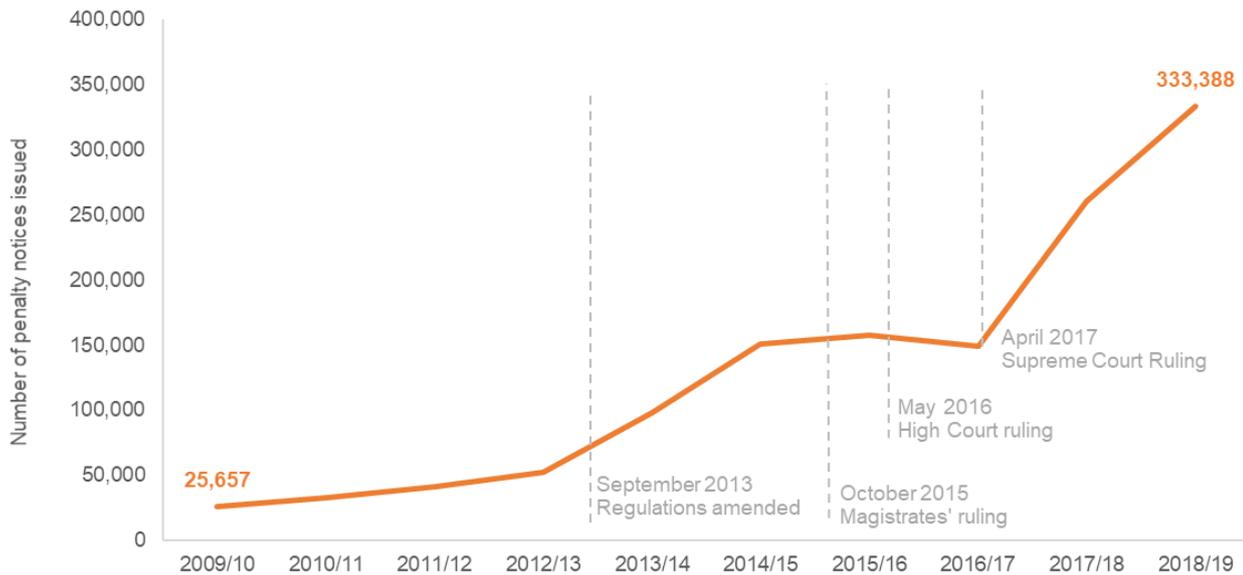




# Parental Responsibility Measures in England: 2018 to 2019

26 March 2020

The number of penalty notices issued to address poor attendance has increased from last year



The number of penalty notices have increased by 28 per cent in the latest year to 333,400 in 2018/19. This compares with an increase of 4 per cent in the number of pupil enrolments with one or more unauthorised absence during the same period.

The increase in penalty notices of 28 per cent compares with an increase of 4 per cent in the unauthorised absence rate as published in the 2018/19 “Pupil absence in schools in England” statistical release.

Amendments to regulations and a number of high profile court cases may have affected trends in recent years. These are highlighted in the chart above and further information is provided in section 1.

## The most common reason for a penalty notice being issued was unauthorised family holiday absence

The majority of penalty notices were issued because of unauthorised holidays, 86 per cent in 2018/19. 0.3 per cent were issued for pupils being late and 13 per cent were issued for other unauthorised absence.

The rates of unauthorised absence due to holiday and late arrival remained steady at 0.4 and 0.1 per cent respectively in 2018/19.

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### About this release

This official statistics release reports on parental responsibility measures for school attendance (PRMA) for the academic year 2018/19. The Department collects data on the number of penalty notices issued to parents for failure to ensure that a child of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 15 as of the start of the academic year) regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. The number of cases entering the attendance case management process (designed to improve a child's attendance), parenting orders and contracts, and supervision orders are also included.

Data is collected at local authority level and then aggregated to national level for reporting purposes. The number of penalty notices issued by an individual school or in regard to an individual pupil or parent are not collected. However, pupil enrolment figures have been provided within the accompanying tables to give an indication of the number of pupils who could have received a penalty notice nationally and in each local authority. A "[Guide to PRMA statistics](#)", which provides historical information on PRMA statistics, as well as technical background information on the figures and data collection, should be referenced alongside this release. Figures held in this release are used as key indicators for measures implemented by local authorities to improve attendance.

