

Burrough Green CE Primary School - Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

Burrough Green CE Primary School aims to have an excellent attendance record. Children enjoy coming to school and we are well supported by parents and carers in maintaining a consistently high standard. However, schools must be vigilant to ensure that poor attendance does not contribute to educational underachievement. Every day missed from school is a lost opportunity. Requests for leave of absence during term time have increased and it is important that parents are aware that these will be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances. For example, if a child is taken away for a two week holiday every year and has the average number of days off for sickness and appointments, by the time they leave secondary school at 16 they will have missed a year of school.

Policy Aims:

- To maintain high levels of achievement and behaviour by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure that every pupil has access to a stimulating education, which meets their needs.
- To address patterns of absence promptly.
- To clarify the position around penalty notices (fines) and 'exceptional circumstances'.

2. Legal and National Context

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 make clear that Headteachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (for a school definition, please see below). Parents and carers should therefore not expect applications for holiday or leave during term time to be authorised. Amendments have also been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The amendments described below came into force on 1st September 2013. Penalty notices (fines) may be issued to each parent who fails, in accordance with the code of conduct drawn up by the Local Authority, to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 within 21 days; or £120 within 28 days to Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Local Authority code of conduct makes it clear that fines will only be levied if unauthorised absence has resulted in attendance falling below 85% in the four weeks prior to leave being taken and a letter alerting parents to our concerns has been sent.

4. Promoting Attendance

The school uses opportunities as they arise to remind parents and pupils of the importance of attendance, for instance through parent information evenings and the school prospectus. Attendance is also celebrated through the award of attendance certificates at the end of each half term, term, and academic year. In addition the school has adopted the following procedures for monitoring attendance and working with parents/carers to address concerns promptly.

4.1 Parents will:

- provide a written explanation for children's absences from school by telephone, letter or email with an indication of the duration of the expected absence,
- endeavour not to take children out of school in term time, but should this be necessary to complete the form in Appendix G and hand in to the school office two weeks before the planned absence is requested.
- notify the school as soon as problems arise with their child's attendance, and
- give advance warning of pupil absence, if possible.

In cases of longer term absence for pupils with a medical condition details should be provided from a qualified medical practitioner so that appropriate work and support can be offered.

4.2 School will:

- keep a register of attendance for every morning and afternoon session,
- not authorise any absence unless the criteria for exceptional circumstances (below) have been met,
- contact parents/carers by telephone if no message explaining absence has been received,
- record any child arriving at school after the register has been returned to the office (e.g. after 8.55am) as late,
- print out a list of attendance for all pupils at the end of each half-term,
- send the standard letter to parents/carers of pupils with unexplained absences, or whose attendance has fallen below 96% (see Appendix B).
- Once slips are returned ensure the absences are coded appropriately on the system,
- keep a record of people who do not reply, and follow up with a phone call,
- check to see if attendance improves over the next half-term.

If attendance continues to be poor, deteriorates or cannot be explained satisfactorily, then send out the standard letter (see Appendix C), inviting parents for interview. This letter will alert parents and carers that their child's attendance is at risk of falling below the 85% threshold.

- Ensure that the class teacher provides work for excluded students and long-term absentees.
- Involve the Education Welfare Officer where attendance is in danger of falling below 85%.

5. The work of Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The school and EWO always endeavour to work with students and parents at an early stage to resolve problems. This is nearly always successful. However, the EWO also has a legal role and if other ways of resolving attendance have failed, these officers can use legal sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates court.

6. Sanctions for Poor Attendance and Punctuality

The School may use any of the following sanctions to fulfil its obligations with respect to school attendance:

- Parent meetings
- Parent contracts
- Penalty notices

7. What constitutes an exceptional circumstance?

Authorised absences are approved by the Headteacher. An example of an authorised absence that may be approved would be a morning or afternoon away from school for a reason such as illness or medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall within the school day, although it is fully expected that routine dental appointments and the like will be made outside of school hours. Absences may also be authorised for approved educational reasons, such as a sporting or drama commitment, or a dance or music examination or competition. At the Headteacher's discretion, the School reserves the right to request proof of the reason for absence. Many of these requests for absence will be well known in advance and therefore should be requested using the form found in Appendix F. However, parents/carers should be aware that no authorisation will be given if attendance has fallen below the satisfactory level of 95%.

It is hard to give a completely watertight definition of other events that might constitute an 'exceptional circumstance', but a good rule of thumb would be to allow for special one-off events in the life of a family that is beyond the control of those requesting the absence. For example:

- bereavement, or
- weddings involving close relatives.
- All other absences will be deemed unauthorised. This includes:
- family holidays in term time for whatever reason,
- notifications received within two weeks of the requested absence.

