

Attendance Policy



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1. Rationale

At Peacehaven Heights Primary School and Nursery we believe that for a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel safe, valued and welcome. Regular attendance is crucial if our pupils are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered and for them have a fulfilling school experience.

At Peacehaven Heights Primary School and Nursery, both the School and Parent/Carer share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality, although it is a Parent's legal duty to ensure that their child attends school on time every day during term time, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

We understand that children are sometimes reluctant to attend school however we strongly believe that any problems with regular attendance can be sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, please contact us in the first instance and we can support you.

2. Promoting Excellent attendance

The foundation for excellent attendance at school is having a strong partnership between the child, parents and the school. We know that a child with excellent school attendance is important because:

- they make better progress, both socially and academically
- they find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- they find learning more satisfying
- they are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training
- statistics show a direct link between attendance below 95% and under-achievement

At Peacehaven Heights Primary School it is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We will continue to do this using the following:

- provide attendance information in our fortnightly school newsletter
- provide a detailed attendance newsletter each term
- share attendance and punctuality information at Parent Consultation meetings
- report to parents regularly about their child's attendance and punctuality
- reward children using the house point system to promote excellent attendance

3. Legislation and guidance for parents

Failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence'

(Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act)

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. If the school were to permit absence that is not authorised, the school would be creating an offence in law.

The Education Regulations (England) state that as from September 2013: Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. Therefore, the DfE only allows a Headteacher the discretion to authorise an absence if there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are: **rare, significant, or unavoidable**, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

4. School procedures

4.1 Registration

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register and all pupils must be placed on this register. Registers are taken twice each day, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, which are completed at 8.50am and 1pm.

The following attendance codes are used at Peacehaven Heights Primary School and Nursery;

/	Present (AM)	O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
\	Present (PM)	P	Approved Sporting Activity
B	Educated off site	R	Religious Observance
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	S	Study Leave
D	Dual registration	T	Traveller
E	Excluded	U	U (Late after registers closed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	V	Educational visit or trip
H	Family holiday (agreed)	W	Work experience
I	Illness	X	Pupil required to be in school
J	Interview Approved Educational	Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
L	Late	Z	Pupil not on admission register
M	Medical appointments	#	Planned whole or partial school closure
N	No reason yet provided for absence		

4.2 Lateness and punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of school day. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late, they can miss this valuable time, cause disruption to the lesson for others and arriving late can be very distressing or embarrassing for a child.

Our school day

Infants: Reception and Year 1-2 (KS1)		Juniors: Years 3-6 (KS2)	
8.30am	Gates open	8.40am	Gates open
8.50am	Registration	8.50am	Registration
12noon to 1pm	Lunch	12noon to 1pm	Lunch
1pm	Registration	1pm	Registration
3pm	School finishes	3.15pm	School finishes

Arriving before the register closes: a child who arrives late after **8:50am** but before the registers close at **9.05am** will be marked as late using the **L** code.

Arriving after the register closes: a child who arrives after the register has closed at **9.05am** will be marked as a 'U' code which is an unauthorised absence.

If a child arrives late to school they must enter the building via the main school office and the accompanying adult must inform the office staff of a reason for lateness and child to be added to the school lateness book.

Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence. Lateness is monitored weekly and if a pattern of lateness is identified then parents/carers will be contacted by the school attendance team. If parents/carers fail to engage or lateness does not improve, a more formal procedure will be put in place setting targets and consequences for the parents/carers, which may result in a penalty fine being issued.

4.3 An absent child

A child not attending school is always followed up to ensure safeguarding. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. As a school, we recognise that there are going to be a small number of occasions when children are unable to attend school, for example due to ill health.

If your child is absent you must:

- Telephone the school before 9am to report your child's absence.
- Leave a brief message including child's name, class, reason for absence and expected date of return
- You must call in each day your child is absent. If your child is off for 3 consecutive days a member of the School Office team will phone to discuss further.

When your child returns to school after an absence:

1. We ask you to send in a signed and dated note with a written explanation for the absence. This must be done for all absences even though you will have previously rung and left a message/spoken to office staff.

4.4 Absence due to illness

Peacehaven Heights Primary School and Nursery completely understands that children get ill and recognises that parents are best placed to decide whether a pupil can attend school or not.

If your child is off school for more than 3 consecutive days, the school may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence such as a GP appointment card, a prescription or other form of appropriate evidence. The school will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Please note our school complies with the 48 hour rule following instances of diarrhoea and vomiting symptoms.