### Changes to this release

Changes introduced in the 2016/17 collection mean that care should be taken when comparing trends over time. From 2016/17 the outcomes for penalty notices issued (for example - paid, withdrawn or prosecuted) were restricted to only penalty notices issued during the period, rather than collecting information on those potentially issued outside of the period. In addition, from 2016/17 the scope of the fast-track case management measure was expanded to include all types of case management so care should be taken when comparing figures to previous years.

Furthermore, 2016/17 was the first academic year when we collected:

- The reason for penalty notices being issued
- The number of unresolved penalty notices
- The number of supervision orders for the period

These items were collected on a voluntary basis for the first year.

# 1. Penalty notices

## What are penalty notices?

Penalty notices are issued to parents for failing to ensure that their child attends school.

The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within 28 days, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence or withdraw the notice.

## Summary of recent trends

- The number of penalty notices has increased by 28 per cent from 260,900 in 2017/18 to 333,400 in 2018/19.
- The majority of penalty notices were issued because of unauthorised holidays, 86 per cent in 2018/19. 0.3 per cent were issued for pupils being late and 13 per cent were issued for other unauthorised absence.
- 76 per cent of penalty notices issued in 2018/19 were paid within 28 days. 10 per cent were withdrawn, 7 per cent led to prosecutions and 8 per cent were unresolved at the end of the period.
- The increase in penalty notices of 28 per cent compares with an increase of 4 per cent in the unauthorised absence rate as published in the 2018/19 "Pupil absence in schools in England" statistical release. The rates of unauthorised absence due to holiday and late arrival remained steady at 0.4 and 0.1 per cent respectively in 2018/19.

## What has driven these trends?

Following a general upward trend from 2009/10 to 2012/13, regulations amended in September 2013 (which stated that term time leave may only be granted in exceptional circumstances) are likely to relate to the sharper increase in penalty notices issued between 2012/13 and 2014/15.

The changes in trend since 2015/16 follow the *Isle of Wight Council v Jon Platt* cases where the local authority issued proceedings against a parent who had taken their child on a term time holiday. Local authorities with large increases were asked to provide reasons and many cited the Supreme Court judgement, either as a result of returning to pre-court case levels following a slowdown or from a change in behaviour since the ruling. Further information on the cases are given below:

- October 2015 - The magistrates' court ruled that the parent had no case to answer.
- May 2016 – The High Court supported the earlier ruling.
- April 2017 - the Supreme Court, however, ruled that no children should be taken out of school without good reason and clarified that 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

## How does practice vary locally?

In 2018/19, the region with the greatest rate of penalty notices issued (as a percentage of pupil enrolments) was Yorkshire and the Humber, at 7.2 per cent, the region with the lowest rate of penalty notices issued was the Inner London at 2.3 per cent.

Local authorities may show a large rise or fall in the number of penalty notices issued from year to year due to changes in local policy.

Every local authority must draw up a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices and there is considerable variability in the number of penalty notices issued at local authority level from zero to 24.4 per cent of enrolments. For more information, refer to the [Parental responsibility measures: methodology](#) guidance.

## 2. Attendance case management

### What is attendance case management?

Attendance case management involves early intervention and a pupil specific approach to tackle absence problems. Common features of attendance case management include:

- regular monitoring and follow-up of absence,
- identification of underlying causes of absence or mitigating circumstances,
- engagement with parents to prompt them to focus on their responsibilities to ensure their child's regular attendance at school and
- application of sanctions, for example prosecution, if improvements are not made within an agreed timeframe.

From 2016/17, data has been collected on all attendance case management rather than just fast-track cases, therefore numbers from 2016/17 onwards are not directly comparable to earlier data. Fast-track is one example of attendance case management which sets out actions and a period for improving a child's attendance.

