

Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team

A Brief Guide to Penalty Notices

Sections 444 Education Act 1996

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

NCC have changed its timescales for issuing Penalty Notices (PN) for unauthorised absence from school. This leaflet offers you a brief summary about the (PN) scheme and what it could mean for you.

What is a PN?

A penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and required the parent(s) to pay a fixed amount as a fine for their child's irregular attendance and avoid a court appearance.

It is issued per parent, per child. Please note **only** a Headteacher can authorise absence from school.

Who issues them?

In Northamptonshire, the Local Authority issues them through the Educational Inclusion and Partnership team

When are they used?

When a pupil has a minimum of ten (10) school sessions (five days consecutive) recorded as unauthorised in a six school week period; a school day is two sessions - AM and PM.

This includes:

- Any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.
- Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken and is recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- An absence in term time which has not been authorised by the Headteacher. The Government has directed Headteachers may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.

PNs can also be used during the first five (5) days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

Please note:

If the school refers a period of absence that is longer than fifteen (15) consecutive school days, the Educational and Inclusion Partnership team may consider a PN is not appropriate.

In these instances the matter may proceed to a prosecution.

Determination about whether it is appropriate to use a penalty notice will be based on the individual circumstances of each case.



If a parent knows that their child is failing to attend school regularly and there is reasonable justification for not ensuring that their child attends then it is for the parents/carers to prove that reasonable justification.

How much is the PN?

The PN is issued with an invoice for £120 and twenty eight (28) days are given for you to settle the penalty.

If the PN is paid within the first twenty one (21) days, the amount payable is reduced to £60.

How do I pay?

The information on how to pay is included on the PN. Payment cannot be made in part or by installments.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within the twenty eight (28) days, the Authority will consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If proven, this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order and also costs.

Can I appeal?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Fixed Penalty Notice?

You cannot be prosecuted for the period of absence identified in the Fixed Penalty Notice. You may subsequently be prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absence from school. Each case is considered on an individual basis

**** REMEMBER ****

School staff would much rather work with parents/carers to resolve poor attendance than resort to enforcement actions like Fixed Penalty Notices or Court

For further information please contact:

The Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team

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<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/EducationandLearning/Parents/Attend/Pages/truancy.aspx>