



Headteacher: Mrs Sharon Finn

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

We wish to share the attendance updates that we are legally required to follow starting this academic year.

### **New DfE statutory attendance guidance – “Attendance Counts”**

There has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance, effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorized absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend school.

#### **“Support First”**

*As the DfE notes, ‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business’, and it is important that we, as your child’s school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community. The new Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance emphasizes a ‘Support First’ ethos and recognizes that ‘the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. It is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.*

If you are concerned about your child’s attendance, then please contact Mrs Pridmore in the school office as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood and appropriate support can be put in place to support you, your family and your child to prevent further absences.

#### **Medical evidence**

In the majority of cases a parent’s notification that their child is too ill to attend school will be evident and can be accepted without question or concern. We need to be told the nature of the illness. Just saying “ill” or “unwell” is not enough information for our records. Only when the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness will medical evidence be requested to support the absence and when attendance is a cause for concern, evidence will also be requested to authorize absence’s.

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## **Formalising and intensifying the support**

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

Nationally, Headteachers are: not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstance, and are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision. The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly. The new policy also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria is met.

If a leave of absence form is completed, it must be returned to school a minimum of one month before the planned absence.

Accompanying this letter is a flow chart to further explain the Fixed Penalty Notice Process.

This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is the crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Meikle'.

Stephanie Meikle

Assistant Headteacher