

Otterburn Primary School and Nursery

'Be happy, aim high and achieve your full potential!'

Head Teacher - Mrs Alison Woodcock

School Website: www.otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk

School Telephone Number: 01830 520283

Email: admin@otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk



Monday 23rd September 2024

Dear Families,

School Attendance

You may be aware that new legislation has come into effect which compels us to use penalty notices to fine parents in certain circumstances.

At Otterburn Primary School, we want all children to have the best attendance, as the more time children spend in school, the better this is for their educational and social outcomes. We recognise that pupils can be absent for many reasons, and we believe that overcoming barriers to school attendance is best achieved in partnership with families and pupils. Therefore, it is always important that we work together and discuss any issues as soon as they arise.

Absence from school

Penalty notices will now be considered by schools when a child has been recorded as absent for five days within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This does not mean that a notice will be issued by the authorised officer but that the school may make a referral which will be considered by the officer. In our school all penalty notices will be issued by officers within Northumberland County Council's Education Welfare Team.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil.
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution.
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

Please note that any fines collected are retained by the County Council and do not come to the school. This is not a way to raise income. We are compelled to do this to comply with new legislation.

Holidays in Term Time

Schools have not been allowed to authorise holidays taken in school term time since 2013 and Headteachers will not grant a request for a leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances. A request for a holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance. A holiday during term time may result in a penalty notice being issued, see guidance below.

Penalty Notices

The national threshold is 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence. For example, 4 sessions (2 days) of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks. These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 5 days of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

For a first offence, the Penalty Notice will be £80 per parent per child if paid within 21 days rising to £160 if paid after the 21 days – it must be paid within 28 days. For a second offence, the amount is £160 per parent per child to be paid within 28 days. Again, the fine is not paid into the school budgets.

We fully recognise that each child is different and we want every child to have the best chance educationally. We believe this is best achieved with good attendance and punctuality. A copy of our updated attendance policy is on our website and will be kept under review by our Governing Body.

Further information:

- Otterburn Primary School attendance policy:
[Otterburn Primary School & Nursery - Attendance](#)
- Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, Department for Education, (August 2024):
[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Please contact the school should you have any questions or wish to discuss any attendance concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Woodcock
Head Teacher