Important updates in School Attendance: Penalty Notices and Unauthorised Absence.

Monday 15th July 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope this letter finds you well. As part of our commitment to maintaining high levels of school attendance, we would like to inform you about some important changes regarding holiday absences and unauthorised leave. The Department for Education (DFE) have updated guidance on improving school attendance, effective from 19th August 2024 in collaboration with the Local Authority, which all schools must adhere to.

The school consistently emphasises the significance of good attendance. We recognise that absences impact not only a student's academic performance but also their social well-being within the school community. The academy closely monitors the attendance of all our learners and communicates with families when concerns arise. Our aim is to continue to work collaboratively with the families to address any issues and we will provide support and explore solutions together to support all learners to be in school regularly and on time.

Reporting absence

If your child is going to be absent from school, please promptly notify the academy providing the reason on each and every day of the absence. Accurate and detailed attendance records are essential, and your swift action contributes to this.

Medical Appointments

While we encourage scheduling medical appointments outside of school hours, we understand that it's not always feasible. If you must have an appointment during the school day, please take only the essential time away from school to minimise disruptions to your child's education. Additionally, we kindly request that you provide the academy with a copy or screen shot of the appointment letter so that we can document it in the child's file.

Term time holidays.

The DFE emphasises that term-time holiday should be avoided. Absence during this time can significantly impact your child's education. We kindly request that you plan holidays during breaks to minimise disruption in learning. Any such absences will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If you believe there are exceptional circumstances that require a term-time holiday, please submit a written request to the academy as soon as possible. We will assess each case individually and provide guidance accordingly. However, if we determine that the circumstances do not qualify as exceptional, we will notify you in writing, indicating that you may be subject to a penalty notice issued by the local authority, which could result in legal action.

Unauthorised absence

These could be situations where a learner is absent without valid reason or permission. This could include being absent without notifying the school of the reason, taking term time holidays, arriving late to school, leaving early without a valid reason or truanting. Occasionally, we may request evidence to validate an absence. For instance, providing a medical appointment letter can change an absence from unauthorised to authorised.

It is your responsibility to read this information before commencing any holiday/ leave of absence in term time.

Penalty notices and prosecution.

It is important to be aware that poor attendance may result in the issuing of penalty notices to parents. These notices can apply to term-time holidays, any unauthorised absences, or a combination of both.

The national threshold for issuing a penalty notice in England is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period. This typically equates to 5 school days. (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

A Penalty Notice can be issued under the following legislation:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise**
- **Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act**
- **In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled Section 444B of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Penalty**

Please note: A Fixed Penalty Notice can also be issued if your child is seen in a public place within the first 5 days of an exclusion from their school.

- **Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Penalty Notice.**

See below for further information:

Penalty Notice	Details
First Notice in a **3 year period**:	Issued to each parent. Charged at £80 if paid within 21 days £160 if paid within 28 days.
Second Notice in a **3 year period**:	Issued to each parent. Charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
Third Notice in a **3 year period**:	Alternative action should be taken, for example prosecution or other attendance legal interventions. Fines per parent are capped at two within any three-year period.

	If a parent is prosecuted for their child's non-attendance, they could face a magistrates court appearance and a fine of up to £2,500 and/or prison.

It is important to note that fines are a last resort, and parents are offered support from the academy on many occasions to improve their child's attendance first.

Thank you for your cooperation in ensuring that your child's education remains a priority. If you have any questions, or you would like any support with the attendance of your child, feel free to contact 01406 370333. (Mrs Z Halden, SLT Attendance Champion)

Sincerely,

Mrs R Walker

Head of School