Ratified by Governors School Development Committee April 2018

Review: April 2019

Additional information available on request:

- Local Authority Code of Conduct for dealing with non-school attendance.
- Copies of penalty notices
- Local Authority briefing notes to accompany Code of Conduct

Appendix A – Legal Background.

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent commits an offence if his or her compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. This can result in the school offering the parent the opportunity to enter into a parenting contract following a pupil's truancy or non-attendance under section 19 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. This can also result in the school instigating a Penalty Notice under section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. Amendments have also been made to the 2007 Regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. The amendments described below came into force on 1st September 2013 Penalty notices (fines) may be issued to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 within 21 days; or £120 within 28 days

Re: School Attendance 2017/18. Letter One

At school we regularly monitor the attendance of children to ensure they get the most out of their education and benefit from the opportunities planned for them. Children thrive on continuity and the interactions they have with teachers and other pupils. Therefore, <name>'s attendance since the beginning of September is of some concern.

As you will see from <name>'s attendance record her attendance has fallen below the satisfactory level of 96%, and currently stands at <overall percentage>%.

Please ensure <name>'s regular attendance at school, and if you have any concerns yourself about this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

We understand that absence can occur for a variety of reasons, such as illness, medical appointments and personal circumstances. However, we are legally obliged to inform you when your child's attendance is of concern.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs Street". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mrs Esther Street
Attendance Lead
Burrough Green Primary School

Re: School Attendance 2017/18. Letter Two

On <date of previous letter> I wrote to you advising that your child's attendance had fallen below 96%. Unfortunately, there has been a further decline and this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed, showing attendance at <overall percentage>%.

I must remind you that regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues that may be the cause of poor attendance are address as soon as possible. We wish to support you in helping to achieve this. A four-week monitoring period will follow <date>, during which we expect to see a significant improvement.

I am inviting you to meet with me on <meeting date> at <meeting time> in order to discuss <name>'s attendance at school and to put some targets in place to help this to improve.

I enclose for your information a copy of the leaflet about the role of the school's Education Welfare Officer.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs Street". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mrs Esther Street
Attendance Lead
Burrough Green Primary School

Appendix D – Paperwork for the meeting following Letter Two

Title/Reason	Attendance/Punctuality	Date:		Time:	
Present/Involved:	Name:	Year Group:	DOB:		
Attendance	Unauthorised Absence		Authorised Absence		
Total Lates:		Unexplained abs:			

Record	
ANY PROBLEMS AT HOME/SCHOOL I.E. BULLYING ETC THAT MAY AFFECT ATTENDANCE/NEED SUPPORT?	
Medical:	
School:	
Bullying:	
Community:	
Home:	
Transport:	
Planned Holidays	
Outcomes/Action (include attendance target)	
EHA Offered? YES/NO (If declined, please state reason and log with Early Help)	
Check address / telephone numbers/email address of those with Parental Responsibilities and Day to Day care	

Mum: Full name: Dad: Full name:	«address_block»		
Step Parent: Full name: Other: Full name	«address_block»		
Email: Home. Work.	Telephone: Home. Work. Mobile.		
<p>I must remind you that as parent(s) it is your legal responsibility, as stated under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that your child attends the school at which he/she is registered, regularly and punctually. Failure to do so may result in a Penalty Notice being issued against you and/or legal proceedings being considered.</p>			
Staff		Date:	Print

Parent Signature		Date:		Print Name	
Parent Signature		Date:		Print Name	
Student Signature		Date:		Print Name	

Re: School Attendance 2017/18. Persistent Absence

Dear

With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department of Education (DfE) that the threshold for Persistent Absence has been reduced to 10%. This means that if a child has an overall attendance of 92% or less, they will be classes as a persistently absent pupil.

On <date> I wrote to you advising that your son/daughter's attendance had fallen below 96%. Unfortunately, there has been no significant improvement and this is continuing to cause concern. A copy of the attendance record is enclosed, showing attendance at <overall percentage>%.

I must remind you that regular attendance is a legal requirement and it is important that any issues that may be the cause of poor attendance are address as soon as possible. We wish to support you in helping to achieve this. Should <name>'s attendance remain below 90% this could result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or further legal action. A four-week monitoring period will follow the issue of this letter, during which we expect to see a significant improvement.

Please contact me in the next few days so that we can arrange a time to discuss <name>'s attendance.

