



THE BISHOPSWOOD SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Attendance Policy

At the Bishopswood Schools Federation we aim to create a welcoming and supportive learning environment where children feel happy and safe. We place high priority on good attendance and punctuality, so that all children are able to get the very best from their time at school.

The aim of this policy is to ensure good attendance for all pupils at the school. It sets out the school's procedures for recording and monitoring attendance, including partnerships with parents and relevant support agencies.

Statutory Duties

The Education Act 1996 requires that all parents secure full time education for any child of compulsory school age. Compulsory School age is deemed to start at the age of 5yrs. Schools must record attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once in the afternoon. All attendance records must be recorded onto a register.

At the Bishopswood Schools Federation we aim to achieve attendance rates of 96% and above by the end of the year.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our newsletters and on our website;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance with rewards.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the School's Senior Leadership Team:

- Oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.
- Ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed.
- Ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.
- School attendance statistics are reported termly to governors and parents.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately;
- Promote good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the Senior Leadership Team on matters of attendance and punctuality; and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Children:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Ensure their child is escorted to and collected from school by a responsible adult or person agreed with the school.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence (before 9:30am), or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Complete an absence request form giving the full details for a request for absence due to any circumstances (including bereavements and family celebrations) - it is for the school to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not. Much will depend on the circumstances of the particular case.
- Inform the school, in confidence, of any circumstances that may be affecting their child's attendance.
- Be asked to provide a doctor's note for prolonged ill-health absence at the request of the Headteacher.

Absence from school

Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence. There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (Where the school approves the pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (Where the school will not approve the absence)

Parents will be made aware that the school has the right to authorise or unauthorise absences and that the ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Executive Headteacher. Details of authorised and unauthorised absences are given later in this policy.

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

First Day of Absence

If your child is absent you must contact the school office before 9.30am on the first day of absence by telephone or email with an explanation of the absence.

If your child is absent the school will:

- Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance;

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start 'child missing in education procedures' as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to

establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends and wider family.

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with our governing body each term. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence we will agree a plan with you to ensure that attendance improves.

Request for Leave of Absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office in advance and before making any travel arrangements. Any supporting evidence for the request must be attached to the application.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Types of absence:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absence:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. This includes; illness, medical/dental appointments, religious observance, exclusion and exceptional circumstances authorised by the school.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
- The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Attendance contracts,
- Parenting orders,
- Penalty notices,
- Education Supervision Orders,
- Prosecution.

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. (see appendix 5) A copy is available from our website or <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Lateness

- School begins at 9.00am and the doors are open from 8.45am. The afternoon session starts at 1.15pm. All pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time.
- Pupils arriving late must enter via the main entrance and report to Reception, when they will then be marked late and sent to their classroom. Parents are asked to sign their child in and give a reason for the lateness. Pupils who arrive between 9:00 and 9:30 will be recorded as late (L). Pupils who arrive after 9:30 will have the morning session recorded as unauthorised (U)
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting their own education, as well as that of others. Persistent lateness will be discussed with parents initially and should the problem continue a penalty fine will be issued. (Penalty fines for lateness are issued for 10 late marks within a 100 session period)

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance.

Monitoring

- The school will ensure attendance data is reviewed at the end of every half term
- All children with attendance below 93% or any child with a U (late after 9:30am), O (unauthorised) or G (unauthorised holiday) code will be recorded and analysed by the EDHT.
- Letters will be sent to parents with attendance below 93% for the half term (school will take into account exceptional circumstances including those children with ongoing medical conditions)

- The flow chart of communication with parents can be found in Appendix 1.
- Examples of letters 1-3 can be found in appendices 2-4.

Persistent absence

Bishopswood recognises a persistent absentee as a child whose attendance is below 85% at the end of the academic year. The school will contact parents if their child's attendance falls below 93%. The aim being that the school will support families with improving their child's attendance throughout the year, resulting in a final cumulative attendance of more than 85%. The school looks to offer support to those families whose child has had a high percentage of authorised absences through the attendance contract or Early Help Hub process as necessary.

Please note:

