SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ANXIETY

ENGLAND

Attendance Fine and Unauthorised Absence Notes Pack

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A notes and letter pack to help you record barriers to attendance, support already requested, and the points you want to raise if absence is being treated as unauthorised.

General information only. Penalty notice and attendance rules can change. Check current official guidance and seek advice. This pack does not stop a fine or make a legal representation for you.

Who this is for

Parents and carers in England who have received, or are worried about, unauthorised absence markings, attendance meetings, or penalty notices, especially where SEND or health may be relevant.

What is inside

- A caution page
- A record of the situation and support already sought
- A model letter you can adapt

Please read this first

This is a free starting-point resource from My SEND Friend. It is general information, not legal, medical or benefits advice, and it is not an official or government form. It does not guarantee an assessment, plan, adjustment, payment or any other outcome. Check current official guidance (for example GOV.UK) and get individual advice from SENDIASS, IPSEA or a suitably qualified adviser when you need it.

Read this before you write anything

Get advice if a penalty notice or prosecution is in view
Attendance law and penalty notice rules in England are specific and can change. This pack is not legal advice and it does not complete an official representation. Contact SENDIASS, and consider independent advice, if you have received a formal notice or are being told a fine will be issued. Keep every letter.

If SEND, illness, or unmet need is part of the picture, it still matters to record that factually. Do not ignore a formal letter while you gather notes.

My record

The attendance concern as the school or local authority has described it, and the dates of any letters

The barriers to attendance, in factual terms, including SEND or health if relevant

Support I have already asked for, and what happened

Medical or other evidence I have, or have asked for

Model letter you can adapt

How to use this letter
Replace anything in [square brackets] with your own details. Delete lines that do not apply. Keep the letter factual and in your own words. This is a starting point, not a required form of words, and sending it does not guarantee a particular outcome.

Model wording (adapt this):

Dear [Name / attendance officer / headteacher],

I am writing about attendance for [child's name], in [class]. I received [letter or conversation] dated [date].

I want to work with you to improve [child's] attendance. I believe the following barriers are relevant: [brief factual summary, including any SEND or health needs]. I have already asked for / we have already tried: [support].

I would like us to agree a support plan and a review date, rather than treating this only as unauthorised absence. I am happy to meet. Please confirm receipt and let me know the next step.

Yours faithfully, [Name]

Advice I will seek, or changes I will make before sending

Useful next steps and sources

Use what helped in this pack and leave the rest. You can come back to it when you need to. Live tools on mysendfriend.co.uk remain free, including Help Me Now, the SEND Letter Builder, the Reasonable Adjustments Builder, the DLA and PIP Claim Planners, and the free resources hub. Saving work to My SEND Plan is optional.

Where to check official or independent information

Guidance and benefit rules can change. Check the current official position, and get individual advice when you need it.

- GOV.UK: Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- The SEND Code of Practice 2015 (England)
- The school's SEN information report and complaints policy
- Your local SENDIASS service
- IPSEA, for legally based information in England

A reminder about this free pack

This is a free starting-point resource from My SEND Friend. It is general information, not legal, medical or benefits advice, and it is not an official or government form. Using it does not start a statutory process or guarantee a particular outcome. Adapt every page to your situation.

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