

## New Attendance Rules for 2024/25 onwards

Dear Parents / Carers,

You may have seen in the news that from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, the previous government's introduction of the new 'National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence' became law. This updated legal framework now has to be followed by schools without exception and removes most of the flexibility and leniency that Headteachers and school governors had in the past to work with families around leave of absence requests.

Although schools can continue to grant a leave of absence in truly exceptional circumstances, the Department for Education is clear that:

***'A holiday is generally not considered an exceptional circumstance. You cannot usually take your child away during term time. You can be fined or face legal action for taking your child on holiday during term time.'***

[\(<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence)

We don't want families to get caught out by the changes – especially since the fines being charged have doubled! It is important for everyone to understand the new laws regarding unauthorised absences:

Penalty Notices can be now issued for:

- **Leave of Absence**

Penalty notices can be issued for term-time leave of absence (e.g. any unauthorised time off school, such as a holiday (whether requested or not) or an unaccounted for absence) of 10 or more sessions (= 5 or more days). This can be for consecutive or non-consecutive days of absence.

- **Unauthorised Absence**

Penalty notices can be issued when there have been 10 sessions (i.e. 5 days' worth) of unauthorised absence in any rolling 10-week period.

The government has also changed how the fining system works:

- **First Offence**

The first time a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, the amount will be £80 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days – this increases to £160 if paid after day 21, until day 28.

- **Second Offence (within 3 years)**

The second time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Any non-payment would then be referred to the Magistrates Court.

- **Third Offence (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued – instead, the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates Court. The Magistrates Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child; issue a community order or even a jail sentence of up to 3 months. The court could also issue a Parenting Order.

**The best way to avoid any of these sanctions, remains to work with school every step of the way.** Please make sure that school always has the reason for ANY absence your child may have!

To avoid unauthorised absences being recorded in the register, if your child is unable to attend school due for any reason, please ring school (0113 386 2560 Option 1) and leave a message, stating your child's full name, class and the reason for absence.

Alternatively, you can report the absence online, by using the link below:

<https://forms.gle/LrJMUW2R2zvaFYR39>

Please note: if you don't inform us of the reason why your child is off school and we can't get a reason from you, it will go down as unauthorised absence.

Any holidays taken in term-time must be applied for on the leave of absence request form available from the office or electronically. Please seek advice from attendance staff in the office on possible fines – but bear in mind that school legally has to be kept informed of children's whereabouts for child protection and safeguarding reasons. If you feel that you do have a reason to be granted a leave of absence under exceptional circumstances, there is space on the form for you to provide the reason – but please approach school in good time – i.e. BEFORE you book anything, so that we can advise whether your request will be granted as exceptional circumstances or not (and therefore will incur a fine).

If a term time holiday is taken without a leave of absence request being completed and submitted to school two weeks before you leave, it will automatically be classed as unauthorised.

Note that fixed penalty notices can also be issued for repeated lateness in arriving at school. All arrivals after the bell goes at 8:55am are recorded as lates.

By working together, I hope we can achieve the government's aim of improving school attendance rates for our children, in such a way that families don't get caught out unnecessarily by the new regulations.

Many thanks for your continued support.

The Headteacher