



Department
for Education

A guide to parental responsibility measures statistics

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Introduction

This document provides a comprehensive guide to the [parental responsibility measures in England](#) statistics published by the Department for Education.

The key areas covered in this guide are:

- Background to published statistics and methodology
- Data collection and coverage

Requirements of parents in ensuring pupil attendance at school

The parent of every child of compulsory school age is required to ensure that the child receives an efficient full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs the child may have either by attendance at school or otherwise. If parents choose to register their child at school, the law places a duty on the parents to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

Schools and local authorities can use a range of parental responsibility measures to provide support and/or sanctions to parents when their child's attendance at school becomes a problem. The law gives schools and local authorities powers to offer parenting contracts and obtain parenting orders in relation to attendance. In addition, schools and local authorities can issue penalty notices to parents for failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school or local authorities can decide to prosecute.

Background to published statistics

The Department publishes parental responsibility measures data annually in March. Data has been collected on these measures since academic year 2004/05.

The Department's parental responsibility measures statistical releases have been badged as Official Statistics since the 2013/14 academic year publication. The 2013/14 and 2014/15 academic year publications and the 2012/13 academic year publication, which was released as transparency data are available via the [parental responsibility measures collection](#).

Earlier parental responsibility measures data from academic year 2004/5 to 2011/12 are available via [the national archives](#).

Comparing PRMA data over time

Changes introduced in the 2016/17 collection (see [section 3.1](#)) 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From 2016/17 the outcomes for penalty notices issued (for example - paid, withdrawn or prosecuted) was restricted to only penalty notices issued during the period. However, previously these figures included all cases regardless of when the associated penalty notice may have been issued – meaning any outcome of penalty notices that were issued in the previous academic year but resolved in the later academic year would be included in totals and the outcome of any unresolved penalty notices within the academic year would be excluded.

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.

Key PRMA measures

The Department monitors parental responsibility measures for attendance using the key measure of penalty notices issued in an academic year for each local authority and resulting outcomes, including:

- Number of penalty notices issued
- Number of penalty notices issued by reason
- Number of penalty notices paid within 21 and 28 days
- Number of prosecutions resulting from non-payment of penalty notices
- Number of penalty notices withdrawn

Additionally, the Department collects data on:

- Number of cases going through attendance case management, including fast-track
- Number of parenting contracts offered to parents
- Number of parenting orders issued by courts following prosecution for unauthorised absence
- Number of education supervision orders issued

Further information on the measures published in the parental responsibility measures for attendance official statistics release is set out below.

Penalty notices issued

Penalty notices can be issued for section 444(1) offences under the Education Act 1996.

They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 require that every local authority must draw up a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices; this Code will set out the occasions when it will be appropriate to issue a penalty notice. Local authorities must consult with schools in their area and relevant police authorities about the contents to be included in their Code. Approaches will vary between local authorities as each Code will be set in consideration of local issues.

Head teachers and police officers have the power to issue penalty notices but must send copies to the local authority. These are included in each local authority's data returns to avoid under reporting on usage.

Main reason for issue of penalty notice

From the 2016/17 academic year, the total number of penalty notices issued by main reason was collected and published for the first time. The main reasons for issuing penalty notices include: unauthorised holiday absence, late arrival, and other unauthorised circumstances.

This includes the main reason for issuing a penalty notice, though a penalty notice could be issued for a combination of reasons. Where there is a combination of reasons local authorities were asked to consider the greatest cause of unauthorised absence and record it in the appropriate reason total. If it is difficult to identify a single greatest cause, the cause deemed to be the deciding factor in the penalty notice being issued should be

used. This deciding factor could be the reason that caused the penalty notice to be issued at that time.

For example, if a pupil had 9 sessions of late arrival and 1 session of other unauthorised circumstances, then the greatest cause of unauthorised absence would be late arrival; this would be the main reason for issuing the penalty notice and would be recorded in the 'Arriving late' total.

The reason for issuing penalty notices was collected on a voluntary basis in 2016/17, two local authorities did not submit this data and are their information is therefore not included in published tables.

Penalty notices paid

The amount payable under a penalty notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days¹. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority..

Prosecutions

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must withdraw the notice and decide whether to prosecute for the original offence under section 444 (failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance). A parent who has been issued a penalty notice can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

Penalty notices withdrawn

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 sets out the circumstances in which a penalty notice issued under section 444(1) can be withdrawn.

The published tables include information on the total number of penalty notices withdrawn and breaks down the possible reasons for withdrawal into the following categories:

- the penalty notice has been issued outside of the terms of the local code of conduct
- the penalty notice ought not to have been issued or issued to the person named as the recipient

¹ Prior to 2013/14 the amount payable under a penalty notice was £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt and £120 if paid within 42 days; with the amounts payable having risen from £50 and £100 to £60 and £120 respectively in 2012/13

- the penalty notice contains material errors
- where after the expiry of 28 days the penalty notice is unpaid and the local authority has neither started legal proceedings nor wishes to take such action under section 444.

