

Notice of Motion (Full Council)

Title of Motion: **Enforcement of Schools Attendance Policy**

Date of Council meeting the motion is to be submitted to: 22 July 2025

Proposer: **Councillor Justyna Kordala**

Seconder: **Councillor Natalie Weston**

Motion:

Council notes the significant and growing number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued to parents in Sandwell for school absences in recent academic years, alongside rising public concern about the fairness and impact of these fines.

Council further notes that many of these fines are issued to parents whose children maintain good overall attendance, often for unavoidable health related and compassionate circumstances. Recent national changes to attendance enforcement have introduced higher fines for repeated absences, increasing pressure on families, with national guidance requiring fine revenue to be ring-fenced specifically for improving attendance support.

Council believes that the current approach is contributing to a culture of mistrust between families, schools, and local authorities. Families deserve to be supported, not penalised, especially where wider socioeconomic pressures, mental health concerns caused by poverty are involved, and that that public confidence would be strengthened by greater transparency and compassion in how attendance policies are applied.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to consider–

1. Reviewing the local attendance enforcement policy, including the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and how discretion is applied by schools and the Council.
2. Committing to ensuring that no parent will be fined where their child's overall school attendance is above 95%, recognising that occasional absence due to genuine family, health or wellbeing reasons should not trigger enforcement action. Commit to publishing annual data on the administration of fines and how associated revenues are reinvested in attendance improvement.

3. Referring the matter to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board, to present data regarding fines and children attendance rates for further investigation and recommendations.
4. Continuing to work with schools, families, and community stakeholders to develop a revised approach that promotes attendance through understanding, trust, and shared responsibility."