



“As God’s Children, we all play our part in making learning irresistible within our Federation community.”

6th September 2024

Dear parents and carers,

At The Pilgrim Federation of Schools, our aim is to work with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential. A crucial factor in this is ensuring regular school attendance because the link between this and strong academic achievement is well documented.

The letter overleaf is based on guidance from the Local Authority to remind all parents/carers regarding the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government remains very clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must continue to take steps to reduce absence to support children’s attainment. The Local Authority requires us to send this letter to all of you at the start of each academic year.

Please note fixed penalty notices received from parent/carers could be fined if your child is absent from at least 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised absence by the pupil within a rolling 10 school week period.

Who is a Parent?

Under education law (section 576 of the Education Act 1996) a parent is defined as:

- All Natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has responsibility for the care of a child or young person.

This means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is a parent in Education Law.

We base all of our conversations with pupils on attendance in a positive light and work towards actively promoting strong attendance by awarding termly and end of year attendance certificates. From this year, we will also be awarding attendance badges for very high levels of attendance throughout the academic year.

I review the attendance levels of every pupil in the Federation weekly and will contact you in writing if I have concerns about the attendance levels of your child(ren). This would usually be if the attendance levels were below 90% but, working alongside the secretary in each school, I take individual circumstances into account before taking any further action. Where concerns persist, I will always arrange an attendance meeting with parents to talk open and honestly about productive ways forward.

To illustrate the impact low attendance levels can have on learning time, please see the attached document that outlines the direct link between pupils’ attendance percentage and days of learning that can be lost.

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any queries about any of this information.

Kind regards and best wishes,

Mr Snowdon
Executive Headteacher

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Norfolk County Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence - Guidance for parents

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At The Pilgrim Federation our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

The important legal information – New from August 19th, 2024

The Government have introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is **10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.**

These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1st penalty notice. The national framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. In Norfolk, where a pupil's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. **There is no reduced sum available in this instance.**

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable, and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.



Requests for leave of absence

Working together to improve school attendance advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government 'does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise schools will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance.

Support with ensuring regular school attendance

If you require any support with ensuring your child's attendance, please contact Mr Snowdon, Executive Headteacher.



175

175 days to use for family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs other appointments



Non school days and each year

No Absence	10 days absence	12 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence
190 days of education	180 days of education	178 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education
100%	95%	94%	90%	85%	80%
Very Good					
Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start!					
Worrying					
Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress.					
Serious Concern					
Your child will find it very difficult to make progress. May result in court action!					