

# LEARNING TOGETHER TRUST

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Friday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025

## Re: School Attendance

Dear Parents and Carers,

I have written to you previously to make you aware about the importance of good attendance and how it is a national priority for our government. Put simply, the more often children attend school, the better they will achieve and the more they will flourish.

One of the most significant changes this year has been around the reduced thresholds for **Term-Time Holidays/Unauthorised Absence** and the subsequent **Education Penalty Notices (EPN)** if these are met. Term-time holidays will only be approved in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of your child's Headteacher. It is more than likely that if your child has 10 sessions of term-time holiday and/or unauthorised absence (5 school days), you will be referred to the Local Authority who may consider legal intervention. On the reverse of this letter is further guidance on Education Penalty Notices (EPN) and the thresholds used to determine whether legal intervention is required.

With the reduced thresholds in place since August 2024, we have seen a rise in the number of our families who have been issued with an EPN. We fully sympathise that travel companies raise their prices significantly during school holidays. However, all schools uphold the Education Act 1996 which states parents:

***'Have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.'***

I would also like to inform you that your child's school **does not** receive any money from EPN fines and the administrative process of completing a referral takes significant time for adults working in school.

We appreciate that the vast majority of parents and carers are continuing to complete 'Leave of Absence' request forms and would like to urge all parents to continue to be honest with schools if they are taking their child on holiday in term-time. Where parents and carers do not inform schools of a term-time holiday and then it is discovered afterwards, difficult conversations arise which can damage the relationship between school and families. If a school believes that a child has been on holiday, they may record the absence as unauthorised or ask for evidence to prove otherwise.

Finally, I would like to thank families for the support you provide in ensuring good attendance and, as a Trust family of schools, we are delighted with our attendance figures. Our overall attendance is **well above** the National Average and our Persistent Absence figure (children with below 90% attendance) is **well below** the National Average.

I am looking forward to us all continuing to support excellent attendance across all our family of schools in Learning Together Trust. If you would like any further information, please contact the school office at your child's school.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr. M. Rigby**  
Head of System Leadership  
The Learning Together Trust

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## Education Penalty Notice Guidance - 2024 - 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Attendance at school has been identified as a national priority by both the Department for Education (DFE) and OFSTED. Research in 2022 by the DFE found that pupils with higher attainment in end of Key Stage assessments had lower levels of absence than those with lower attainment.

Schools that are part of The Learning Together Trust family provide a wide range of support to ensure that children attend school as often as possible and work with families to help address difficulties and challenges they may face.

In some circumstances, Local Authorities may issue parent/s with an Education Penalty Notice (EPN) if a child's absence record does not improve. This year, there has been new guidance issued from Local Authorities which came into effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The summary of the changes are included below:

1. There will be a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period for when a penalty notice must be considered. *(The new rules mean you will no longer be able to take your child out of school for one week's holiday without a penalty notice being issued.)*
2. There will be an increase in the penalty fine from £60 to £80 if paid in 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 if paid within 28 days of being issued.
3. If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
4. If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Kind regards,

**Mr. M. Rigby**  
**Head of System Leadership**  
**The Learning Together Trust**