



**Aycliffe Community Primary School**  
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17/09/2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Important Information About School Attendance and Penalty Notices**

We are writing to inform you about recent changes to the national framework for school attendance, which all schools must now follow. These changes have been introduced to ensure a consistent approach across the country and to place an emphasis on support before enforcement.

#### **Support First Approach**

The new national approach is based on the principle of "Support First." This means schools and local authorities will always try to offer help and support to improve attendance before considering any legal action. A Penalty Notice (PN) will only be issued if support has not been successful, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate – for example, in the case of an unauthorised term-time holiday.

#### **When Might a Penalty Notice Be Considered?**

Under the new framework:

- A Penalty Notice may be considered when a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence (equivalent to 5 full days) within a rolling 10-school-week period.
- A school week is any week where school is open for at least one session.
- This is not an automatic trigger for a fine, but schools are legally required to consider whether a PN is appropriate.

#### **Unauthorised Term-Time Leave (e.g., Holidays)**

If parents take their child out of school without authorisation:

- Schools must consider issuing a PN, especially if the reason is a holiday or other leave of absence not approved by the headteacher.

**Please note:** if a third period of unauthorised leave occurs within a 3-year rolling period, a Penalty Notice will not be issued. However, the case may be escalated for legal action under the Single Justice Procedure.

#### **Notice to Improve for Poor Attendance**

For children with ongoing poor attendance:

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**Make a Difference Make a Difference Make a Difference Make a Difference**

- If a child has 10 unauthorised sessions within 10 school weeks, a Notice to Improve may be issued first.
- During this period (typically 20 school days), the school will work with you to support improved attendance.
- If attendance does not improve, and support has been exhausted or refused, a Penalty Notice may be considered.

The school will clearly outline what improvement looks like, which may vary depending on each child's circumstances.

### **Penalty Notice Fines**

Penalty Notices carry the following consequences:

- A fine of £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days
- Rising to £160 per parent, per child if paid between 22 and 28 days
- If unpaid, the matter may be taken to court, where the fine can be up to £1,000 under Section 444(1) of the Education Act.

### **Additional Notes**

- Medical Absence: If your child is absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence, particularly if there are frequent or prolonged absences.
- Separated Parents: The school will determine which parent is responsible for the absence and may issue a PN to that parent accordingly.
- Special Events or Sporting Activities: Leave can only be authorised for the days of the event and must be supervised by a responsible adult. Approval is at the discretion of the headteacher.

### **Our Commitment to You**

We are committed to working with families to improve attendance and ensure every child receives the best possible education. If you are facing difficulties that may be affecting your child's attendance, please speak to us as early as possible so that we can offer support.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these changes, please contact the school office

Yours Sincerely



Mrs Jacky Cox  
Headteacher