



HEACHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

College Drive, Heacham, PE31 7EJ

TEL: 01485 571013

office@heachamjunior.co.uk

www.heachamjunior.co.uk

3rd September 2026

Norfolk County Council:

Penalty Notices regarding school absence - Guidance for parents

Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities

At **Heacham Junior School** 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

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.**

EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER
Ms L Jackson



ASSISTANT HEAD
Mr A Kirwan

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

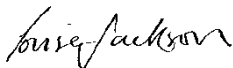
[Working together to improve school attendance](#) advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of 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 Ms Robins, Pastoral and Attendance Support, via the school contact number or email.

Yours sincerely,



Louise Jackson
Executive Head Teacher



HEACHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

College Drive, Heacham, PE31 7EJ

TEL: 01485 571013

office@heachamjunior.co.uk

www.heachamjunior.co.uk

Date: 3/9/26

Dear Parents/Carers,

Reporting your child's absence – our Safeguarding Responsibilities

We would like to explain that due to our safeguarding responsibilities, we will email families every day that a child is absent if we have not heard from that family on each day (even if you have pre-warned us that they may not be in the following day).

It is a legal requirement for us to have contact with a parent daily, to ensure that a child is not presumed to be ill when they have, in fact, walked to school and something happen on the way to prevent them arriving. Should an incident occur, a whole day would pass before anyone would know that a child is missing.

If your child is absent, for any reason, please contact school every day, before 8.45am if possible, leaving a short message on our answerphone. There is an option specifically for reporting a child absent, or you can email the Office.

All schools have annual Safeguarding training and we are committed to ensuring that the safety of your children is in everything we do. We do not mean to annoy or upset by emailing and I'm sure that you would support us in our endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

Louise Jackson
Executive Headteacher

