

Notice of Motion (Full Council)

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

Date of Council meeting the motion is to be submitted to: 4 November 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 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 welcomes the effectiveness of local campaigns such as Attendance is Everybody’s Business’ and ‘Miss School Miss Out’ are helping to improve attendance rates, Council believes that more could be done.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to –

1. Write to the Secretary of State for Education setting out the terms of this Motion and calling for the 2024 statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities titled “Working together to improve school attendance” to be reviewed to recognise the impacts on families whose children have otherwise high

levels of attendance but may be impacted by exceptional family, health or well-being reasons.

2. Subject to the limitations of the existing statutory guidance, encourage schools when exercising their discretion to recognise 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. Request the Children's Services Scrutiny Board examine data on levels of Fixed Penalty Notices, attendance rates and review any existing local Council policies or guidance relating to school attendance enforcement and the use of Fixed Penalty Notices.
4. Continue to work with schools, families, and community stakeholders to promote attendance through understanding, trust, and shared responsibility."