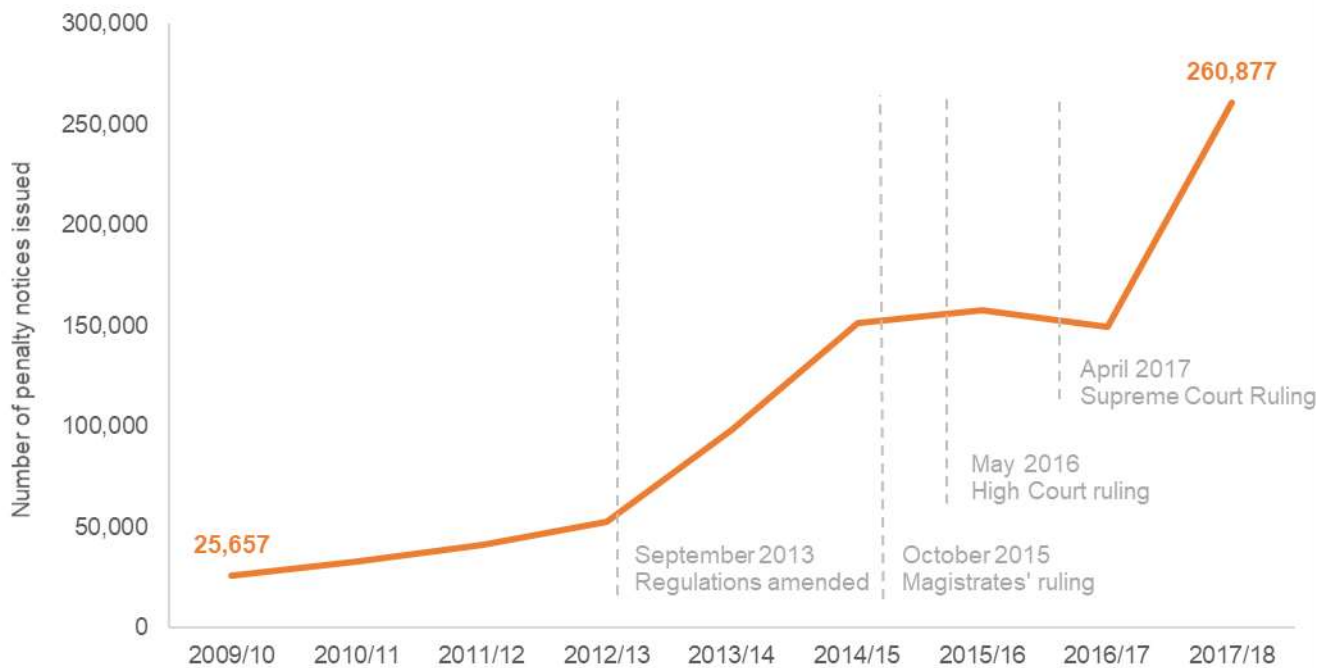




Parental Responsibility Measures in England: 2017 to 2018

21 March 2019

The number of penalty notices issued to address poor attendance has increased from last year



The number of penalty notices have increased by 74.7 per cent in the latest year, from 149,300 in 2016/17 to 260,900 in 2017/18. This compares with an increase of 7.5 per cent in the number of pupil enrolments with one or more unauthorised absence during the same period.

Amendments to regulations and a number of high profile court cases may have affected trends in recent years. These are highlighted in the chart above and further information is provided in section 1.

The most common reason for a penalty notice being issued was unauthorised family holiday absence

85.4 per cent of all penalty notices were issued for unauthorised family holiday absence in 2017/18, up from 77.5 per cent in 2016/17. 0.2 per cent were issued for arriving late and 14.3 per cent were issued for other unauthorised absence.

The unauthorised absence rate in state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools was 1.4 per cent in 2017/18, an increase from 1.3 per cent in 2016/17 – the rate of unauthorised holiday absence remained steady at 0.4 per cent.

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About this release

This official statistics release reports on parental responsibility measures for school attendance (PRMA) for the academic year 2017/18. The Department collects data on the number of penalty notices issued to parents for failure to ensure that a child of compulsory school age (aged 5 to 15 as of the start of the academic year) regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. The number of cases entering the attendance case management process (designed to improve a child's attendance), parenting orders and contracts, and supervision orders are also included.

Data is collected at local authority level and then aggregated to national level for reporting purposes. The number of penalty notices issued by an individual school or in regards to an individual pupil or parent are not collected. However, pupil enrolment figures have been provided within the accompanying tables to give an indication of the number of pupils who could have received a penalty notice nationally and in each local authority. A "[Guide to PRMA statistics](#)", which provides historical information on PRMA statistics, as well as technical background information on the figures and data collection, should be referenced alongside this release. Figures held in this release are used as key indicators for measures implemented by local authorities to improve attendance.