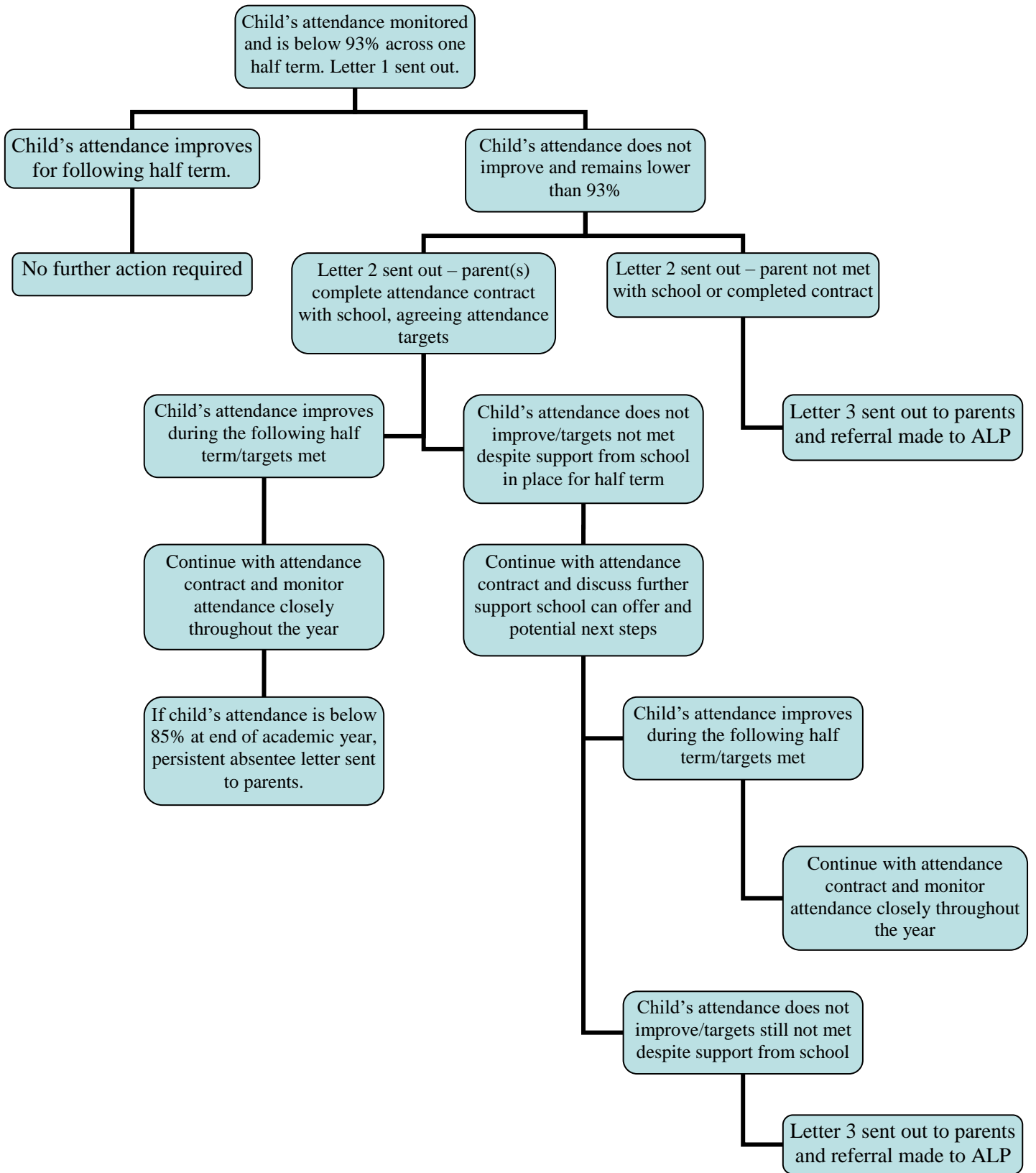
- Parent is taken to mean the child's primary carer.
- Compulsory school age is between 5 and 16 years.

Policy Reviewed – May 2023

Next Review – May 2025

APPENDIX 1

Diagram showing communication with parents regarding continued poor attendance



APPENDIX 2

Letter 1 – Initial Concerns (text in red edited as appropriate)

Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance: Initial Concerns – Child's Name

We are writing to you about your child's attendance. As part of our duty of care and the Government's drive to raise standards in schools, we are required to monitor attendance regularly. The school also has to consult with Children's Services when we have concerns about a child. As a school we must take action when:

- A pupil has had 10 sessions of absence (5 days) for which authorisation has not been given.
- A pupil has had 10 late sessions in a 10-week period
- A pupil's attendance falls below 90%

The Government classes a pupil whose attendance is below 90% as a persistent absentee regardless of whether the school has authorised or unauthorised the absence. This equates to 38 sessions or 19 days of absence across the year.

Monitoring of XXXXXXXX attendance shows that although her attendance was XX% during the first half of the XXX Term, during the second half her attendance dropped significantly to XX%, resulting in a cumulative attendance this year of only XXX%. We anticipate that with an increase in attendance during the XXX Term her cumulative attendance will be back above 90% by the end of the year. These absences can be found on the enclosed Registration Certificate. Definitions of the absence marks can be found on the Key to Codes panel.

Regular school attendance is important for children to enjoy the educational opportunities provided within the school and make progress. Absence can lead to educational disadvantage for a child and place them at risk of not achieving. The Department for Education has published data that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. This highlights the fact that there will be an impact on your child's education if attendance is not consistently above 95% throughout their schooling. We are concerned that the amount of time your child has been absent will affect their education and is below acceptable levels.

If the lack of attendance is due to ill health please be aware that you may be asked to provide medical evidence for prolonged ill-health issues. Minor ailments, such as a headache or slight cold, are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. Repeated absences may require the school to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery or local pharmacy as recommended by the Government.