Attendance case management is a non-statutory process and is not used by all local authorities; therefore, figures at local authority level are not directly comparable. For more information, refer to the [Parental responsibility measures: methodology](#) guidance.

### Summary of recent trends

The number of cases going through attendance case management was 85,200 during 2017/18 and 82,100 in 2018/19, a decrease of 4 per cent. Around half of all cases, 44,600, were withdrawn before prosecution in 2018/19.

The Department has queried local authorities with large decreases (78 local authorities have reported decreases, 59 reported increases and the rest remaining stable). Some have reported that the decreases are a result of the local authority moving to providing a statutory service only, with schools responsible for early intervention work and local authorities responsible for attendance enforcement work. As such, some early intervention case management may still be occurring in these local authorities but by schools and not reported in the data. Conversely, a small number of local authorities have recorded large increases, some of which are explained by these local authorities now being able to record this school activity.

## 3. Parenting orders and parenting contracts

### What are parenting orders?

Parenting orders are issued by courts following prosecution for unauthorised absence. They include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions and to comply with specified requirements.

### What are parenting contracts?

Parenting contracts are voluntary but formal written agreements between parents and the local authority or the governing body of a school. They contain a statement by the parents agreeing to comply with the requirements of the contract, and a statement by the local authority or governing body agreeing to provide support to parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

### Summary of recent trends

The number of cases going through attendance case management was 85,200 during 2017/18 and 82,100 in 2018/19, a decrease of 4 per cent. Around half of all cases, 44,600, were withdrawn before prosecution in 2018/19.

- The number of parenting orders decreased by 24 per cent from 153 in 2017/18 to 117 in 2018/19. The number of parenting orders has followed a generally downward trend from 439 in 2010/11.
- The number of parenting contracts offered decreased from 19,200 in 2017/18 to 18,300 in 2018/19. This follows an increase between 2016/17 and 2017/18 but there has been no clear trend in recent years. 69 per cent of parenting contracts were accepted by parents in 2018/19.

## 4. Education supervision orders

### What are education supervision orders?

Local authorities must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting parents. A local authority may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting parents. The order is made in respect of the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education, either at a school or at home, for a specified period of time.

### Summary of recent trends

Data on the number of education supervision orders was first collected in 2016/17 when 90 were made. Following a small decrease to 80 in 2017/18, the number in 2018/19 decreased further to 34.

## 5. Accompanying tables

The following are available in Excel format:

### Chart

Figure 1 Number of penalty notices issued, 2009/10 – 2018/19

### National tables

Table 1 Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance summary, 2009/10 – 2018/19

### National, regional and local authority tables

Table 2 Penalty notices issued, paid and withdrawn during the period, and prosecutions following non-payment of a penalty notice, 2014/15 – 2018/19

Table 3 Penalty notices issued by reason in the period

Table 4 Penalty notices issued, paid, withdrawn and prosecuted for non-payment during the period and reason for withdrawal

Table 5 Cases going through the attendance case management system in the period

Table 6 Parenting orders and parenting contracts in the period

Table 7 Education supervision orders in the period

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

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We preserve confidentiality	The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality.
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## 6. Further information is available

For previous PRMA figures visit: [Parental Responsibility Measures data](#) and for pupil absence statistics visit: [Statistics: pupil absence](#)

The PRMA census only collects information from local authorities in England. For information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contact the departments below or access their statistics at the following links:

**Wales:** [school.stats@wales.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gov.uk) or [Welsh Government Statistics and Research](#)

**Scotland:** [school.stats@scotland.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@scotland.gov.uk) or [Scottish Government School Education Statistics](#)

**Northern Ireland:** [statistics@deni.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@deni.gov.uk) or [Department of Education Statistics](#)

There are no further planned revisions to this statistical release. However, if at a later date we need to make a revision, this will comply with the [Departmental revisions policy](#).

## 7. Technical information

A "[Guide to parental responsibility measures statistics](#)" accompanies this release. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed. Definitions of key terms should be referred to alongside this release.

## 8. Get in touch

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### Other enquiries/feedback

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