



Department
for Education

A guide to parental responsibility measures statistics

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1. 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

1.1. Requirements of parents in ensuring pupil attendance at school

The parent of every child of compulsory school age (approximately 5-16) is required to ensure that the child receives a full time education suitable to the child's ability, age, aptitude and any special education needs the child may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure of a parent to secure regular attendance of their school registered child of compulsory school age can lead to a penalty notice or prosecution. Penalty notices, fast-track case management, parenting orders and parenting contracts were introduced in February 2004 following the [Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#), to encourage parents to engage with schools and local authorities in addressing their children's poor attendance and behaviour.

1.1.1. Penalty notices

Penalty notices can be issued to parents by schools, local authorities or the police for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the state-funded school where they are registered or at the place where alternative provision is provided for them. Penalty notices provide an alternative to the prosecution of parents and can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. Penalty notices can only be issued to parents of pupils who are of compulsory school age (5-16).

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. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence, or withdraw the notice. 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.

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 Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 as amended require that every local authority draw up a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices, setting out the criteria for their use for all state-funded schools in its area, including academies and free schools. Local authorities must consult with state-funded schools and relevant police authorities in their area 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.

An amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 stated that head teachers of maintained schools may only grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

1.1.2. 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.

1.1.3. 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.

1.1.4. Fast-track case management

Fast-track case management is a non-statutory process that sets out actions and a time frame for improving a child's attendance when irregular attendance patterns have been observed. A parenting contract can also be offered as part of this process. The local authority can consider prosecution during or after the programme if irregular attendance patterns continue.

Fast-track case management processes are developed and administered by individual local authorities to reflect local Codes of Conduct and circumstances. Not all local authorities use fast-track case management systems and there is no statutory requirement for them to do so.

For more detailed information on parental responsibility measures, please see the [most recent statutory guidance](#).

2. 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](#).

2.1. Key parental responsibility 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 paid within 21 and 28 days
- Number of penalty notices withdrawn
- Number of prosecutions resulting from non-payment of penalty notices

Additionally, the Department collects data on:

- Number of cases going through the fast-track case management system
- Number of parenting orders issued by courts following prosecution for unauthorised absence
- Number of parenting contracts offered to parents

2.2. Other related publications

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

Other Statistical First Releases published by the Department:

[Pupil Absence](#)

[Children in Need](#)

[Children looked after](#)

[Special Educational Needs](#)

Other reports published by the Department:

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

2.3. Devolved administration statistics

The Department collects and reports on parental responsibility measures information from schools 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.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](#)

3. Methodology

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

The number of pupils of compulsory school age (5-15) is collected separately by the Department through the [school census](#) and published in the statistical release [Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics](#). The number of pupils 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.

4. Data collection

The parental responsibility measures attendance (PRMA) census collects mandatory data from local authorities annually on parental responsibility measures issued to address poor attendance in state-funded schools including academies and free schools.

Data is collected one year in arrears during the autumn term, for example the Autumn 2016 PRMA census collects information on parental responsibility measures for the academic year 2015/16.

Local authorities submit their PRMA census returns via the Department's data collection software, COLLECT. Guidance on the PRMA census is available on the [DfE statistics website](#).

4.1. Background 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.

4.2. What parental responsibility measures information is collected?

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

4.2.1. Number of penalty notices issued, paid, withdrawn and prosecutions for non-payment of penalty notices

Local authorities must record:

- The number of penalty notices issued in an academic year, i.e those issued within the census reporting period. This includes where a penalty

notice is issued in relation to pupils who fail to attend alternative provision in a pupil referral unit.

- The number of penalty notices paid within 21 or 22-28 days of a penalty notice for unauthorised absence being issued.
- The number of cases prosecuted for non-payment of a penalty notice during the period, including the number of summons served for unauthorised absence.
- The number of withdrawals of penalty notices for unauthorised absence during the reporting period, including the accepted reasons for withdrawal as stipulated in the The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007:
 - 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
 - The penalty notice contains material errors
 - Where after the expiry of 28 days the penalty notice is unpaid and the local authority has not started legal proceedings or wishes to take such action

4.2.2. Number of cases entering the fast-track case management system relating to absence from school

Local authorities must record:

- The number of cases being managed within a fast-track process by schools or local authorities.
- The number of fast-track cases prosecuted during the period. The total number of cases prosecuted equals the number of parents prosecuted, so if both parents are prosecuted for a child's unauthorised absence, they will each be counted in the total.

- The number of fast-track cases withdrawn before reaching prosecution either due to the improved attendance of the pupil being case managed within a stipulated time frame or for other reasons.

4.2.3. Number of parenting orders and parenting contracts issued

Local authorities must record:

- The total number of parenting orders made by the courts following the prosecution of a parent for failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance during the reporting period.
- The number of parenting orders that the local authority was able to implement following prosecution, during the reporting period.
- The number of parenting orders not implemented following prosecution during the reporting period and the reasons why these were not implemented due to:
 - Lack of the necessary parenting provision within the local authority
 - Breach of the parenting order by a parent

4.2.4. Data includes all notices, cases and prosecutions completed within the reporting period

The number of payments, withdrawals and prosecutions for non-payment of penalty notices comprise those completed within the academic year and may include some penalty notices that were issued in the previous academic year as well as exclude any penalty notices issued during the relevant academic year, which had not been resolved by the end of the year. Therefore, the combined total of penalty notices paid, withdrawn and prosecuted may not match the total number of penalty notices issued in an academic year. For the same reason, the combined total of fast-track cases withdrawn and prosecuted may not match the total number of fast-track cases implemented, and the total number of parenting orders issued may not equal the combined total of orders implemented and not implemented in an academic year. It should also be noted that, for these reasons, the rates of payment, withdrawal and prosecution cannot be calculated from the data.

4.3. What parental responsibility measures information is not collected

4.3.1. 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.

4.3.2. Reason for issue of penalty notice

The Department does not currently collect data on the issue of penalty notices broken down by reason, for example, due to unauthorised holiday absence or late arrival.

The Department does collect data on the number of unauthorised absences by pupils of compulsory school age and reasons for those absences via the school census. These are published in the [national absence statistics series](#).

4.3.3. 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.

4.3.4. Other attendance measures

Data on attendance measures other than penalty notices, fast-track case management, parenting orders and parenting contracts are not collected by the PRMA census. For example, data on informal measures taken by schools and local authorities prior to the issue of a penalty notice or prosecution, and case-management processes outside of the fast-track system, are not collected.

5. 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.

6. Contacts

Email: Schools.statistics@education.gov.uk

Public enquiries: 037 0000 2288

Press office: 020 7925 6789

7. 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	31 st August to the 31 st July. The academic year is generally broken into three terms, autumn spring and summer.
Number of pupils	The number of pupils of compulsory school age attending state-funded schools and pupil-referral units. Includes pupils who are sole or dual main registrations, who are aged between 5 and 15 as at 31 August 2015.
The PRMA census	Statutory annual data collection for all local authorities. The data collection for attendance penalty notices (PNs), parenting contracts, parenting orders and fast-track cases for attendance.

8. Annex B – Links to parental responsibility measures statistics publications

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

[Parental responsibility measures: 2014 to 2015 academic year](#)

[Parental responsibility measures: 2013 to 2014 academic year](#)

[Parental responsibility measures data: 2012 to 2013 academic year](#)

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



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