Our school seeks to work actively with parents to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. We ask you to work with us to improve the situation by ensuring that your child attends school regularly and that you contact the school on the first day of any absence. We will monitor your child's attendance and write to you again if we see no improvement.

Please take the opportunity to discuss this with us. We can arrange for you to see the school nurse or access advice and support in improving your child's attendance.

If the situation does not improve, we may need make a formal referral.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 3

Letter 2 – Further Concerns & Attendance Contract needed (text in red edited as appropriate)

Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance: Further Concerns – Child's Name

We wrote to you on _____ and requested that you work with the school to support you in raising the attendance of your child XXXX.

We are writing again to express our concern that the amount of time your child has been absent has not improved. This will have a negative impact on their education and it is below acceptable levels.

Monitoring of your child's attendance has shown that their attendance was XX% when we last wrote to you for the period from _____ to _____. Since that period we have seen little improvement in their attendance which is currently XX%

The Department for Education has published data that clearly shows the link between attendance and attainment. This highlights the fact that there will be an impact on your child's education if attendance is not consistently above 95% throughout their schooling and children with attendance below 90% are regarded as persistent absentees. As a school our minimum expectation is 95%.

We will now need to invite you for a formal meeting to discuss your child's attendance. During the meeting we will construct an 'Attendance Improvement Contract' with targets for improved attendance and we can also arrange for you to see the school nurse or access advice and support in improving your child's attendance.

If the lack of attendance is due to ill health please be aware that you may be asked to provide medical evidence for prolonged ill-health issues. Minor ailments, such as a headache or slight cold, are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. Further absences may require the school to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery or local pharmacy as recommended by the Government.

It is vital that you now contact the school to arrange a meeting where the situation may be discussed with a view to finding ways to support your family in improving your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 4

Letter 3 – Continued Concerns & referral to Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) (text in red edited as appropriate)

Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance: Details of Formal Action

Following our letter(s) written to you on _____ and _____ we requested that you work with the school to support you in raising the attendance of your child. After these letters were issued there was no sufficient improvement in your child's attendance so we therefore requested to meet you on _____.

During the arranged meeting we discussed the necessary required improvement in attendance and constructed the 'Attendance Improvement Contract'. After the contract agreement, which was signed by you on _____, we would hope to see an improvement in your child's attendance. This contract has not been adhered to and their attendance remains at _____%. As a result, we have now decided to refer your case to the Attendance Legal Panel (ALP).

As a school we are making this referral in-line with Hampshire County Council's guidance. Hampshire County Council, through its ALP, carries out its responsibility to act on behalf of its schools. (Education Act 1996. Section 443: failure to comply with school attendance order and Section 444: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil). The County Council's [Legal Intervention Team](#) (LIT) will also process Education Supervision Orders. (Section 447 Education Act 1996; and School attendance orders – Section 437 Education Act 1996.)

The ALP will consider whether it is appropriate to pursue legal action as a result of your failure to work alongside the school to improve your child's attendance.

Although the referral will need to be made, you can still act now to increase your child's attendance and for a more favourable outcome for their wellbeing and academic progress.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 5

The Hampshire County Council '*Attendance guidance for parents/carers*' states:

Penalty Notices (fines) for non-attendance at school

A Penalty Notice is a fine which may be issued as an alternative to prosecution. If it is paid it does not require a court appearance and does not result in a criminal record.

Section 444A of the Act gives powers to the local authority, and headteachers to issue Penalty Notices in circumstances where it is believed that a person has committed an offence under Section 444(1); that is, where a child fails to attend regularly at their registered school.

Who can be issued with a Penalty Notice

Where absence warrants the issuing of a Penalty Notice, anyone with Parental Responsibility, or having day to day care of the child can be issued with one Penalty Notice for each of the children with unauthorised absence. If two parents have two children this may result in four Penalty Notices, 2 Penalty Notices per parent.

Further unauthorised absence from school

If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action may be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this may result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notice are issued

As set down by the Department for Education, Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence. In Hampshire, Penalty Notices are issued when a pupil has had 10 or more half-day sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence, in the last 10 school week period.

Unauthorised absence is absence not approved by the school and will be coded on your child's attendance record as one of the following:

O: unauthorised absence

U: late after close of registration

G: non-approved leave of absence (holiday).

Persistent Lateness (L) code which reaches the threshold may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

How a Penalty Notice is issued and amount of the fine

Penalty Notices are either posted to your home or delivered to you by hand. Each Penalty Notice fine is £60 and should be made within 21 days of 'deemed service' (2nd working day after postmark on the envelope and receipt of posting). If paid after 21 days but within 28 days the Penalty is £120.

Written warning

If your child has an ongoing pattern of unauthorised absence then you will normally receive a written warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued. This warning will advise you about the extent of your child's absence and warn you that if your child's attendance does not show a significant improvement and if this improvement is not maintained thereafter, a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning.

Further support, advice and guidance is available from the Department for Education.

No appeal process

There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

For further information parents/carers can visit Hampshire County Councils website at:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents>