

28.06.24

Dear Parents/Carers

Securing strong pupil attendance continues to be a challenge for all schools across the country. Our Academy Trust and school leaders continue to be committed to securing high levels of attendance for all pupils in our schools. There are over 1200 pupils in our family of schools, and we are pleased that our overall average attendance is 95.6%, which is higher than the current national average of 94.6% for state primary schools. However, within this data we have over 100 pupils who are recorded as persistently absent, which means their attendance is less than 90%.

Whilst all school leaders recognise that children will have days when they are not able to attend school because they are ill, or because of other exceptional circumstances which are agreed in advance, our data analysis indicates that a high proportion of those children who are persistently absent or have lower than the national average attendance across the trust have had unauthorised holiday in term time.

It is important to highlight again that a consistently high level of school attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances e.g. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

As a result of the national issues with pupil attendance there have been some significant changes to the DfE statutory guidance - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) around the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) which are important to make our families aware of. The changes will apply from the 19th of August 2024 and are complex. I will endeavour to explain the main points as clearly as possible.

- The threshold for a Fixed Penalty Notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. (Please note: 1 school day is equivalent to 2 sessions.)
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions 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. 10 sessions 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).

In order for North Yorkshire Council to comply with the requirements of the updated guidance, they have amended their Code of Conduct for the use of Fixed Penalty Notices as follows.

**Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time:**

From the 19th of August 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 2nd Penalty Notice issued within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first Fixed Penalty Notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular child will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days, this will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second Fixed Penalty Notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same child will be charged a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third Fixed 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 Penalty Notice.
- In a case where the national threshold is met for the third time (or subsequent times) 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.

In cases where a pupil has moved from another school or Local Authority area in the previous 3 years, schools now have the duty to try to ascertain whether previous Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the pupil.

In addition to the above, please also note that in line with the national guidance and expectations Fixed Penalty Notices can also be issued for long term poor attendance situations. YCAT schools are committed to supporting their families in these situations and through their robust pupil attendance management processes would make parents/carers aware in advance if there was a risk of a FPN being issued.

Finally, our academy schools are keen to support all their families in ensuring positive attendance and as a result of this commitment I wanted to bring the changes to the Department for Education's statutory guidance to your attention as soon as possible. Please remember school leaders are the main point of contact should parents/carers have any concerns/queries or need to talk further about their child's attendance.

Yours Sincerely



Mrs J Robinson  
CEO, YCAT