

## How you can help

- Encourage your child to attend school regularly and on time.
- If your child starts missing school, work with the school to address the problem.
- Make sure your child knows that you do not approve of them missing school.
- Take an interest in their education.
- If your child is unwell, inform the school on the first day of absence and ensure your child returns to school as soon as possible.
- Avoid taking holidays in term time.

## Where can you contact us?

The Education Welfare Service offers support and advice about your child's education. Inclusion & Welfare Officers are based in schools.

Please ask the school for the phone number of your Inclusion & Welfare Officer.

Alternatively, contact the Inclusion & Welfare Service at Borough Hall as per the address and phone number on the back of this leaflet.

### Other Inclusion & Welfare Service Leaflets

#### The Inclusion & Welfare Service – Information for Parents

- School Attendance, Guidance on Prosecutions
- School Attendance Orders
- Holidays during Term Time
- The Inclusion & Welfare Service
- Absentee Investigation Patrols
- Children Missing Education
- Employing School Age Children

## Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

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برای اطلاع	Informacja
Za Informacije	
Per Informazione	তথ্যের জন্য

## Contact us



01234 228304



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Borough Hall  
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Bedford  
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[www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Penalty Notice

## School Attendance

Inclusion & Welfare Service

## Penalty Notices (School Attendance)

Local Authorities have several powers they can use to tackle poor school attendance but parents must also play their part by ensuring that their child attends school regularly.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers Local Authority Officers, Headteachers and the Police to issue Penalty Notices when pupils take unauthorised absence from school. Penalty Notices supplement the sanctions to enforce attendance at school that are already available in the Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 1989.

In Bedford Borough, the Inclusion & Welfare Service is responsible for issuing Penalty Notices on behalf of schools in our area, in consultation with head teachers, school staff and other agencies where appropriate.

## When a Penalty Notice may be issued

**The Inclusion & Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice:**

- When a pupil has taken an unauthorised leave of absence from school during term time;
- When a truancy patrol has found a pupil absent from school and the school has recorded the pupil's absence as unauthorised.
- In the early stages of casework where the Inclusion & Welfare Service or the school believe that the sanction will lead to an improvement in attendance. For example, the pupil persistently arrives late at school; parents fail to attend or co-operate with the school's attempts to improve attendance.

**To ensure that we deliver Penalty Notices consistently, we apply the following criteria:**

### Poor Attendance

- We consider a Penalty Notice only when the pupil's unauthorised absences amount to at least 10 sessions (5 days) during the last 10 school weeks.
- We normally give the parents a formal warning that we are considering a Penalty Notice and allow them 15 school days to bring about an improvement (in some exceptional cases this will not be the case).

### Unauthorised Leave of Absence

- When an unauthorised leave of absence has been recorded by the school they can request that a Penalty Notice be issued.
- No warning is given by Bedford Borough Council prior to a Penalty Notice being issued for an unauthorised leave of absence.
- After receiving three penalty notices within a three year period, including a penalty notice issued by another authority, you will automatically face prosecution under the aggravated offence.

## Definition of 'parent' as stated in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.

- Any person who has care of a child or young person, although not a natural parent, is considered to be a parent in education law. (Having care of a child or young person means a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of their relationship with the child).

We issue a Penalty Notice to each 'parent' as defined above.

## Payment of Penalty Notices

The payment is £80 if paid within 21 days from the date of receiving the Notice, rising to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receiving the Notice.

The Local Authority will retain any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs.

Parents who do not pay a Penalty Notice will be referred through the Single Justice Process and face prosecution under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This may lead to a fine of up to £2,500.

Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal.

## Children's Welfare

**Children who attend school regularly gain through:**

- Better qualifications.
- Better employment prospects.
- Improved personal safety.
- Social skills.
- Friendship.
- Confidence.