

The Government's priority is to ensure that every child attends school regularly and where attendance is deemed to be unsatisfactory, that it is addressed promptly. There is clear evidence that any absence can and will have an impact on attainment. It is therefore important that schools maintain good attendance levels and that parents support this by ensuring their children attend school regularly.

The Brooke Weston Trust Academies and the Local Authority have been working together to issue warnings and Penalty Notices under Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 (amended regulations 2013).

A Penalty Notice is a fine up to £120. It is £60, if paid within the first 21 days but then £120 past the 21st day / within the 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the Local Authority will instigate Court Proceedings and the outcome of a prosecution could be up to £1,000 per parent/adult This is an alternative to the prosecution of parents/carers/guardians for failing to ensure the regular attendance of a compulsory school age (age 5-16 years) student where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Whilst parents/carers/guardians can provide explanations for absences, it is at the Academy's discretion as to whether this absence will be authorised or unauthorised. The change in legislation has meant the removal of holiday entitlement and Principals will now not authorise any holiday requests in term time, unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. A family holiday taken in term time will result in a warning and Penalty Notice being issued.

Other criteria for Penalty Notices include a student having a high number of unauthorised absences within an academic year and where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable explanation.

UPDATED The current Persistent Absence threshold has been 15% during this academic year however from September 2015, the Government is reducing this to 10%. This means that students who have cumulative absence as shown below will fall into the Persistent Absence banding –

- 7 sessions of absence or more in term 1;
- 14 sessions of absence or more in term 2;
- 20 sessions of absence or more in term 3;
- 25 sessions of absence or more in term 4;
- 31 sessions of absence or more in term 5
- 38 sessions of absence or more in term 6/end of the academic year.

Further advice and guidance on this matter can be located through the Department of Education website entitled "Advice on school attendance".