



June 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Absence during Term Time

As you are aware our recent OFSTED inspection highlighted many excellent features of the school. One area, however, that the OFSTED team included in their report as an area for improvement was the attendance of students, currently just below the national average.

With this area of development in mind, one of our key objectives at The Hamble School next year is to improve attendance. We place great importance on students regularly attending school and, as such, our attendance target for individual students is 96%. I would like to thank parents who send their children to school regularly and I hope to get the support of all parents in meeting the attendance target for their child.

The Supreme Court recently ruled that no child should be taken out of school without good reason. The evidence showed that every extra day of school missed affects a student's chances of achieving good GCSE which in turn has a lasting effect on their life chances.

Following the Supreme Court's ruling, The Hamble School will resume fully implementing Hampshire's attendance policies and code of conduct where required. This means issuing a fixed penalty notice to parents where a student is taken out of school for 10 sessions (5 days) or more for unauthorised circumstances within a 100 session period (50 days). Unauthorised circumstances may include:

- unauthorised holiday;
- unauthorised failure to attend on time;
- reasons deemed by the school not to be a valid reason to keep your child home;
- prolonged illness without medical evidence.

I should like to take this opportunity to remind you that if your child's attendance is poor, all absences will be unauthorised unless medical evidence can be provided. Good attendance is vital in ensuring your child achieves the best possible outcomes when they leave The Hamble School and move on to further education. It also ensures that they are well versed in the standards required for successful future employment.

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Headteacher: Ms L Croke, B.Ed (Hons) MA NPQH

If your child's attendance is slipping, we have several ways in which we can support you. We also have a system of warnings so that you are completely aware of any issues before they escalate.

There are some simple steps you can take to ensure that your child's attendance is maintained at a good level:

- Avoid all unauthorised absence.
- If your child requires a non-urgent medical appointment please make every effort to arrange the appointment out of school time whenever possible.
- If your child is feeling ill, err on the side of sending them to school. We have a medical officer in school who will contact you if we feel that your child is too unwell to be in school. Often a child will feel better as the day progresses.

I would appreciate it if you would familiarise yourself with the attached leaflet regarding the issuing of penalty notices. If you have any questions, require support or would like to speak in more detail regarding your child's attendance please do not hesitate to contact Miss West, Attendance Officer on 023 8045 2105 or hwest@thehambleschool.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



J Beck
Senior Deputy Headteacher

If, at any time, you should require special arrangements to be made when visiting the school and/or in order to participate fully in supporting your child at school (e.g. an accessible venue for meetings, if you are a wheelchair user, assistance with translation of documents or enlarged copies of communications etc.), please do not hesitate to let us know.

Is there an appeal process?

There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

How do I pay?

Details of payment arrangements are included in the Penalty Notice. You must ensure that you include your Penalty Notice reference number on any payment method so the payment can be tracked. Failure to do so may result in the Penalty Notice being recorded as unpaid. Full payment is required within the 21 days or 28 days' timescales. Payment in part or by instalments is not possible. Late payments cannot be accepted and the Penalty Notice is recorded as unpaid.

What happens if I do not pay?

You will have up to 21 days at £60 or 28 days at £120 from the date of posting to pay the Penalty Notice in full. If you fail to do so, the local authority is required, by law, to commence proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the original offence of poor school attendance.

If convicted of this offence under the Education Act 1996 there are a number of possible sentences, including a fine of up to £1,000 (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1)) or a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a period of up to three months' imprisonment (in the case of a prosecution under section 444(1A)).

Can I get help if my child is not attending school?

Yes. The school is available to provide advice and support and signpost you to other support agencies in the locality.

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

Information on Penalty Notices for non-attendance at school

Education Act 1996, section 444A

Advice for parents and carers

Applied from September 2015



Penalty Notices and the Education Act 1996

Section 444A of the Act gives powers to the local authority, and headteachers to issue Penalty Notices in circumstances where it is believed that a person has committed an offence under Section 444(1); that is, where a child fails to attend regularly at their registered school.

What is a Penalty Notice?

A Penalty Notice is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. If it is paid it does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record.

Who can be issued with a Penalty Notice?

Where absence warrants the issuing of a Penalty Notice, each individual parent/carer can be issued with one Penalty Notice for each of their children with unauthorised absence.

What if my child has further unauthorised absence from school?

If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

How is a Penalty Notice issued and how much is the fine?

Penalty Notices are either posted to your home or delivered to you by hand. Each Penalty Notice fine is £60 if paid within 21 days of the date of posting and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days of the date of posting.

When are they issued?

As set down by the Department for Education, Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence. In Hampshire, Penalty Notices are issued when a pupil has had 10 or more half-day sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence, in any 10 school week period; or one or more unauthorised absences during a public exam,

assessment or test (where the dates have been published). *Unauthorised absence* is absence not approved by the school and will be coded on your child's attendance record as one of the following:

- O – unauthorised absence
- U – late after close of registration
- G – non-approved leave of absence (holiday).

Is a warning given?

For unauthorised leave of absence or during public exams, assessment and testing the school will provide warning of a Penalty Notice in its school policy, or through letters, newsletters, the school website, and the leave of absence request form. In such cases a Penalty Notice can be issued without further warning.

If your child has an ongoing pattern of unauthorised absence then you will receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This warning will advise you about the extent of your child's absence and warn you that if your child's attendance does not show a significant improvement and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.

Further support, advice and guidance is available from:

The Department for Education

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance
- www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview
- www.gov.uk

Hampshire County Council

- www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents.