

18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents / Carers,



I would like to start by thanking you all for your continued support in upholding good attendance at our school. We know, as you do, the impact that this has on your young people in terms of their achievements and their ability to socialise with others. However, I am writing to you because the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced some new guidance for Trusts, schools and Local Authorities (LAs) for managing school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notices and amended the law. These changes, which aim to address the issue of higher levels of absences nationally, came into effect from 19th August 2024 and all Trusts, schools and LAs across the country will be expected to follow the new statutory guidance:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance\\_applies\\_from\\_19\\_August\\_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

**Please note – the procedures and recording of illness, medical appointments, post op recovery etc. are not affected by the following changes. This information relates only to requests for authorised absence.**

### **Support First**

The importance of regular attendance at school cannot be stressed enough. All Trusts, schools and LAs are expected to promote good levels of school attendance and provide support to remove barriers where a pupil's absence may be causing concern. By working with you, we can step in early to help to prevent patterns of absence developing. We may identify other underlying issues that are making your child unable, or reluctant to attend school and be able to help you and your child. For this to be successful, parents are asked to work with the school. We're partners in your child's schooling.

### **National Framework for Penalty Notices**

Please be aware that this is a national framework and is not unique to our Trust. To provide consistency, the Government has introduced a new national framework for when Trusts, schools and LAs believe that they have exhausted all offers of support, and the parent/carer is not engaging with the attempt to improve their child's attendance at school.

The threshold for when a school should refer to the LA is 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be made up of any form of unauthorised absence including late after close of register (attendance code U), and odd days of unauthorised absence (attendance code O), which add up to 5 days within a 10-week period.

At this point the school will consider if it is likely that the attendance will improve with further support. We may then decide to refer the case to the LA for formal monitoring. This may proceed to legal action if the attendance does not improve.

Education Penalty Notices are issued to parents of statutory school age children. Please be aware that Penalty Notice Fines will be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent. For example: if 3 siblings are absent, it would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines. The new costs and process is outlined below:

**First offence:** The first time a Penalty Notice is issued it carries a fine of £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, or £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

**Second offence:** (within a 3 year period) The second time a Penalty Notice is issued it carries a fine of £160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days.

**Third offence and any further offences (within 3 years):** The third time an offence is committed, a Penalty Notice will not be issued. Instead, the case will be presented straight to Magistrates Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

### Other changes

There are a range of other changes such as:

- It is now compulsory for us to share data with the DfE.
- There are changes to register coding and removing from register (legal). This will mean that your printout of your child's attendance may look a little different.
- We have new responsibilities around Children in Need, Looked After Children and those with a social worker, and will ensure we follow these protocols.
- Mental health, rightly, has a high priority. We are mindful of children with mental health difficulties and work with parents and children to overcome these.

We appreciate that there are a lot of changes, but the priority is all about supporting children to access school every day. However, if your child is finding attending school difficult, is feeling anxious about attending school, or needs help to access their education, please don't hesitate to get in touch to discuss reasonable adjustments, interventions and the support available for your child. As always, we encourage you to communicate any upcoming absences or any concerns you may have regarding your child's attendance with the school as soon as possible. We would also continue to ask for your honesty – this has always worked so well in the past.

If you have any queries, questions or concerns please contact the school. We appreciate your continued cooperation in ensuring your child's regular attendance and academic success.

Thank you for your understanding.

Rob Armstrong  
**Headteacher**