# School Attendance & Penalty Notices

## What is a Penalty Notice?

A financial penalty for keeping a child out of school during term-time, intended to change behaviour without criminal prosecution.

Penalty Notice fines are issued **per parent, per child**.
For example, if two siblings are taken out of school for a term-time holiday each parent will receive two separate fines.

## What happens if I get one?

**The first time a Penalty Notice is issued** the fine will be

- **£160** per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days) reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days.

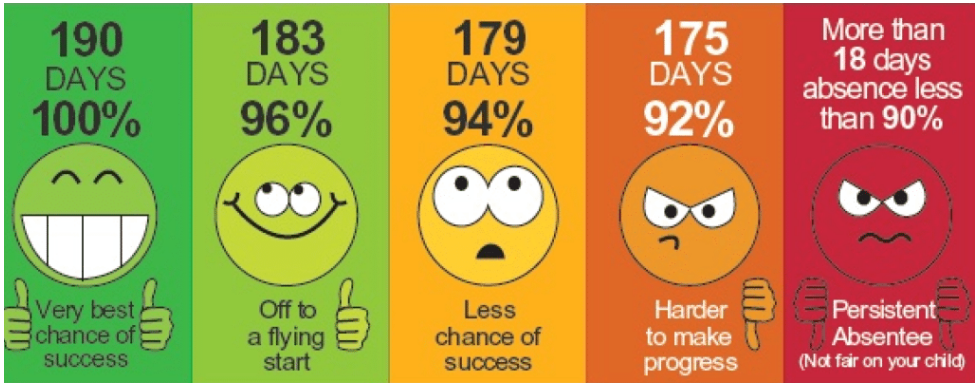
**If a second Penalty Notice is issued** within 3 years the fine will be

- **£160** per parent, per child (if paid within 28 days) with no reduction for early payment.

**If there is a third offence within three years** (even under another school or Local Authority)

- the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service for **Prosecution.**

**That can result in fines of up to £2,500 per parent, per child and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months, and may appear on a parent's DBS certificate.**




## What changed in 2024?

Schools must now consider issuing Penalty Notices if a child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any rolling period of 10 school weeks.

There is no longer an early payment reduction for a second offence.

Only two Penalty Notices can now be issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period.

**Any further offences may result in criminal prosecution.**

## The Penalty Notice Threshold

**10 sessions of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks**
(A school week is any week when there is at least one school session and there are two sessions in a school day - morning and afternoon.)

This can be any combination of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period, consecutive or not, for example:

- a 5-day unauthorised holiday **= 10 sessions**
- a 3-day holiday + 4 mornings arriving after the register closes **= 10 sessions**
- 3 days of unauthorised absence in one week and half a day a week over the next 4 weeks **= 10 sessions**

The 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years, for example:

- 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term + 8
- more in the Autumn Term **= 10 sessions.**

as well as spanning schools and local authorities if you move schools.

## Can I get one without reaching the threshold?

Bristol City Council can issue Penalty Notices before the threshold is reached if parents deliberately try to avoid the threshold by taking several short holidays or repeatedly take a child out for birthdays or other family events.