This is a formal written warning that, unless attendance significantly improves, you will be issued with a penalty notice. This is to give you another chance to work with the school to improve your child's attendance. A 'notice to improve' will not be given if you take a holiday in term time without permission.

How much could I be fined if my child misses school?

How many penalty notices can I get? From the 2024-25 school year, the fine for school absence penalty notices across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. If you do not pay the fine you may be prosecuted in court.

If a parent receives a second penalty notice for the same child within any three-year period, the charge will be a flat rate of £160; there will be no reduction if paid within 21 days. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count.

A parent cannot receive more than two penalty notices for the same child within any three-year period. This is because it is clear that previous penalty notices have not worked. Once this limit has been reached, another action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Penalty notices for absence before the 2024-25 school year do not count in this limit.

FAQ's

What is PA?

PA stands for 'Persistently absent'. This is when your child's attendance is below 90%

What is risk of PA?

Risk of PA is when your child's attendance is at risk of dropping below 90%- we aim to offer early intervention at this stage.

What is an EPN?

EPN stands for 'Education penalty notices'. EPN's are issued for unauthorised absences, this includes term time holidays.

I'll just go on holiday and pay the fine?

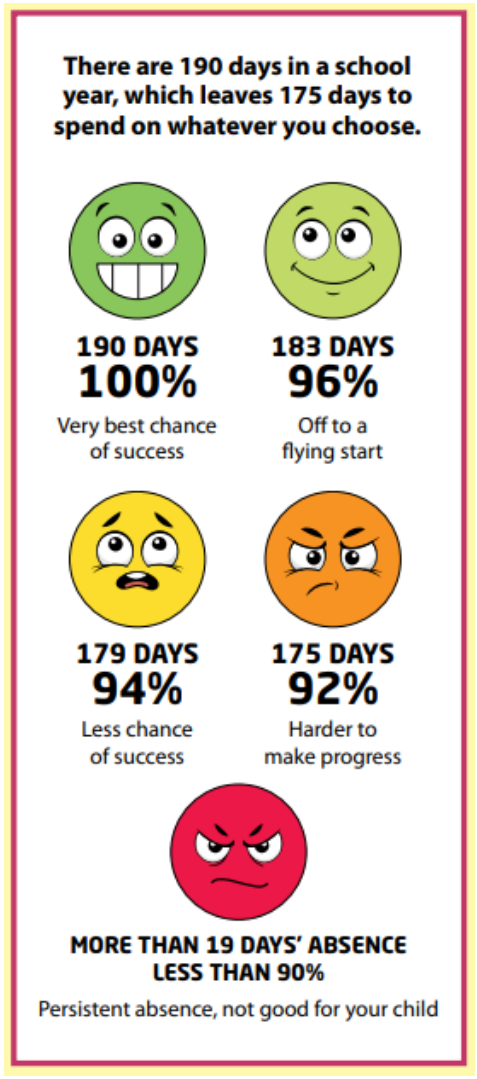
EPN's have now been capped nationally at TWO fines within any 3 year period. After this, other action like a parenting order or prosecution has to be considered- this could mean a fine of up to £2500!

What is an unauthorised absence?

A child being kept off school unnecessarily or without good reason. Term time holidays is not a justified reason to take your child out of school.

What happens if I keep my child off, and don't contact school?

School will call home to try and obtain a reason for absence- if no reason is provided school may carry out a visit to your home- this is to check on the welfare of you and your child.



Leigh Primary School

The Green, Leigh, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 8QP
Telephone/Fax: 01732 832660

School Attendance Parent Guide

'Sharing, Caring and Learning Together'

ATTENDANCE TEAM-

Attendance Manager – Mrs Halfhide
Head Teachers- Mrs Halfhide/Mrs Shobbrook
Deputy Head Teacher- Mrs Shobbrook
Attendance Officer – Mrs Burbridge

Telephone: 01732 832 660
E-mail: office@leigh.kent.sch.uk
Website: www.leighprimaryschool.co.uk

What are my responsibilities for my child's attendance?

As a parent, you are legally responsible for making sure your child gets a suitable fulltime education, from the age of 5 to 16. For most parents, this will mean making sure your child is in school every day except when:

- Your child is too ill to go to school. - You have permission for a leave of absence from your child's school for them not to attend.
- You should only ask for this in exceptional circumstances. Generally, a holiday would not be classed as an exceptional circumstance.
- Your religious body has a day for religious observance.

