

Department for Education Update for Parents and Carers

Working together to improve attendance

At Southport Learning Trust we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our young people. We strive to work in true partnership to create positive communities where we all feel valued, welcomed and included.

Strong attendance is vital for all children. It takes character to develop strong attendance, creating habits which empower children and young people to positively impact the world.

Attendance is everyone's responsibility and working with our schools, students, parents/carers and Sefton Local Authority pro-actively we feel we can have the greatest impact. Statistics show a direct link between achievement and strong attendance above 95%. Children with attendance over 95% make better progress both socially and academically.

New Government guidance becomes statutory from August 19th. Please read the following significant update from the Department for Education which will help us work together to support all children and young people to attend school on time every day.

Working Together Guidance

Parent Responsibilities

- Support your child with regular routines to support their attendance especially in the morning.
- Your child must attend school on time every day. Any issues that prevent this must be discussed with the appropriate staff in our schools.
- If your child is absent you are required to contact your school before 8:30am each morning of absence.
- It remains important to arrange medical appointments outside of school hours because appointments during the day impacts your child's learning and attendance. Where it is unavoidable to have medical appointments during term time, we expect that children will attend for morning and afternoon registration where practicable.
- You are required to book holidays only during the 13 weeks of school holidays every year.

School Responsibilities

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Schools have a legal responsibility to ensure children attend school on time every day which includes a morning and afternoon session and schools must address attendance concerns with the appropriate levels of support.

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- Schools must contact parents if a child is not present for morning registration and a reason for absence has not been provided before 8:30am.
- Schools must follow safeguarding guidance around absence including home visits where appropriate.

Key Updates - Working together to improve school attendance (Department for Education 2024)

The new legislation from the DfE reinforces expectations about school attendance and term-time absence, especially in relation to taking children on holidays outside of the 13 weeks of school holidays every year. Schools are no longer able to authorise holidays during term-time.

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a Fixed Penalty Notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons within any 10 week rolling period. Each 10 week rolling period will begin on the first session of unauthorised absence for any child.

Please read the update from the [Department for Education](#):

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

190. A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Punctuality to school - Key National statutory policy changes and school procedure:

After 9.30am the school register must 'close'. This is a national requirement and it means that any student arriving at school later than 9.30am, will be coded as U (late after the register has closed).

Students arriving at school after 9.30am will be required to sign in at the main reception.

Arrival after 9.30am is classed as being ***significantly late for school*** and the U code impacts on the student's attendance record as it counts as an absent session.

If a student has 10 or more ***unauthorised absence sessions in any 10 week rolling period*** then the school has to pursue one of two actions: A referral to the Local Authority for a fine or a referral to the Local Authority for an Attendance meeting.

For example:

Scenario 1:

If a student arrives at school after 9.30am on 10 occasions or more during a 10 week rolling period then the school has to either make a referral to the Local Authority for a fine or a referral for parents and the student to attend an attendance panel meeting with the Local Authority.

Scenario 2:

If a student arrives at school after 9.30am on 6 occasions during a 10 week period and in addition has a further 4 sessions (2 days) of absence that has not been authorised by the school then the school has to either make a referral to the Local Authority for a fine or a referral for parents and the student to attend an attendance panel meeting with the Local Authority.

If you need support about your child's attendance, please contact their school and support and guidance will be offered.

As Southport Learning Trust our commitment to our communities is our constant focus and we thank you for your continued support to ensure that every child reaches their potential. Together, we will continue to inspire and empower the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "I. Raikes".

Ian Raikes
CEO