Attendance case management (including fast-track)

Attendance case management involves early intervention and a pupil specific approach to tackle absence problems (whether authorised or unauthorised) by the school, and when appropriate by the local authority. 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 time-frame.

In the 2016/17 academic year the scope of this collection was increased to include all cases of case management, previously only fast-track case management was reported on. Fast-track is one example of attendance case management which sets out actions and a time frame for improving a child's attendance when irregular attendance patterns have been observed.

Parenting contracts

Parenting contracts are voluntary but formal written agreements between parents and the local authority or the governing body of a school. It contains 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. Parenting contracts can be used in cases of misbehaviour or irregular attendance.

Parenting orders

Parenting orders can be imposed by the court following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Parenting orders include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions to receive help and support to improve their child's behaviour for up to 3 months, and a requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as are specified in the order for up to 12 months.

Education supervision orders

In the 2016/17 academic year, the total number of education supervision orders issued was collected and published for the first time, this information was collected on a voluntary basis in 2016/17.

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.

Data collection

The parental responsibility measures attendance (PRMA) census is a mandatory, local authority level, data collection – collecting information on parental responsibility measures issued to address poor attendance in state-funded schools including academies and free schools.

Data is collected annually and one year in arrears, for example the 2019 PRMA census (open September-November 2019) collected information for the 2018/19 academic year.

Local authorities submit their PRMA census returns via the Department's data collection software, COLLECT. Guidance on the PRMA census is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Background and changes to data collection

Data has been collected on parental responsibility measures since their introduction in academic year 2004/05.

The PRMA census was previously named the parental responsibility measures attendance and behaviour census (PRAB) and captured data on parental responsibility measures relating to behaviour and exclusions from school as well as unauthorised absence. Since autumn 2012 (academic year 2011/12), the PRMA census has no longer collected data on penalty notices, parenting orders and parenting contracts relating to behaviour and exclusions.

From 1 September 2013, the timescale for payments stated on penalty notices reduced to 21 and 28 days from 28 and 42 days and the PRMA census was amended to reflect this.

In the 2016/17 academic year, changes to the data collection were made to provide more insight into penalty notices and allow for more robust findings from the data collected.

Additional questions (responded to on a voluntary basis for 2016/17), were added on:

- the reason for penalty notices being issued
- the number of unresolved penalty notices at the end of the period
- the number of education supervision orders issued during the period

Amendments have also been made to the following questions but these items remained mandatory:

- the number of penalty notices paid and withdrawn has been restricted to penalty notices issued during the period only

- Fast-track case management questions have been expanded to cover any cases of attendance case management rather than just fast-track cases.

Data published from 2013/14 onwards include the number of penalty notices issued as a proportion of all pupil enrolments. This information is not available prior to this as enrolment data relating to pupils in special schools and pupil referral units is not available.

What PRMA information is collected?

Local authorities are expected to supply the following via their PRMA census returns:

Penalty notices for unauthorised absence

1. Total number of penalty notices for unauthorised absences issued during the period
 - 1a. Total number of penalty notices by main reason: unauthorised family holiday absence
 - 1b. Total number of penalty notices by main reason: late arrival
 - 1c. Total number of penalty notices by main reason: other unauthorised circumstances

Payment of penalty notices

2. During the period, the number of penalty notices paid within 21 days
3. During the period, the number of penalty notices paid between 22- 28 days

Withdrawal of penalty notices

4. During the period, the total number of penalty notices withdrawn

Reasons for the withdrawal of penalty notices

- 4.a. The number of penalty notices withdrawn as the penalty notice was issued outside the terms of the local code of conduct
- 4.b. The number of penalty notices withdrawn as they ought not to have been issued or issued to the person named as recipient
- 4.c. The number of penalty notices withdrawn as it appears that notice contains material errors
- 4.d. The number of penalty notices withdrawn as after expiry of 28 days, penalty is unpaid and LA does not wish to bring legal proceedings Prosecutions relating to unpaid penalty notices

5. During the period, the number of cases prosecuted following non-payment Unresolved penalty notices

6. Number of unresolved penalty notices at the end of the period (i.e. penalty notices not falling into the paid, withdrawn or prosecuted category by the end of the period)

Attendance case management relating to absence from school

7. Total number of cases entering attendance case management during the period, including those entering the fast-track case management system

8. Total number of attendance case management cases prosecuted during the period, including those within the fast-track case management system [Only include cases opened in the period]

9. Total number of attendance case management cases withdrawn, before prosecution, during the period, including those within the fast-track case management system [Only include cases opened in the period]

Reasons for withdrawal of Attendance case management cases

9.a. Total number of attendance case management cases withdrawn because attendance improved, including those within the fast-track case management system

9.b. Total number of attendance case management cases withdrawn for another reason, including those within the fast-track case management system

9.c. Please specify the reason for those cases withdrawn for another reason in Q9b

Parenting orders for unauthorised absence

10. Total number of parenting orders granted following unauthorised absence prosecution (ancillary orders) within the period