I enclose for your information a copy of the leaflet about the role of the school's Education Welfare Officer.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs Street". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mrs Esther Street
Attendance Lead
Burrough Green Primary School

LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE CLUSTER SCHOOLS

FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

Dear Parents

We are writing to clarify the situation in relation to leave of absence for (including family holidays) in term time, so that all schools in our cluster can adopt a consistent approach.

You should not expect your child's school to agree to any absence for a holiday in term time. Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time – both educationally and for other school activities. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on

Parents do not have a legal right to take children out of school on holiday. Schools will only consider requests for up to ten days a year in exceptional circumstances. Each application, which should be received two weeks in advance, is considered individually, taking into account the following factors:

- the child's attendance record (it should exceed 95% attendance)
- the timing of the absence (it should not be taken during test times, exam days or at the beginning of term)
- the reason for the absence (the exceptional circumstances must be explained - a cheap term time holiday will not be accepted as a valid reason for absence)

There is more information about what's acceptable and what's not on the leaflet provided.

If leave is taken after permission has been withheld then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child's report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

Yours sincerely

Helena Marsh
Linton Village College

Anna Hayesmore
Burrough Green

James Puxley
Linton Heights

Guy Underwood
Great Abington

Nicola Connor
Meadow, Balsham

Alexandra O'Connor
Castle Camps

Kelly Harries
Linton Infants

Lucie Calow
Granta



APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

To be completed by parents

You should not expect your child’s school to agree to any absence for a holiday in term time. Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time – both educationally and for other school activities. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on.

Parents do not have a legal right to take children out of school on holiday. Schools will only consider requests for up to ten days a year in exceptional circumstances. Each application, which should be received two weeks in advance, is considered individually, taking into account the following factors:

- the child’s attendance record (it should exceed 95% attendance)
- the timing of the absence (it should not be taken during test times, exam days or at the beginning of term)
- the reason for the absence (the exceptional circumstances must be explained - a cheap term time holiday will not be accepted as a valid reason for absence)

If leave is taken after permission has been withheld then this will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will appear both in the school register and in your child’s report. Persistent unauthorised absence may result in the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and possible legal proceedings.

I request that (name of child)

be granted leave of absence from (name of school)

from to 20

for the following reason (Details must be provided,. Insufficient information will mean authorisation cannot be given)

.....
.....

Signature of Parent / Carer Date

To be completed by the school

Attendance record

- Good (over 97%)
- Satisfactory (over 95%)
- Unsatisfactory (below 95%)
- Authorised
- Unauthorised

Signature of Headteacher Date

Burrough Green C of E Primary School

NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Childs Name:

Dates of absence (please give time if an appointment)

Reason for absence:

Doctor's appointment

Cold

Dentist's appointment

Cough

Hospital appointment

Sore Throat

Stomach ache

Nausea/Vomiting

Temperature

Headache

Other (please give details below)

Signed:

Appendix H

PENALTY NOTICES

NON-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL AUTHORITY CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

1. Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 local education authority officers, headteachers and the police have the discretionary power to issue Penalty Notices to the parents of who children who truant.
2. The new power provides an alternative to prosecution of parents under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and enables parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days.
3. Should the Penalty Notice remain unpaid or have been paid only in part at the end of the 28 day period Cambridgeshire County Council must prosecute the parents for the offence to which the notice relates, or, in specified circumstances (see section 29 below), withdraw the notice.
4. Penalty Notices may only be issued in Cambridgeshire in accordance with the terms of this Code of Conduct. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that the power is applied fairly and consistently across the County Council and that suitable arrangements are in place for the effective and efficient administration of the scheme.
5. In implementing this Code of Conduct the County Council will liaise when appropriate with neighbouring education and police authorities.
6. This Code of Conduct has been drafted in accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004: Statutory Instrument 2004 No 181 and guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills.
7. In preparing this Code of Conduct the County Council has consulted with Cambridgeshire headteachers and the Chief Officer of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. 1B Circumstances in which Penalty Notices may be issued
8. A Penalty Notice may be issued in cases of non-school attendance. Such a notice is intended to offer a rapid intervention, which may be used to address non-school attendance before it becomes entrenched.
9. Penalty Notices may only be issued in relation to absence from school, which is unauthorised. The County Council's recommended criteria for authorising/not authorising absence can be found in the Local Authority School Attendance Policy. (All Cambridgeshire schools are encouraged to adhere to the criteria detailed within this policy – see below).
10. Penalty Notices may only be issued in relation to a child whose attendance at school has been below 85% over the previous 4-week period.
11. The key consideration in deciding whether to issue a Penalty Notice should be whether it is considered likely to be effective in helping the child to whom it relates to return to regular attendance.
12. Before issuing a Penalty Notice due consideration should be given to other strategies which may help return the child concerned to regular school attendance. Such strategies might include:
 - a) writing to the child's parents to remind them of their legal responsibilities;
 - b) meeting with the child's parents;
 - c) ensuring a first-day response to any absence;
 - d) setting targets for improvement;
 - e) referral to the Education Welfare Officer;
 - f) involvement of other services/agencies.
13. The usual response to a first offence would be to warn the parent rather than to issue a Penalty Notice. Authorised officers do, however, have the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence. Such exceptional circumstances could be where the unauthorised absence had been for an extended period of time and condoned by the parent.
14. Headteachers and police officers should only issue a Penalty Notice following consultation, discussion, reflection and joint decision with a County Council Education Welfare Officer.
15. The Education Welfare Officer will not agree to sanction the issuing of a Penalty Notice unless he/she considers that with regard to the offence to which it relates there is sufficient evidence to secure a conviction under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Evidence could be letters sent to parent, minutes of meetings and record of telephone conversations.
16. A maximum of three Penalty Notices may be served on any one parent over a 12- month period.
17. There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice. A parent should therefore, if possible, be given warning of the possibility of a notice being issued in order to allow him/her to make representations should he/she wish to do so. 2B Authority to Issue a Penalty Notice
18. An Education Welfare Officer may issue a Penalty Notice to the parent of a child who is a registered pupil at a school in Cambridgeshire or who is a registered pupil at a school in an authority, which has an agreement to that effect with Cambridgeshire County Council.