Changes to this release

Changes introduced in the 2016/17 collection 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) were restricted to only penalty notices issued during the period, rather than collecting information on those potentially issued outside of the period. 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.

Furthermore, 2016/17 was the first academic year when we collected:

- The reason for penalty notices being issued
- The number of unresolved penalty notices
- The number of supervision orders for the period

These items were collected on a voluntary basis for the first year.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the statistical release:

- PRMA_2019_tables.xlsx

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at schools.statistics@education.gov.uk.

1. Penalty notices paid, withdrawn and prosecutions following non-payment

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are 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. 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 days. 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.

Local authorities may also show a large rise or fall in the number of penalty notices issued from year to year, or in the ratio of penalty notices issued to pupils of compulsory school age, due to changes in local policy. Figures at local authority level are therefore not directly comparable but are published for transparency. Furthermore, the combined total of penalty notices paid, withdrawn and prosecuted may not match the total number of penalty notices issued in an academic year due to unresolved penalty notices.

Penalty notices at national level (Tables 1 to 3)

The number of penalty notices have increased by 74.7 per cent from 149,300 in 2016/17 to 260,877 in 2017/18. The majority of penalty notices were issued because of unauthorised holidays, 85.4 per cent in 2017/18. 0.2 per cent were issued for pupils being late 14.3 per cent were issued for other unauthorised absence.

The increase in penalty notices of 74.7 per cent compares with the recently published increase of 8.2 per cent in the unauthorised absence rate. Rates of unauthorised holiday absence remained steady at 0.4 per cent in 2017/18 and rates of unauthorised absence due to late arrival have remained the same as in 2016/17 at 0.1 per cent (please refer to the [Pupil absence statistics series](#) for more information).

Following a general upward trend from 2009/10 to 2012/13, regulations amended in September 2013 (which stated that term time leave may only be granted in exceptional circumstances) are likely to relate to the sharper increase in penalty notices issued between 2012/13 and 2014/15.

The relatively small increase in 2015/16, decrease in 2016/17 and large increase in 2017/18 follow the *Isle of Wight Council v Jon Platt* cases during that period where the local authority issued proceedings against a parent who had taken their child on a term time holiday. DfE contacted a small sample of local authorities with large changes about the increase in 2017/18. All six that responded cited that the Supreme Court judgement in this case had an effect on the number of penalty notices issued in 2017/18, either as a result of returning to pre-court case levels following a slowdown or from a change in behavior as a result of the ruling. Further information on the cases are given below:

- October 2015 - The magistrates' court ruled that the parent had no case to answer.
- May 2016 – The High Court supported the earlier ruling.
- April 2017 - the Supreme Court, however, ruled that no children should be taken out of school without good reason and clarified that 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

Penalty notices at local authority level (Tables 2 to 4)

In 2017/18, the region with the greatest rate of penalty notices issued (as a percentage of pupil enrolments) was Yorkshire and the Humber, at 5.4 per cent, the region with the lowest rate of penalty notices issued was the Inner London at 2.3 per cent.

Every local authority must draw up a code of conduct for issuing penalty notices and there is considerable variability in the number of penalty notices issued at local authority level from zero to 13.6 per cent of enrolments. For more information, refer to the [guide to PRMA statistics](#).

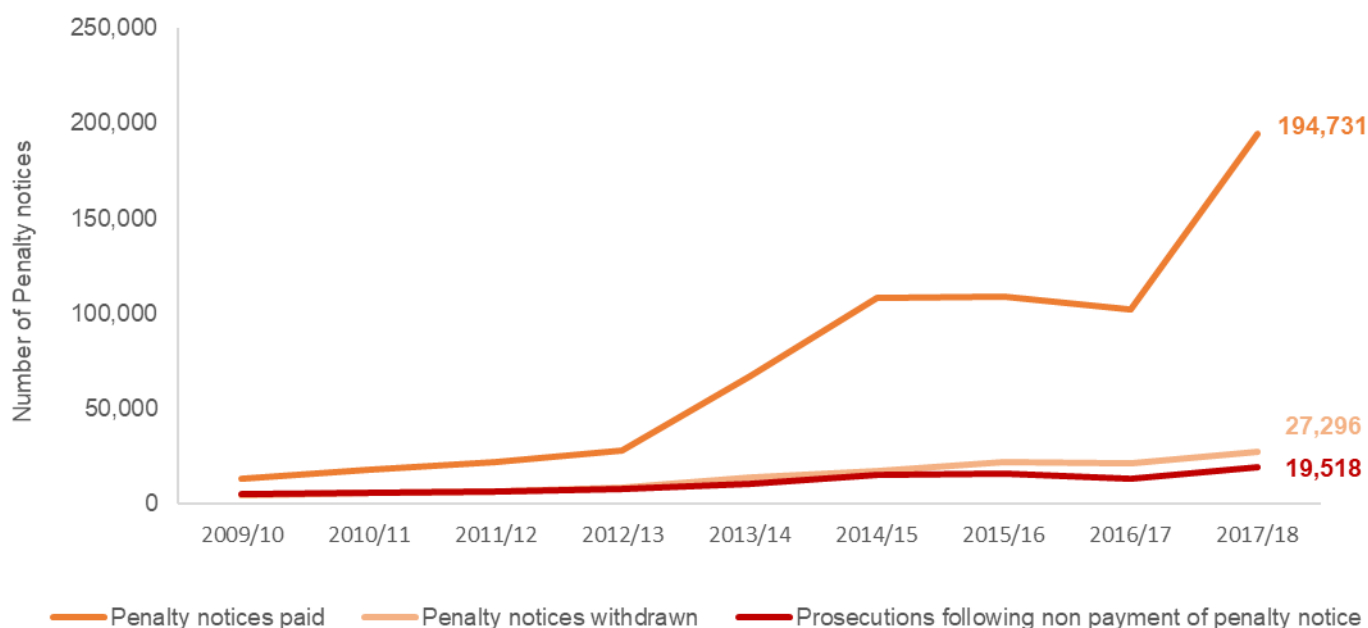
2. Payment of penalty notices (Table 4)

