# Barnsley Council leads England in school absence fines amid policy shake-up



Barnsley Council has garnered attention due to its significant enforcement of fines related to unauthorised school absences, revealing a persistent trend in the management of attendance issues. During the current academic year, the council has already issued 2,320 penalty notices, reflecting a stringent approach to absenteeism. This follows a remarkable surge in enforcement measures from the previous academic year, where the total number of fines escalated to 6,151 — an increase of 96% compared to the prior year. Notably, a staggering 94% of these fines were attributed to families taking unauthorised holidays during term time.

The sharp rise in penalties aligns with national policy guidelines set by the Department for Education, which mandates that councils nationwide issue fines for specific cases of unauthorised absence. These include not only absences for unapproved holidays but also situations where attendance remains low despite prior warnings. Under the newly-adopted system, local authorities must act when attendance thresholds are not met, particularly for families who disregard formal advisories regarding their children's schooling.

Each issued fine amounts to £80 if settled within 21 days, escalating to £160 thereafter if payment is not made. Should fines remain unpaid, cases can ultimately progress to court, where parents face the prospect of larger monetary penalties or additional legal ramifications. Barnsley Council asserts that the revenue from these fines is essential in supporting its administrative costs, while also emphasising the potential detrimental impact that unchecked absences can have on a child's educational development.

The local government's stance on these fines has positioned Barnsley as a leader in school attendance enforcement, recording the highest rate of school fines across England last year, at 183 per 1,000 pupil enrolments. This rigorous approach reflects ongoing concerns surrounding children's participation in educational activities, with the council noting that unauthorised holidays can significantly hinder learning opportunities.

The increase in financial penalties was further underscored by a recent adjustment in the national policy, which raised fines for unauthorised absences from £60 to £80 as of September 2024. This change also introduced a more severe penalty structure for repeat offenders, increasing second fines within a three-year period to £160, signalling a clear message from educational authorities regarding the necessity of consistent school attendance.

As Barnsley continues to navigate these challenges, it remains imperative for families to understand the ramifications of unauthorised absences. The ongoing dialogue around educational policies illustrates the balancing act councils must perform between affording families necessary flexibility and ensuring that the foundational principles of compulsory education are upheld.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2jkj7de3go> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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