

Re: Changes to national school attendance expectations

Dear families,

I am writing to inform you of the new statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education relating to attendance and term time absence. The Department for Education have significantly tightened the law in relation to school attendance and have now published revised statutory guidance that became mandatory from the start of this academic year. This can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

Excellent attendance (above 98%) is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their GCSE outcomes, wellbeing and wider life chances and it is a parent or carer's legal obligation to ensure their child attends school as frequently as possible.

Requests for Leave of Absence

Parents must request permission in advance, in writing, for leave of absence for any reason, including holidays. Head teachers cannot grant leave during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and cannot grant permission retrospectively.

If you take your child out of school without permission this may lead to enforcement action (fixed penalty notice or prosecution) and Leytonstone School works closely with our Educational Welfare Officer to monitor this.

National Thresholds

Schools now need to consider a fixed penalty notice if a pupil incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. Half of a day (am or pm) is considered as one 'session'. The threshold of 10 sessions can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, for example, eight sessions of unauthorised holidays in term time and two sessions for other unauthorised reasons. The ten school week period may span different terms or school years.

Fixed penalty notices

Fixed penalty notices charged to parents will rise to £80 (if paid within 21 days) or £160 (if paid between 22 and 28 days). Where a penalty notice is unpaid, legal action may be pursued.

The local authority and schools are committed to improving attendance and achievement and would like our families to work with us to ensure the best possible outcomes for their children.

Attending school is the most effective way to improve life chances and future opportunities. We expect all children to attend school regularly and those families who struggle to send their child to school will be fully supported by your child's pastoral team.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email – we certainly want to support your child and move beyond our 93% school attendance from last year.

Yours sincerely,

Mr P Hunt
Deputy Head Teacher