**Essex Schools and Professionals Guidance on Notices to Improve**

[DFE Statutory Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf300da44f1c4c23e5bd1b/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf)

* **Essex schools must use the Essex Notice to Improve Template found under both the Attendance – Support First and Attendance - Statutory Legal Intervention sections of Essex Schools Infolink (ESI)**
* Schools should familiarise themselves with not just the National Framework for Legal Intervention as detailed in the above Guidance, but also the [Essex County Council – Code of Conduct - Penalty notices for school absence/suspended pupils](https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/Code%20of%20conduct%20-%20penalty%20notices%20for%20school%20absence%20suspended%20pupils%20-%202024.pdf)
* A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued if the national threshold has been met
* A Notice to Improve may only be issued where the national threshold for legal intervention has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling 10-school week period)
* A Notice to Improve should be considered where support is appropriate, but has not been engaged with by the parent or has not worked
* In Essex, the duration of the Notice to Improve should be set for 6-weeks
* A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate
* An authorised officer can choose not to use one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate, but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (e.g. because the parent has already received one for a similar offence)
* Where a Notice to Improve is used, it should be issued in line with processes set out in the Local Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.
* Schools should decide what sufficient improvement looks like on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual family’s circumstances
* For some families, no further unauthorised absences will be appropriate, for others some absence may be tolerable if considerable improvement is seen
* Details of what sufficient improvement looks like for each case should be made clear in the Notice to Improve
* Where improvement is not being made, it may be appropriate to request legal intervention from the local authority before the improvement period has ended. For example, a Notice to Improve states there should be no further unauthorised absences in the specified 6-week period, but the pupil has further unauthorised reasons during the first week
* The school should keep parent/s updated with their intended actions, including where legal intervention is being requested before the 6-week period has ended
* As part of the Notice to Improve, all available support strategies should be re-offered/adjusted with a clear audit trail as to whether engagement is secured
* If it is clear engagement is not forthcoming, and attendance continues to decline with further unauthorised absence, schools may choose to escalate the process before the 6-week period has ended