



## Introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-School Attendance

### Letter to all Parents and Carers of pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf Schools

September 2014

Dear Parent/Carer,

In September 2013, the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 came into force, as part of Welsh Government's commitment to addressing poor school attendance. All local authorities across Wales are expected to use the fixed penalty notices to assist them to prevent unnecessary absence from school.

A requirement of this is for every local authority to develop a Code of Conduct outlining how the scheme would operate ensuring consistency in the issuing of fixed penalty notices across the county. The implementation of the regulations will affect all pupils of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years) registered at any infant, junior, primary, secondary and special school, including pupil referral units in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A draft Code of Conduct was disseminated to school governing bodies, school staff and South Wales Police for consultation in May 2014, and the responses were used to inform amendments to the document and its procedures. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014, Rhondda Cynon Taf Cabinet approved the Code of Conduct, including the criteria for issuing fixed penalty notices:

- Where a pupil has accrued 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absences in the current term;
- Where a pupil has been persistently late on 10 or more occasions in the current term, arriving more than 30 minutes after the registration period;
- Where a parent refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
- Where a pupil is repeatedly caught truanting in public places during school hours;
- Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised. Given the need to ensure high attendance, we have reviewed the impact of holidays taken in term-time. We are now asking headteachers not to authorise requests for a holiday in term-time. There is no right that enables parents and carers to take a child out of school for a term-time holiday. We realise that there will be certain exceptional circumstances when it would not be appropriate to unauthorise a holiday absence, and therefore, the following reasons have been agreed that a headteacher may approve such a request:



- Families of serving armed forces personnel;
- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness;
- Families that have suffered an acute trauma.

Fixed penalty notices will offer a means of intervention to prevent individual cases becoming persistent non-attendance cases and progressing to the local magistrates' court. Only one notice will be issued to a parent/carer (who has parental responsibility) in any one academic year but notices can be issued for more than one child in that family. A fixed penalty notice is a £60 fine if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days, the local authority must either prosecute parents/carers for the offence or withdraw the notice.

Therefore, from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014, the Code of Conduct will be operational across Rhondda Cynon Taf. An information leaflet has been produced and will be made available by schools during the first half of the autumn term 2014. If you require further information, please contact your child's school in the first instance. Alternatively, contact the Attendance and Wellbeing Service Office on 01443 744298 or e-mail [aws@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:aws@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Yours faithfully,

Chris Bradshaw  
Director of Education and Lifelong Learning