



# South Hylton Primary School

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Website: [www.southhylton.org.uk](http://www.southhylton.org.uk)

Head Teacher: Mrs Julie Cort

14<sup>th</sup> December, 2015

Dear Parents/Carers,

## INTRODUCTION OF FIXED PENALTY NOTICES - Every Schoolday Counts

I am writing to advise you that, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, we will be implementing the use of Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences from school where such absence meets the criteria.

The criteria for issuing FPNs are contained in the Sunderland Local Code of Conduct, a copy of which can be found on the school website ([www.southhylton.org.uk](http://www.southhylton.org.uk)). A frequently asked questions response sheet has been prepared to assist parents in understanding how the scheme is administered, and this is also available on the school website.

There is much research which demonstrates the links between regular attendance at school and academic achievement – the more a pupil attends the more they can achieve. If your child has two weeks off or a number of odd day's absence from school over a sustained period of time, those days cannot be recovered, the learning is missed and your child will be in danger of falling behind and not achieving their full potential.

It is important that we work in partnership with you to ensure that good attendance is maintained throughout the school year. Therefore, it is essential that you support the school by:

- Ensuring that your child/children attend regularly and arrive punctually.
- Informing the school on the first day of absence. Some indication should be given of the likely length of the absence.
- Providing a dated note explaining the absence when your son/daughter returns to school if the information has not been communicated by other means.
- Avoiding the organisation of a family holiday during school time.

In the case of unauthorised term time leave, the letter that is sent by me refusing a term time leave application will be regarded as the formal warning. If you then take the decision to remove your child from school for the purpose of the holiday, I will request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

It is expected that you will contact School at an early stage and that we will work together to resolve any attendance problems; there may be times when external agencies are needed to offer specialist support. It is vital that you contact us at the earliest opportunity if your child appears unhappy about school so that we can work together to support you and your child.

Yours faithfully,

Julie Cort  
Headteacher



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## FIXED PENALTY NOTICES – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How are they issued?

Fixed Penalty Notices will always be issued by post.

### When will penalty notices be used?

They are used as a measure to address unauthorised absence at an early stage before non-attendance becomes entrenched, but they can also be used as a response to unauthorised term time absence.

### What is an unauthorised absence?

An unauthorised absence occurs when a parent fails to give a reason for their child's absence or the Head teacher does not agree to accept a parent's reason for a pupil's absence. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Regulation 7) states that only a head teacher or their representative can determine if an absence is to be authorised.

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

### Is a warning given?

Yes, written warning of the possibility of a Notice being issued will be sent to the parent. This will inform the parent of the extent of their child's absences and give them 15 school days in which to bring about an improvement. In that time, the pupil should have no unauthorised absences from school.

There is no limit to the number of formal warnings which can be issued.

In the case of unauthorised term time leave the warning will be the Head teacher's letter confirming that requested leave of absence has not been authorised. This letter includes a warning that a penalty notice may be issued.

### Can a parent receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for more than one child?

Multiple Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued to the same parents during the year.

### Is there an appeal process?

Fixed Penalty Notice fines are set by government regulation and are not based upon ability to pay. There is no provision for payment instalments nor is there a statutory right of appeal once a fixed-penalty notice has been issued. Fixed Penalty notices can only be withdrawn if they were issued in error or to the wrong person or there is material evidence of error.

### How do parents pay the Penalty Notice?

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Fixed Penalty Notice.

### Can a parent be prosecuted if they pay the Penalty Notice but their child is still missing school?

Not for the period stated in the Fixed Penalty Notice, since payment of the penalty discharges their liability for that period. However, it could be the case that a prosecution could be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending on the circumstances.