19. A headteacher or an authorised deputy or assistant headteacher may issue a Penalty Notice to the parent of a child who is registered at his/her school, in consultation with a CCC Legal Panel.

20. A police officer, including a community support officer or other accredited person, may issue a Penalty Notice.

21. Headteachers and police officers should comply with the terms of this Code of Conduct when issuing a Penalty Notice and should provide a copy of any notice issued to the relevant Education Welfare Officer.

3B Form and Content of Penalty Notices

22. A Penalty Notice should give the following particulars alleged to constitute the offence to which the notice relates and should contain:

- a) the name and address of the person to whom the notice is issued;
- b) the name and address of the child who is failing to attend school regularly and the name of the school at which he/she is a registered pupil;
- c) the name, title and official details of the authorised person issuing the notice;
- d) the date of the offence and of the issue of the notice;
- e) the amount of the penalty which is to be paid and details of the timescales and any variation involved;
- f) the address of the County Council office at which the penalty is to be paid and to which any correspondence relating to the notice may be sent;
- g) the method/methods by which payment may be made;
- h) the specified period within which the penalty should be paid;
- i) a statement that full payment within the specified period will discharge any liability for the offence;
- j) an explanation of the consequences should the penalty not be paid in full before the expiry of the specified period;
- k) an explanation of the grounds on which the notice may be withdrawn.

23. Should there be more than one person liable for the offence a separate notice should be issued to each person.

24. Should the offence involve more than one child a separate notice should be issued for each child.

Service of Penalty Notices

25. A Penalty Notice may be served by:

- a) giving it to the recipient; or
- b) leaving it at the recipient's usual or last-known address; or c) sending it to the recipient at that address by first-class post.

26. Service by post is deemed to have been effected, unless the contrary is proved, on the second working day after posting the notice by first-class post.

Failure to Pay a Penalty Notice

27. Should the recipient of a Penalty Notice fail to pay the full amount before the expiry of the period for paying it the County Council will either begin proceedings against the parent under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 or withdraw the notice in accordance with specified conditions (see section 29 below).

28. A certificate signed by the Attendance & Behaviour Manager to the effect that the recipient of a Penalty Notice has or has not paid the amount due on or before the date specified should be retained and presented as evidence in any subsequent Section 444 Education Act 1996 proceedings.

Withdrawal of a Penalty Notice

29. A Penalty Notice may be withdrawn by the County Council, regardless of whom within the authority issued it, if it is deemed that:

- a) the notice ought not to have been issued (i.e. where it has issued outside of the terms of this Code of Conduct or where no offence has been committed); or
- b) the notice ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient.

30. Should a Penalty Notice be withdrawn:

- a) notice of the withdrawal should be given to the recipient;
- b) any amount already paid by the recipient should be reimbursed;
- c) any proceedings under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 instituted against the recipient should be discontinued.

Retention of Receipts and Revenue Collection

31. The County Council will retain all revenue from the issuing of Penalty Notices in order to cover the costs of issuing and enforcing notices and the cost of prosecuting those recipients of the notices who fail to pay.

