



London Borough of Havering
ENGAYNE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Mrs S Sankey: Headteacher

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING CHANGES TO HOLIDAYS AND OTHER UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am sure you have all read and heard about the changes to penalty charges for unauthorised absences which will be implemented in August 2024 and used in school in September 2024.

We thought it would be a good idea to let you have all the relevant information we currently hold regarding the changes so you are aware of the new possible outcomes that will occur if you book or take a holiday in term time.

Government and borough guidance states:

1. An increase to the rate of a penalty notice from **£120 to £160** if paid within 28 days, and **£60 to £80** if paid within 21 days.
2. An additional rung to the ladder of escalation, **with any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period being charged at a higher rate of £160** with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.
3. **A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).**

Points 2 and 3 are new to guidance in terms of more than one holiday during a period of time.

The guidance also clarifies absence thresholds:

1. The National Framework will introduce a national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered from the 19th August 2024. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence. This can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence, such as 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes, all taken within any 10 school week period. The unauthorised absence sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
 2. The 10 school week¹ period may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).
 3. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences. They should usually be issued to the parent or parents with day to day responsibility for the pupil's attendance or the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).
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Please note each school day is 2 sessions

The guidance also takes into account shorter absences and holidays which do not currently meet a penalty notice threshold:

1. The new national framework does not prevent a penalty notice from being used in other cases where an offence has been committed. To secure national consistency, our intention is that the national threshold should operate as the norm and local authorities should not introduce their own alternative thresholds. However, if the local authority or another authorised officer believes a penalty notice would be appropriate in an individual case, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

We are obviously awaiting further borough guidance, our local code of conduct and updated policies to use moving forward, but hope in the interim this information will be useful for any possible holiday planning. We also hope this information clarifies the changes announced earlier this month.

Regards



N Wyman