

Not Fine in School's

Key Advice for the new Attendance Guidance

effective from 19 August 2024

CHECK FOR UPDATED SCHOOL AND LA POLICIES

The 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance becomes statutory on 19 August 2024. Schools and local authorities MUST follow it.

SUPPORT FIRST IS THE KEY MESSAGE

Schools and partners should work in partnership with pupils and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

PARENTS SHOULD BE TRUSTED

Medical evidence for recording absences should only be needed in a minority of cases, and schools must not be rigid about the nature of the evidence. A conversation with parents can count as evidence.

SCHOOLS MUST MAKE SICKNESS RETURNS TO THE LA

The updated guidance makes it clearer that schools MUST tell the local authority about children who are unable to attend school because of illness.

MAKE SURE YOU ENGAGE WITH ANY SUPPORT THAT'S OFFERED

By agreeing to work with the school, you show that you are willing to find ways that might help your child. This doesn't mean ignoring your instincts, but if you refuse to engage with support you risk being fined.

NEW FRAMEWORK FOR PENALTY NOTICES IN ENGLAND

When the National Threshold (ten sessions, or five days) is reached, the appropriateness of a fine should be considered in individual cases and applied as a last resort, and only where it is the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour.

ATTENDANCE REGISTERS MUST BE ACCURATE & SHARED WITH DFE

By law schools must make accurate entries to the attendance register and, from 19 August 2024, MUST submit all data to the Department for Education.

THE 'WHY' SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Schools and local authorities should consider why parents have not engaged with support, or why the support hasn't worked prior to legal action. The 'why' should indicate if a different form of support is appropriate.

SCHOOLS HAVE DISCRETION TO AUTHORISE ABSENCES

Absence can be authorised by the school. Code I (Illness) is to be used when a pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related) and code C can be used for exceptional circumstances.

SOME CHILDREN NEED EXTRA SUPPORT FOR SEND/ILL HEALTH

Schools are expected to be particularly mindful of pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health, or because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities. They should provide them with additional support, pastoral care, and consider reasonable adjustments.

KEEP A DIARY & GATHER EVIDENCE

In order to best support your child and to defend yourself if legal action is enforced it is vital to use written communication and keep records of events and progress.

FIND OTHER PARENTS THAT GET IT

Join the private Not Fine in School group on Facebook to get advice and support from families in the same position.

Support, not sanctions

www.notfineinschool.co.uk

Peer support for families with school attendance difficulties