32. The County Council will produce an annual audit statement as part of its usual audit procedures in order to show that income received from Penalty Notices does not exceed enforcement costs as defined above.

Any surplus acquired will be surrendered to a consolidated fund.

PENALTY NOTICE

SECTION 444A EDUCATION ACT 1996

Please read the notes overleaf.

PART 1

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

To: (Title) (Forenames)
..... (Surname)

Date of birth (if known): Of:
.....(Address)

.....
.....(Postcode)

You are a parent of (name and address of pupil) (called in this notice "the pupil") who is a registered pupil at (name of school).

Between (date) and (date) the pupil failed to attend regularly at the school.

This notice gives you the opportunity to pay a penalty fine instead of being prosecuted for the offence given above. The amount of the penalty is £60/£120 in accordance with the table overleaf. If you pay this penalty within the time limits set out below, no further action will be taken against you in connection with the offence as set out in this notice.

Payment should be made within 21 days. If paid after 21 days but within 28 days the penalty is doubled to £120.

Payment should be made to an Education Welfare Officer at one of the following addresses:

(Insert address at which payment should be made)

Payment may be made by post or in person. (Offices are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday). Cheques should be made payable to Cambridgeshire County Council. Should you wish to make payment in person, you are required to telephone the appropriate office in order to make a mutually convenient appointment.

Late or part payments will not be accepted and no reminders will be sent. If payment is not received by (insert date 28 days from date of issue), you may be prosecuted for the offence and could be subject to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or up to 3 months in prison.

This notice is issued by: (name) (title)

Organisation: Date:

PART 2

Please complete the following and return this notice to one of the addresses overleaf.

Name: Address:

..... I attach payment in the sum of:

..... Signed:

Date:

Received the sum of £..... in relation to a Penalty Notice issued on in respect of (name of child)

Dated..... Signed.....

Name..... (Please print)

Title.....

(A copy of this receipt should be sent to all parties subject to the Notice and a copy retained on file)

Notes

1. Contact Details

If you have any queries about this notice please contact the relevant Education Welfare Officer at one of the addresses shown in Part 1 of the Notice.

2. Amount of penalty

The amount of the penalty is as follows: When paid

Within 21days £60

When paid within 28 days £120

3. Code of Conduct

This notice is issued in accordance with a Code of Conduct drawn up by the Local Authority. Any enquiries regarding this Code of Conduct should be addressed to the relevant Education Welfare Officer at one of the addresses overleaf.

4. Withdrawal

This notice may be withdrawn should it be shown that it should not have been issued to you or has not been issued to you in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Should you believe that the notice was wrongly issued you should contact the relevant Education Welfare Officer as soon as possible (no later than within 10 days of the notice having been issued), stating why you believe the notice to have been incorrectly issued. Your query will be considered and

you will be contacted to notify you whether the notice is to be withdrawn. Should it be decided not to withdraw the notice and you fail to pay the sum specified you will be liable to prosecution for the offence that your child has failed to attend school regularly.

5. Payment

You should complete the notice above (Part 2) and send or deliver it to one of the addresses given. Please telephone the appropriate office to make an appointment should you wish to make payment in person.

6. Prosecution

Should you not pay the penalty notice and should the notice not be withdrawn you will be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. You will receive a separate summons for this which will give you notice of the time and date of the court hearing. You will be given the opportunity to defend yourself and you are advised to seek legal representation; in some circumstances you may be entitled to legal aid.

Appendix 1 Suggested letter, which schools may wish to consider using to notify parents of the new discretionary power given to headteachers to serve Penalty Notices in relation to non-school attendance.

Dear Parent

Penalty Notices in Relation to Non-School Attendance

You may be aware that legislation has given headteachers (as well as police officers and Education Welfare Officers) the power to serve Penalty Notices on parents who permit their children to truant or who take their children out of school without the school's prior authorisation. I of course do appreciate the fact that the vast majority of our parents fully support their children's regular attendance at school but I am writing in order to ensure that this discretionary power is properly explained to all parents so that any unnecessary misunderstandings can be avoided.

A Penalty Notice involves a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Should a parent on whom a notice is served fail to pay the full amount of the fine within the specified time he /she will be liable to prosecution in a Magistrates court where on conviction a sentence of a fine of up to £2,500 or up to three months in prison may be imposed. Penalty Notices may only be served in accordance with the terms of the County Council's local Code of Conduct, a copy of which is retained by the school.

In making any future decision as to whether it is appropriate for the school to utilise this discretionary power I will consult with the Education Welfare Officer and will consider the seriousness of an individual child's non-attendance and the response of his/her parent.