Advice about your child's illness can be found on the NHS page '**Is my child too ill for school?**'

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

You can also contact the school nurse team on **0300 123 4062** or visit their website at

<https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/school-health/school-health-service-east-sussex/>

4.5 First Day Calling Procedures

If a child is absent and the school has not heard from a parent by 9.10am, the school will begin first day calling procedures. This includes contacting those on the priority calling list, provided by the parent annually, and recorded on SIMS. A message must be left if there is no answer and an absence message should be sent via the school's Parentmail system.

Please note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, **after three days** of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by East Sussex County Council guidance.

The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and may visit the family home to try to establish contact.

After **ten days' absence** the school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

4.6 Medical appointments

If your child requires a routine medical appointment in school time we ask for you to arrange these outside of school hours or in the school holidays. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence but please note that the school will require advance written notice (7 days notice unless an emergency) and a copy of the appointment card to authorise these absences.

4.7 Persistent absence

If a child misses 10% (the equivalent of three weeks) or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason**, they are defined as persistent absentees.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. The school therefore monitors all absence

thoroughly and regularly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If, at any point, a child has had absence and their attendance level falls below 95% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, a warning letter will be sent home to the parent/carer (see appendix 1 to 2)

If the child's attendance drops below 90% they will be classed as a persistent absentee. In this instance the following letters should be used (see appendix 3 to 7)

If attendance has not improved, then the school will start legal sanctions for unauthorised absence (see section 7)

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

Authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

Unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave/absence from school after a parent's request.

5.1 Granting approval for term time absence

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence for children during term time, including for holidays, unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define exceptional circumstances as unavoidable and a rare circumstance such as a family bereavement or a close family wedding. Such absences would not be expected to be more than one or two days. Holidays attached to such events will not be authorised.

Time away from school due to unavoidable illness impacts on a child's learning and therefore to choose to withdraw a child for a reason that is not an exceptional circumstance in addition to this results in children missing more education.

The school year is only 39 weeks which leaves 13 weeks in which holidays can be taken without a child missing school. Children returning from a term time holiday are unprepared for the lessons which build on the teaching they have missed. This poses a potential risk of the under achievement of that child and other children in the class. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

If the school suspects a child has been absent from school due to a holiday that they have not been informed about, the absence will be unauthorised and it is the responsibility of the parent/carer(s) to provide evidence to the contrary ie. a doctor's certificate.

5.2 Valid reasons for authorised absence

Valid reasons include:

- Illness or medical appointment
- Bereavement of an immediate family member
- To attend the funeral service of a close family member
- To visit a seriously ill relative, in particular if they are not local
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the children parents belong to. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Service personnel on active service who are prevented from taking holidays outside of term time if the holidays will have minimal disruption to the child's education. (We are unable to authorise holiday for any other job or business)
- Traveller children travelling for occupational purposes- this cover Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish traveller, showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargess (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school.

Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to attend school as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

The circumstances detailed above are not exhaustive. Such absences would not be expected to be more than one or two days. Holidays attached to such events will not be authorised. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. This might mean that only part of the absence may be authorised. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time (eg. during school holiday time).

5.3 Examples of what are not considered to be exceptional circumstances?

- Taking additional days at the beginning or end of a scheduled school holiday
- A birthday
- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Tickets to sports/culture events
- Days out at resorts or amusement parks

6. Requesting an absence

A 'Withdrawal from Learning Application form' (see appendix 8) should be completed and returned no later than **14 days before the proposed absence if possible**. Forms received later than this may result in the absence being marked as unauthorised. Forms can be collected from the school office or a link can be found on the school website at www.peacehavenheights.co.uk under the attendance tab.

Parents are strongly advised not to make any bookings or incur holiday related costs before approval for exceptional absence is granted. The school considers each application for term time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

7. Legal Sanctions

7.1 Sanctions for unauthorised absences

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised. East Sussex County Council is responsible for issuing fines to parents/carers. However, the decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year, where the child is of compulsory school age (5 years old)
- one-off instance or irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If issued with a penalty notice, each parent/carer including step parents or those with parental responsibility must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

7.2 Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

East Sussex schools and East Sussex County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Peacehaven Heights Primary School liaises with the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS).

Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require or accept the support from the school outlined in Section 4.7 above and/or from any other agency to improve the attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents/carers are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices

8. Moving Schools

If a child is leaving our school (other than when moving on to secondary school), parents/carers are asked to:

- Give the office staff comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
- If a child leaves the school and it does not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving the school the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

9. Other types of absence

9.1 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C code, an authorised absence.

