September 2026
Important Information for Parents and Carers: Education Penalty Notices

Dear Parent/Carer,

We would like to remind all parents and carers about changes to the law relating to Education Penalty Notices (EPNs) for unauthorised school absence, which came into effect nationally on 19 August 2024.

Regular school attendance is essential to support children's learning, wellbeing, and future success. Wigan Council and local schools are committed to working with families to ensure children attend school every day they can.

A Support First Approach for absence that is not related to a holiday
In line with national attendance guidance, Wigan Council and schools will continue to adopt a support first approach. Where attendance concerns arise, schools will work with families to understand any barriers and offer appropriate support wherever possible. Parents and carers are encouraged to speak to their child's school as early as possible if they are experiencing difficulties that may affect attendance.

When Can an Education Penalty Notice Be Issued?
Under the national framework, a penalty notice must be considered when a child has accumulated 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school-week period.

This threshold applies to unauthorised absence for any reason, including unauthorised leave of absence during term time.

What Has Changed since August 2024?
The national changes mean that:

- A penalty notice may be issued where a child has 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) within a rolling 10 school-week period.
- Parents can no longer take their child out of school for a week's holiday during term time without the risk of a penalty notice being issued.
- The penalty notice charge is **£80 per parent, per child** if paid within 21 days for a first offence.
- If payment is not made within 21 days, the charge increases to **£160 per parent, per child**, payable within 28 days.
- If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year period, the charge will automatically be **£160**, with no option to pay the lower rate.
- A third offence within a three-year period may result in the Local Authority considering alternative legal interventions.

Wigan Council, People Directorate.
Phone: 01942 487139 E-mail: AttendancePathway@wigan.gov.uk
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Working Together to Improve Attendance
Good attendance gives children the best opportunity to achieve their potential. We appreciate the continued support of parents and carers in ensuring that children attend school regularly and arrive on time.
If you have concerns about your child's attendance, or require support, please contact your child's school as soon as possible. Early communication allows schools and services to work with families to resolve issues before they impact on attendance.

Thank you for your continued support.
Wigan Council Attendance Service

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