I would like to reiterate my appreciation of the efforts of the vast majority of our parents who successfully ensure their children's regular attendance.

Yours sincerely

Schools may wish to amend the language and tone of this letter in order to meet their own particular circumstances.

Appendix I - Briefing - appropriate use of Penalty Notices

Cambridgeshire County Council

Schools Attendance

Background

This paper should be read in conjunction with the Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

Introduction

The use of sanctions is a critical part of the toolkit available to every Education Welfare Officer and should be utilised alongside other strategies. The decision to apply a Penalty Notice must be based on clear threshold criteria, **further information can be obtained from your Education Welfare Officer who will offer advice and guidance.**

It's a requirement for schools to have developed a bespoke Attendance Policy that highlights the use of Penalty Notices.

Attendance at 85% and below over previous 4 weeks – warning letter to parents that if attendance doesn't improve over monitoring period a PN maybe be applied – school to discuss cases with EWO

Threshold Criteria:

Unauthorised absence pattern developing

Attendance at 85% and below over previous 6 weeks – referral to Education Welfare Officer who may apply a PN as an alternative to prosecuting through magistrate courts (PC* & PACE* process followed)

Ongoing unauthorised absence

Evidence that child has been taken out of school for the purpose of going on holiday. Education Welfare Officer will warn parent/s that that if attendance doesn't improve over the monitoring period a PN will be applied (Formal Warning letter sent)

Holiday in term time

History of good attendance & no previous issues with term time holidays being taken
Evidence that child has been taken out of school for the purpose of going on holiday.

Education Welfare Officer will apply a PN

Existing/previous attendance issues

Unauthorised leave in previous term/years

Attendance at 85% and below over previous **4** weeks – referral to Education Welfare Officer who will warn parents that if attendance doesn't improve over monitoring period a PN will be applied

Pupils Persistently late

i.e after registers closed ('U' code)

Evidence of when child seen in public place – referral to Education Welfare Officer.

Penalty Notice will be applied

Pupils Excluded

Found in public place during school hours, in the first 5 days of exclusion

*** Parenting Contracts**

Parenting Contracts for irregular school attendance have been developed in response to the provisions of Section 19 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Parenting Contracts are in line with the philosophy behind the Children Act 1989 which emphasises that Local Authorities must make every attempt to work in partnership with parents to avoid instituting Court action wherever possible. Parenting Contracts are intended to:

- Improve the pupil's attendance to an acceptable level by identifying obstacles and agreeing a plan to overcome them
- Agree details of how to achieve change through determined actions

Following the Parenting Contract meeting should these objectives not be met, a PACE Interview under caution will be held to help provide a formal process whereby consideration can be given to the institution of action either under the Children Act 1989 or the Education Act 1996.

**** The PACE interview**

Should a student's attendance fail to improve, in spite of help from the school and an EWO, parents will be invited to a formal PACE interview held under Caution. Before a meeting begins parents will be formally cautioned under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. (PACE)



MANAGING ATTENDANCE

THREE LETTER SYSTEM

(Including the use of Penalty Notices)

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
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1. Introduction

Early intervention work is essential for schools in order to maintain satisfactory attendance levels. Attendance and attainment are linked. Schools should ensure they develop their strategic approaches to best manage overall attendance and achieve the government persistent absence target of 10% (Sept 2015)

The three-letter system is intended to enable schools and colleges to continuously and consistently monitor and address poor school attendance.

Continuous monitoring is advisable following the recent government change to persistent absence threshold. With effect from September 2015 schools have been advised by the government's Department for Education (DfE) that the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold will be reduced to 10%. Until this date it has been 15%.

The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to an Education Welfare Officer and/or the Legal Panel may be necessary. The system is based on model letters which schools can send to parents when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

It is intended to apply essentially to absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification (and appropriate rewording of the letters) it might in certain circumstances be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised but which are beginning to cause concern. Schools should, however, decline to continue to authorise such absences once doubts arise as to their legitimacy.

2. Key Features and Potential Benefits of the Three-Letter System

- Heads of year and/or the headteacher can focus on the attendance of all pupils on a regular basis. E.g. weekly – by introducing new excel spreadsheet process that will allow for regular monitoring and immediate action where required. (refer to EWO or Legal Panel)
- The Spreadsheet system will allow for 'ONE STOP Monitoring. This records weekly attendance, when letters have been sent, and up to date accumulative figures at a glance. Can be used for Governor Meetings and Ofsted visits.
- Heads of year and/or the headteacher can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern
- In most cases Letter 1 brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required. (Many parents, on receiving Letter 1, comment that they had been unaware that their child's attendance was causing concern and they often respond positively.)