9.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for the child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

10. Reluctant Attendees

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. As above, any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child together.

If a child is reluctant or refusing to attend school, contact the child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. A child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that the school and parents/carers identify the reason for a child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

Date:

Attendance Concern

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: <<NAME>> <<SURNAME>> <<REG>>

At Peacehaven Heights Primary School we aim to ensure each student is given the best possible chance to access the National Curriculum and to reach their full potential. Frequent absences and lateness can adversely impact upon a pupil's progress and academic achievement.

We are writing regarding [child's name] overall level of school attendance for this academic year, which is below our expectation of 96%. A copy of their current registration certificate is enclosed for your information.

In order to support you and <<NAME>>, we would like to notify you that we shall be monitoring their attendance closely during this academic year.

Should there be any absences of concern, you may be asked to provide medical evidence to authorise further absences or attend a meeting at the school with the Headteacher to discuss the reasons for the absences and to agree to an attendance improvement plan.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs G.Roxburgh

Date:

Medical Evidence Letter

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: <<NAME>> <<SURNAME>> <<REG>>

At Peacehaven Heights Primary School we aim to ensure each student is given the best possible chance to access the National Curriculum and to reach their full potential. Frequent absences and lateness can adversely impact upon a pupil's progress and academic achievement.

We are writing regarding [child's name] overall level of school attendance for this academic year, which has fallen below 92%. A copy of their current registration certificate is enclosed for your information.

In order for us to authorise any further absences such as illness, we will now require you to provide us with medical evidence. This may take the form of a signed medical appointment card, a photocopy of any prescription or medication packaging issued by the GP or a note from the GP confirming your child has been seen by them, together with the reason.

During your child's illness or recuperation period, we wish to work in partnership with you to provide any additional support or school work that will assist your child's return to school.

We will review your child's attendance over the next 10 weeks and will notify you, should we require you to provide medical evidence beyond this.

Thank you for your attention with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Appendix 3

ATTENDANCE MEETING INVITE LETTER TO PARENT

NB (Separate letters to be addressed to each parent if there is more than one)

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Attendance Meeting Invite

On **at**

There are currently concerns regarding your child's level of attendance at school. Despite this having previously been brought to your attention, there has been no improvement and, to date, we do not appear to have been provided with a valid reason for these absences.

Under the Education Act 1996, parents have a duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and failure to do so is therefore an offence.

You are therefore invited to attend the above meeting where we can discuss and agree targets in an attempt to support you in fulfilling your legal responsibility to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. [Student name] will also be required to attend this meeting.

If you are unable to attend this meeting you should contact me on the above number and arrangements can be made to agree a more suitable date and time for you if this assists. Failure to attend this meeting, without a valid reason, may be used as evidence if legal intervention were to be considered should [Student's name] attendance not improve.

I look forward to seeing you at on.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 4

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT AGREEMENT

Meeting held at: (School)

On: (Date)

Present at Meeting:

.....
.....
.....

Pupil's Name:	
Date of Birth: Year:	
<u>Parent/Carers (1)</u> Name Date of Birth Address <u>Parent/Carers (2)</u> Name Date of Birth Address (if different)	
<u>Absent Parent/Carer</u> Name Date of Birth Address	

Sibling Details:	
% Attendance and unauthorised sessions on invite	
Other Agencies involved with family	

Reasons and factors affecting attendance provided by parent/carer and pupil:

AGREEMENTS MADE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION:

The SCHOOL will:

- (a) Not authorise illness without medical evidence.**
- (b) Set an attendance % punctuality target of 100% to be reviewed on a weekly basis by the school.**

The pupil's attendance will therefore initially be reviewed on:

Date.....

The PARENT/S will:

- (a)**
- (b)**
- (c)**

The PUPIL will:

(a)

(b)

WARNING:

I/We understand that should (name) accrue a further 10 unauthorised absences over the next 10 school week period then the Education Support Behaviour & Attendance Service will be requested to issue a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice is issued to each parent; this is a fine of £60 if paid within the first 21 days, but will increase to £120 if paid after this period. If this is not paid within 28 days it will result in legal action.