11. Total number of parenting orders implemented following unauthorised absence prosecution within the period

12. Total number of parenting orders not implemented following unauthorised absence prosecution within the period

Reasons for not implementing parenting orders

12.a. Total number of parenting orders not implemented due to a lack of provision

12.b. Total number of parenting orders not implemented due to a breach by a parent

Parenting contracts for unauthorised absence

13. Number of parenting contracts offered within the LA following unauthorised absence within the period

14. Number of parenting contracts offered in Q13 that were accepted by parent

Education Supervision Orders

15. Total number of education supervision orders issued during the period

15.a. Total number of education supervision orders issued during the period in place of prosecution

15.b. Total number of education supervision orders issued during the period in addition to prosecution

What parental responsibility measures information is not collected

School, pupil and parent level data

Data is collected on the volume of penalty notices, fast-track cases, parenting orders and parenting contracts at local authority level. The number of penalty notices issued by an individual school or in regards to an individual pupil are not collected. Furthermore, as a parent may be issued multiple penalty notices during an academic year, and as separate penalty notices may be issued to both parents of a pupil, it is not possible to identify the number of families issued penalty notices from the data collected. The same is true for fast-track cases, parenting orders and parenting contracts.

Termly parental responsibility measures data

The Department collects parental responsibility measures data annually. All data is provided by local authorities as aggregate year-end totals. The time between the issue of a penalty notice and withdrawal, payment or prosecution can stretch between school terms. Penalty notices may also be issued after a number of incidents of unauthorised absence and termly data would not necessarily reflect the number of notices or when they occurred.

Methodology used in PRMA statistics

The number of penalty notices issued, paid and withdrawn, number of prosecutions for non-payment, number of attendance case management cases, parenting orders, parenting contracts and education supervision orders implemented in the academic year are collected at local authority level and aggregated to produce national and regional totals.

The number of pupil enrolments of compulsory school age at the start of the academic year (31st August), attending state-funded schools and pupil referral units, is provided alongside parental responsibility measures data to indicate the size of the pupil population nationally and in each local authority.

Other related publications

Information relating to pupil absence is also available in the following publications:

Other National Statistics published by the Department:

[Pupil Absence](#)

[Children in Need](#)

[Children looked after](#)

Other reports published by the Department:

[The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4](#)

Devolved administration statistics

The Department collects and reports on parental responsibility measures information from schools in England only. For education statistics for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contact the departments below at the following links:

Wales: school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk or

[Welsh Government – Statistics and Research](#)

Scotland: school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk or

[Scottish Government – School Education Statistics](#)

Northern Ireland: statistics@deni.gov.uk or

[Department of Education – Education Statistics](#)

Data quality

The following should be taken into account when reviewing published parental responsibility measures statistics.

- The information reported in published releases is based on data returned by local authorities as part of the PRMA census. It does not include data which has been submitted by local authorities or schools outside of the PRMA census.
- It is a school's responsibility to report the issue of a penalty notice to the local authority and the responsibility of the local authority to record the total number of penalty notices, fast track cases, parenting contracts and parenting orders issued.
- It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to submit PRMA census data returns that are both accurate and complete via the Department's data collection software, COLLECT. A census guide is provided to local authorities with an explanation of each question and the data required. To further quality assure data, questions that are left blank in COLLECT, values of less than zero or overall values that do not match their composite totals (e.g. the totals for each reason for withdrawal of a penalty notice do not add up to the total number of penalty notices withdrawn) will return an error message and may not be submitted until validated. Local authorities are able to submit data returns that contain queries which will only be authorised by the department via the COLLECT Helpdesk once an acceptable explanation has been added to their return. However, it remains the responsibility of the local authority to check and verify all PRMA totals before submission. Given recent large increases in the number of penalty notices issued, local authorities with large increases are now prompted to return an explanation as part of their return.

The following are known specific issues with data items:

- The number of cases going through attendance case management was 86,000 during 2017/18 and 82,100 in 2018/19. The Department has queried local authorities with large decreases in the number of number of cases going through attendance case management (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.

Contacts

Email: Schools.statistics@education.gov.uk

Public enquiries: 037 0000 2288

Press office: 020 7925 6789

Annex A - Glossary

The following are key terms used in published parental responsibility measures statistics and their definitions:

Unauthorised absence

Absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences and late arrivals.

Academic year

31st August to the 31st July. The academic year is generally broken into three terms, autumn spring and summer.

Number of pupil enrolments

The number of pupils of compulsory school age attending state-funded schools and pupil-referral units who are on the school roll for at least one session. Some pupils may be counted more than once (if they moved schools during the academic year or are registered in more than one school).

Compulsory school age

Aged between 5 and 15 as at 31 August.

The PRMA census

Statutory annual data collection for all local authorities. The data collection for attendance penalty notices (PNs), parenting contracts, parenting orders, attendance case manage and education supervision orders.

Annex B – Links to parental responsibility measures statistics publications

Published parental responsibility measures statistics are available at the following links.

[Parental responsibility measures](#) (data for 2012/13 to 2017/18)

[Parental responsibility data](#) (data from 2004/05 to 2011/12 via the national archives)



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