If my child needs to be absent from school, what do I need to do?

You should contact us as early as possible on the first day of absence to explain why – before 9am. If you do not, we will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why your child is not in school. You should then contact the school by phone or email on each subsequent day of absence.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. The school can approve or deny the request at our discretion, in line with our policy and procedures. A number of factors will be considered. Approved absence will be for 'exceptional circumstances'.

What time does my child need to be at school?

Register is taken at 8:45 which is why the gates open at 8:30, Any child arriving after 8:50 is classified as 'late' (L). If your child arrives after 9am they are classified as 'unauthorised late' (U). A 'U' code is treated as a session of absence in the register.

My child has a short term illness. Do they have to go to school, and will I be penalised if they don't?

If your child is ill, read the NHS's 'Is my child too ill for school?' advice to help you decide whether they can go to school. If they are too ill to attend, you are not breaking the law and will not be penalised. You should let the school know as soon as possible on the first day of absence and schools must record such absences as authorised. If the absence due to illness is ongoing or frequent you should speak to your child's school to see what support can be put in place.

What should I do if my child needs a dental or medical appointment in school time?

To avoid disruption to your child's attendance, medical and dental appointments should not be booked during the school day whenever reasonably possible. When they are, you should ask the school in advance for a leave of absence and collect them as close to the time of the appointment as possible and return them to school for the rest of the school day afterwards.

How do I access support to help my child attend school?

If you need support to get your child to school for any reason, the first step is to talk to us so that we can work in partnership. In the first instance you can talk to your class teacher or the Attendance Manager (Mrs Halfhide) or Deputy Attendance Manager (Joanne Shobbrook).

If for any reason the issues facing you as a family are outside the support the school can provide internally through intervention and various forms of additional support, we can provide access to local services that can work with you, your family, you child and the school to provide further support.

Alongside this support, you are expected to agree and take part in accessing the support once it has been put in place. It is advisable to regularly meet with your child's school to review what is and isn't working, involving your child if possible. While waiting for help, you should still do everything you can to help your child attend as much as possible.

If you are struggling to maintain good attendance due to your child being too anxious to attend school, it is advisable to talk to the school but also your GP. You can find useful advice from the NHS on anxiety in children and at Young Minds. These sites will help you work through likely reasons together with your child, what to do and how to make sure that you get the right support if there are more serious issues.

Formal and legal action - Will my local council take legal action against me?

If your child is absent from school without permission or a valid reason, you are likely to be breaking the law. Where this happens, the school or your council will speak to you to understand the reasons. If your child hasn't attended because they are struggling to, we and Kent local council are expected to put the right support in place to help you. If you do not take part in that support, or it doesn't work because more structured formal support is needed, then we or Kent county council may:

- Invite you to agree to an attendance contract. This is a formal action plan that sets out what you will do to improve your child's attendance and what your child's school and/or your local council will do to support this.
- Apply to the family court for an education supervision order to ensure you and your child receive advice, assistance and direction to make sure they receive a suitable full-time education.

If you do not make any efforts to improve your child's attendance or it is clear you have knowingly allowed your child to be absent without good reason – for example, taking your child on holiday in school time without permission – your local council may prosecute you to protect your child's right to a full-time education.

When can I be given a penalty notice (fine) if my child misses school?

From the 2024-25 school year, there will be new national rules on how penalty notices for school absence are used. The new rules mean that all schools must consider giving a penalty notice to a parent when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons within a 10 school week period, and support to help your child be in school is not appropriate.

If support would help improve attendance, that should be provided by the school or local council rather than a penalty notice. You cannot be given a penalty notice for absence that is authorised by the school (such as illness).

A penalty notice will usually only be issued in cases of holidays taken in school time, or for other reasons where the school or council is trying to help attendance to improve and you are not engaging in that support or it is not working and they believe that a penalty notice would improve attendance. Your school or council can still decide to issue a penalty notice or proceed to prosecution for less amounts of absence than 10 sessions (5 days) if support is not appropriate and they think it would improve attendance. For example, if parents are often taking shorter holidays in school time to deliberately avoid a fine.

When may I be given a 'notice to improve' instead of a penalty notice?

In some cases, your school or local council may choose to give you a 'notice to improve' instead of a penalty notice once the national threshold of 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence is met.