Signed: Parent/Carer

Signed: Parent/Carer

Signed: School (1)

Signed: School (2)

Dated:

Appendix 5

NB (Separate letters to be addressed to each parent if there is more than one)

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Date:

CONFIRMATION

Dear (Parent)

ATTENDANCE

Thank you for attending the meeting on [date]. Please find enclosed a copy of the Attendance Improvement Agreement signed by you at the meeting reflecting the agreements made by all parties.

I confirm that I shall monitor [Student's Name] attendance and review this periodically.

This letter is a warning that should [student's name] accrue 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the next 10 school week period we will be requesting that a Penalty Notice be issued.

If you have any queries, please contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 6

NB (Separate letters to be addressed to each parent if there is more than one)

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Date:

Failed to attend meeting

Dear (Parent)

Warning of Possible Issue of Penalty Notice

You were invited by letter dated [date] to attend a meeting on [date]. This was to give you an opportunity to discuss any difficulties you may be experiencing in fulfilling your legal responsibility with regard to school attendance and to discuss how we could support you in this. You did not attend the meeting and no response was received to our invitation.

If you wish for a meeting to be re-scheduled then please contact me on the above number to rearrange at a mutually convenient date and time.

I confirm that I shall monitor [Student's Name] attendance and review this periodically.

This letter is a warning that should [student's name] accrue 10 sessions of unauthorised absence during the next 10 school week period we will be requesting that a Penalty Notice be issued.

If you have any queries, please contact me on the number above.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 7

NB (Separate letters to be addressed to each parent if there is more than one)

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

SCHOOL CLOSE LETTER

Date:

Dear (Parent)

Having reviewed [Student's Name] attendance, I am writing to inform you that during the last period, your child's attendance had reached a satisfactory level. However, your child's attendance percentage overall will have been affected by previous absences.

I would advise that the current level of attendance needs to be maintained and your child's attendance will continue to be monitored by the school.

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Appendix 8

Withdrawal from Learning Application: For Exceptional Circumstances



Did you know that across the year there are just 190 school days? That means there are already 175 days set aside for weekends, holidays, family visits and rewarding days out. We believe every school day counts to give your child the greatest opportunity of attaining a good education and to support a happy and healthy future.

With 175 days already marked out as 'non-school-days', you should have an exceptional reason to withdraw your child from school. The following are considered illegitimate reasons and are likely to be rejected and unauthorised:




- Trips to visit family/friends
- Your child's birthday
- Cheaper family holidays
- Tickets to sports/culture events

100% is recognised as an expected level of school attendance. If your child is out of school for 3 days each term, then their attendance is below 95% and they're spending more days out of school than in it! Should your child need time off due to illness, this figure will quickly become even lower. Because five days of school equates to 25 hours of learning, catching up with extra work out of school is unrealistic. From a young person's perspective, missing schools means:

- Missing out on fun projects and school activities
- Struggling to catch up on work
- Disconnecting with school friends

The vast majority of headteachers do not authorise any absence in term time, in fact, many schools refused 100% of requests last year.

Think twice about whether you want to proceed.

WHAT IS GOOD ATTENDANCE?					
190 days	180 days	178 days	163 days	161 days	143 days
100%	95%	94%	86%	85%	75%
Good 		Worrying 		Serious Concern 	
Only 1-2 day missed per term		Between 3-8 days missed per term		More than 9 days missed per term	

To be completed by parent/carer:

Childs Name..... Tutor Group/ Class

First Date of absence

Date of return to learning.....

Total number of learning days missed.....

Reason withdrawal from learning is requested:

Please ensure you are giving at least 14 day's notice of the proposed absence.

Your child has the right to a full time education and the opportunities that this can bring. We hope that you will work in partnership with us to make sure that your child attends school every day, allowing them access to the education they deserve.

I understand that if the request is unauthorised the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service will be notified of the absence taken and a legal intervention may be instigated in the form of a Penalty Notice. If a Penalty Notice is issued it will be to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of £60 which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 21 days. I understand that if I do not pay this will result in legal action.

Name of Parent/Carer

Signed:..... Dated:

Home Address
.....
.....

This form will be submitted to the head teacher for review. A senior member of staff may conduct a telephone interview with you to discuss the request and to confirm the decision.

Head teacher decision:

Name of child:..... Class..... Year Group.....

Date of telephone conversation with decision:

Date decision form and letter sent home:

Authorised:
Your request has been authorised for the following dates:/...../..... to/...../.....

Unauthorised:
Your request has been unauthorised for the following dates:/...../..... to/...../.....

Head teacher signature..... Date:.....

For Office Use Only: **Additional Notes :**

Penalty Notice request to ESBAS