

ATTENDANCE · GUIDE 2

School fines for non-attendance



SHORT ANSWER

Since 19 August 2024, a school absence fine is £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days — rising to £160 within 28 days. Fines usually start after 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in 10 school weeks, and repeat offences within 3 years escalate quickly.

How the fines work (England, from 19 August 2024)

- 1 **Threshold:** a fine must be considered after **10 sessions (usually 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school weeks** — sessions need not be consecutive and can span terms.
- 2 **First fine:** **£80 per parent, per child** if paid within 21 days, rising to **£160** if paid between days 22 and 28.
- 3 **Second fine within 3 years** (same parent, same child): a flat **£160** — no £80 option.
- 4 **Third time within 3 years:** no more fines — the case goes **straight to court**, where fines can reach £2,500 with a criminal record, which can appear on future DBS checks.
- 5 **Who issues it:** the head teacher asks the local authority, which issues the notice under its published code of conduct. If you don't pay, the council can prosecute — and it can prosecute without ever issuing a fine.

SECTION 444(1) — EDUCATION ACT 1996

If your child is absent without authorisation, you are guilty of an offence, punishable by a fine of up to **£1,000**.

SECTION 444(1A) — AGGRAVATED OFFENCE

If you knew about the unauthorised absence and failed to act: a fine of up to **£2,500** or up to **3 months in prison**.

SECTION 103 — EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

An excluded child found in a public place in school hours can mean a fine of up to **£1,000** for parents.

Think a fine is unfair?

There is no formal right of appeal — but you can challenge a fine and ask for it to be withdrawn. See **Guide 4: Challenging a school fine** for the step-by-step process.

Sources: DfE, *Working together to improve school attendance* (statutory guidance, applies from 19 August 2024); Education Act 1996, s.444; Education and Inspections Act 2006, s.103.

Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at **info@travellermovement.org.uk**