



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Dear Charlie,

Review of School Attendance

Thank you for your excellent review of attendance in schools. I also extend my thanks to the schools, courts and local authorities who were able to help you during the course of your work.

Together we share the same high aspirations for all children and young people. I believe we must do everything possible to reduce absence from schools. Most parents and children know that every day missed from school is a lost opportunity but we must do more to make sure that all parents understand this. Getting children into good attendance habits from an early age is an essential preparation for success in school and throughout life.

Successive governments have focussed overwhelmingly on tackling truancy amongst older children. I agree with you that we now need a fundamental change in approach. Improving the attendance of younger children at primary school will reduce the numbers of pupils who develop truancy problems when they are older. It is clear that poor habits form in the early stages of a child's education. Primary schools need to do more to support parents who are not getting their children into school, starting in reception classes. A full range of school absence data plays a key role in helping teachers to pick up and deal with poor attendance patterns. We will publish this data. Holding schools to account on attendance is important and this will continue to be reflected in Ofsted inspections.

We must ensure that absence from primary school is taken just as seriously as absence from secondary school. We need to do more to discourage holidays taken during term time: the rate of these absences in primary schools is double that in secondary schools. While head teachers will retain full discretion, the expectation will

be that schools only give permission for leave of absence where there are exceptional circumstances that warrant it. We plan to amend the Pupil Registration Regulations to strengthen the rules governing leave of absence.

Having sent a strong message to parents that school is important, we must equip schools to tackle the minority of parents who do not heed that message. Sanctions are most likely to work if their effect is certain and immediate and if they are simple for schools to administer. I agree with you that the current penalty notice scheme should be simplified and made more effective. Today, the Government has changed the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations to increase the amounts stated on the notices from this September. I will work with my colleagues in the Government to explore ways to make payment of penalty notices swift and certain.

In order to ensure that your recommendations are implemented quickly, I would like you to continue to work closely on these areas with officials in my Department and also to work with other Government departments. I would be grateful if you could write to me in July to update me about progress on your recommendations.

I am placing a copy of your reports and copies of our correspondence in the libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I am also copying this letter to Sir Michael Wilshaw HMCI.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

MICHAEL GOVE