- The system provides a clear record of the school's own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve an Education Welfare Officer/ or in case of non-buyback academies, the legal panel.
- As the 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent with Letter 2, parents are made aware of the existence and role of the Education Welfare Officer prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary. This leaflet is available on the school portal.
- The system enables Education Welfare Officers/Attendance leads in academies to anticipate to a certain extent the number of referrals they are likely to receive. This facilitates forward planning.

3. Managing Attendance: Three Letter system flowchart

- It essential that schools build up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and are able to ensure that when they do need to refer for a penalty notice and/or involve an Education Welfare Officer they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful. Once the case is formally referred via the Locality Manager for Education Welfare Officer support on a SIF (if CAF has been declined by parent), this needs to be supported by a copy of an up to date Attendance Certificate, school meeting notes and confirmation of school letters sent, attached to it. Please also send a registration certificate showing the last 6 school week's attendance (should be 85% and below with the majority of absences unauthorised). In relation to the application of Penalty Notices all schools and academies should refer via the Penalty Notice email address:

penalty.notices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

- Academies who do not have a linked Education Welfare Officer should refer cases to either the Penalty Notice or Legal Panel email addresses:

EWOProsecutions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Should the pupil have been absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns then the school should be initiating enquiries as to the child's whereabouts.

If they still have concerns they should contact the Education Welfare Officer.

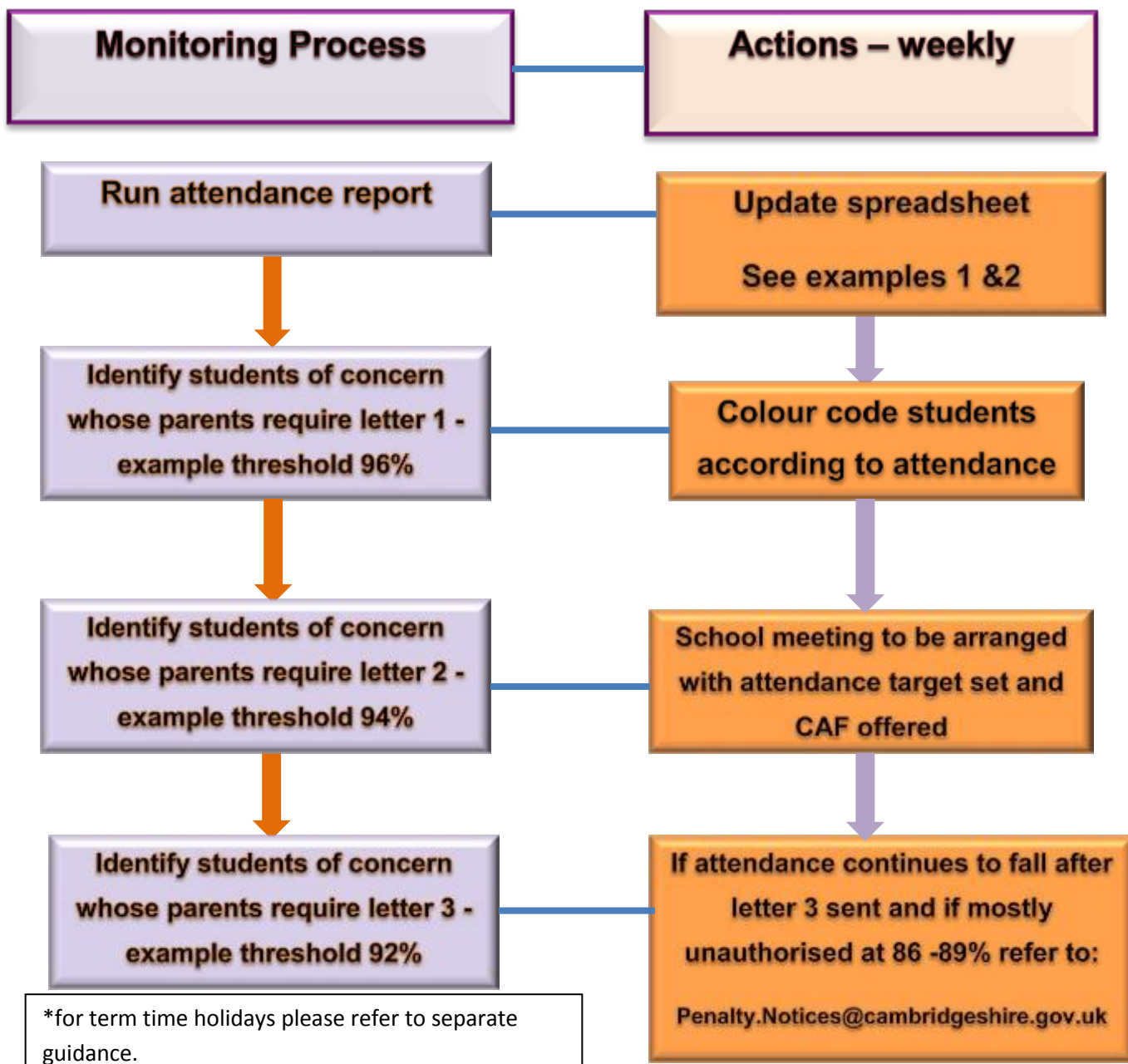
Should the child be subject of a Child Protection Plan, the child's social worker should be notified immediately.

