than 9 in 10 young people who miss less than 8 days of school go on to get good GCSE grades. **Missing school regularly** could affect your child's chances in life, for example, their ability to get into university or be accepted into a qualification of their choice. Children should never miss school for reasons like shopping, birthdays or to wait in for a repair person. You have a legal duty to ensure that your child attends school every day and is on time. Taking your child out of school during term time for holidays is also likely to impact on their achievement. There are 38 weeks in the year when schools are open, and 14 weeks when families can take holidays. Head teachers can only authorise a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

What should I do if my child is truanting?

If your child is truanting you should:

Talk to them to find out why. Meet with a member of school staff to discuss the situation and look for solutions. Contact the School for advice and guidance - try to understand what is happening for your child and help them resolve the problem. **Education is key to their future success so it is vitally important**

Consequences

If your child takes unauthorised holidays or takes longer than the time agreed by your Head teacher, this absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Sanctions could be imposed including:

- Your child could lose their school place
- You could face a penalty fine
- You could be subject to legal action by the authority that could result in a fine of up to £2,500.

If your child has an unauthorised absence, such as taking holidays during term time, reoccurring lateness, or persistent absence for any other reason other than certified illness, the school will refer the matter to London Borough of Harrow for consideration of a Penalty Notice and/or Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court which may lead to a criminal record with a maximum fine of £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment. **Regular and punctual attendance is both a legal requirement and essential for your child to maximise the opportunities available to them.**

Why are Penalty Notices issued?

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child doesn't attend school regularly and the absence is not agreed by the school (unauthorised). In some cases unauthorised absence may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced Penalty Notices as an alternative to prosecution. If paid within deadlines a Penalty Notice does not require a court appearance, but still aims to improve attendance.

How much is a Penalty Notice?

£60 if payment is made within 21 days. £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

When will they be used?

A Penalty Notice will only be issued when 'unauthorised' absences have been recorded.

If I get a Penalty Notice and don't pay, what happens?

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If full payment is not received within this time the local authority is required under the Act to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of unauthorised absence by your child. If proven, this can result in fines of up to £2,500 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders, Community Sentences and imprisonment. If a parent is found guilty of the aggravated offence of failing to secure regular attendance, the parent will receive a criminal record.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty notice but my child is still missing school?

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice as payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of unauthorised absence not covered by the Penalty Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as the Early Intervention Service (EIS).

For more information, please contact your child's school.

Or, if you have further enquiries, contact:

courtattendanceofficer@harrow.gov.uk