75% of Penalty Notices issued in 2017/18 were paid within 28 days. 10% were withdrawn, 7% led to prosecutions and 8% were unresolved at the end of the period. Figure 2 below shows the trend over time in notices paid, withdrawn and resulting in prosecution.

Figure 2: Outcome of penalty notices issued during the period

England, 2009/10 to 2017/18

Note: excluding unresolved



3. Case management including fast-track (Table 5)

From 2016/17 we have collected all cases of attendance case management rather than just fast-track cases, therefore numbers from 2016/17 onwards are not directly comparable to earlier data. Attendance case management involves early intervention and a pupil specific approach to tackle absence problems. Fast-track is one example of attendance case management which sets out actions and a period for improving a child's attendance.

The number of cases going through attendance case management was 68,700 in 2016/17 and 86,000 in 2017/18, an increase of 25 per cent. Around half of all cases, 46,900 were withdrawn before prosecution in 2017/18. Attendance case management is a non-statutory process and is not used by all local authorities; therefore figures at local authority level are not directly comparable. For more information, refer to the [guide to PRMA statistics](#).

4. Parenting orders and parenting contracts (Table 6)

Parenting orders are issued by courts following prosecution for unauthorised absence. They include a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions and to comply with specified requirements. The number of parenting orders decreased by 14.5 per cent from 179 in 2016/17 to 153 in 2017/18. The number of parenting orders has followed a generally downward trend from 439 in 2010/11.

The number of parenting contracts offered – voluntary agreements between parents and schools or local authorities – increased from 17,100 in 2016/17 to 19,200 in 2017/18. 73.3 per cent of parenting contracts were accepted by parents during the period.

5. Accompanying tables

The following are available in Excel format:

Chart

Figure 1 Number of penalty notices issued, 2009/10 – 2017/18

National tables

Table 1 Parental Responsibility Measures for Attendance summary, 2009/10 – 2017/18

National, regional and local authority tables

Table 2 Penalty notices issued, paid and withdrawn during the period, and prosecutions following non-payment of a penalty notice, 2013/14 – 2016/17

Table 3 Penalty notices issued by reason in the period

Table 4 Penalty notices issued, paid, withdrawn and prosecuted for non-payment during the period and reason for withdrawal

Table 5 Cases going through the attendance case management system in the period

Table 6 Parenting orders and parenting contracts in the period

Table 7 Education supervision orders in the period

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

We preserve confidentiality	The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality.
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6. Further information is available

For previous PRMA figures visit: [Parental Responsibility Measures data](#) and for pupil absence statistics visit: [Statistics: pupil absence](#)

The PRMA census only collects information from local authorities 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.gov.uk or [Welsh Government Statistics and Research](#)

Scotland: school.stats@scotland.gov.uk or [Scottish Government School Education Statistics](#)

Northern Ireland: statistics@deni.gov.uk or [Department of Education Statistics](#)

There are no further planned revisions to this statistical release. However, if at a later date we need to make a revision, this will comply with the [Departmental revisions policy](#).

7. Technical information

A "[Guide to parental responsibility measures statistics](#)" accompanies this release. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed. Definitions of key terms should be referred to alongside this release.

8. Get in touch

Media enquiries

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. Tel: 020 7783 8300

Other enquiries/feedback

Data Insights and Statistics Division, Level 2, Department for Education, Bishopsgate House, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QE. Email: Schools.statistics@education.gov.uk