Children Missing Education guidance can be found:

Learntogether.org.uk

Managing Attendance – three letter system

Monitoring procedures for schools & academies to improve attendance and when appropriate refer for a Penalty Notice and Education Welfare Officer Involvement – excluding term time holiday*



Attendance at 85% and below, mostly unauthorised over previous 6 weeks requires a referral for an Education Welfare Officer to follow formal processes

Academies not buying back should refer to the Legal Panel for PACE interview at the required threshold



IT ALL ADDS UP!

Descriptor	Threshold Attendance	Actual Attendance	Whole Days Absent	Learning Hours Lost	
<i>An approach to help schools target non-attendance methodically – it is intended to apply to absence that is mostly unauthorised!</i>					
Excellent	100%	190	0	0	P R E V E N T A T I V E ↓
	99%	188 days	2	10	
Good	98%	186 days	4	20	
	97%	184 days	6	30	
Identify students of concern and send Letter One	96%	182.5 days	7.5	37.5	
Becoming Unsatisfactory	95%	180.5 days	9.5	47.5	
Identify students of concern and send Letter Two . Meet with parents to discuss concerns and identify support – complete CAF	94%	177 days	13	65	
Cause For Concern	90%	171 days	19	95	
After identifying students of concerns at 90 - 92% attendance and having sent Letter Three , monitor attendance over a four week period and refer for PN when attendance falls between 86 to 89%	89%	169 days	21	105	
	88%	167 days	23	115	
	87%	165	25	125	P E N A L T Y
Over previous 6 weeks attendance recorded as mostly unauthorised prepare referral to Education Welfare. Non buying back academies progress to formal Parent Contract Meeting	86%	163	27	135	
Serious Cause For Concern	85%	161.5	28.5	142.6	
Academies to refer to Legal Panel	84%	159.5	30.5	152.5	C O U R T
	83%	158	32	160	
	82%	156	34	170	
	81%	154	36	180	
Critical	80%			190	

APPENDIX 1

REFERAL TO EWO LETTER FOR MAINTAINED AND ACADEMIES BUYING BACK

Date

Name and address of parent

School ref

Re: Name of pupil DOB:

School: Dear Parent

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance has not significantly improved since I last contacted you.

I have enclosed a copy of «forename»'s attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

I am now formally requesting the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer who will contact you in due course to arrange a meeting.

I will continue to be available to discuss this matter with you. Please telephone me on the number above should you require an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Headteacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

APPENDIX 2 SUSPECTED HOLIDAY LETTER

Date

Name and Address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Child Name: xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

I am writing about «forename»'s absence from school from <<date>> to <<date>>.

From information received from other sources we believe that this was due to a family holiday. You have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, «forename»'s absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/care in respect of each child who is absent from school. However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Head teacher or other relevant Pastoral Personnel

cc Education Welfare Officer

APPENDIX 3

NON-STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE / AUTHORISED ABSENCE LETTER

Date

Name and Address of parent

Dear Parent

Re: Child Name: xxx **DOB:** xxx **School:**

This letter is for your information so you do not need to take any action.

I would like to thank you for following the school procedure regarding Attendance. We understand that «forename» has had authorised absence recently and that you called the school every day to keep us informed. We would just like to let you know how this has affected «forename»'s attendance which is currently at «percentage_attendance»%. As you know, if it is medical please ensure we have relevant doctor's notes and appointment details.

School share a vital part in ensuring that children who are absent from school because of their medical needs maintain their education.

If you child is absent from school for over 10 days it may be necessary for school to seek support for your child.

Please ensure that school is fully aware of any medical issues that may affect your child's attendance.

Please continue to work with us. You are more than welcome to contact *school* to discuss any queries or concerns you may have.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning, and as I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year / Head teacher or other relevant Pastoral

Personnel cc Education Welfare Officer