



November 2024

Dear Parents / Carers

## **New DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'**

Firstly, may I thank you for your patience and understanding last week when we had to make the difficult decision to close the site to students. We only make this decision when it would not be safe or feasible for students and staff to be on site. I would also like to publicly thank our staff who came in to clear the snow from our large site, to ensure it was safe for students to return on Thursday. Please rest assured that we will always endeavour to open our school when possible.

Secondly, I hope that this letter finds you well and that your child has returned to a positive start this half term. You will be aware from talking to your child, that there is an increased focus on attendance. 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 unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

We have already put measures in place in line with the guidance from the Department for Education and in consultation with the Local Authority. Some families will have received a Stage 1 letter which is guidance to families that their child's attendance has fallen below 97%. As the Department for Education 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. If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact Mrs Williams, our Attendance Officer, in school 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.

As mentioned in our Attendance Policy, The Headteacher cannot and will not authorise school (or other educational establishment) absence purely for the reason of a family holiday.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Warning of Potential Legal Action (WOPLA)' notification on behalf of the school and issued by the Local Authority. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon).

Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time.

The WOPLA notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carers responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 am/pm sessions (5 school days) in 10 school weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a Leave of Absence Declined notification will be issued beforehand. If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the allocated time limit, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court. We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but this is a national statutory process and is to be followed by all English state funded schools. The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.


Our revised school attendance policy in line with these regulations will be available on the school website. If you would also like more information on the guidance from the Department for Education, please see [here](#).

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress both academically and socially as illustrated in the table below.

<b>This number of days absent per academic year</b>	<b>Means this percentage attendance for the year</b>	<b>This is approximately this number of weeks...</b>	<b>..which means this number of lessons are missed.</b>
9 days	95%	2 weeks	45 lessons
19 days	90%	4 weeks	95 lessons
29 days	85%	6 weeks	145 lessons
38 days	80%	8 weeks	190 lessons
48 days	75%	10 weeks	240 lessons
57 days	70%	11.5 weeks	285 lessons
67 days	65%	13.5 weeks	335 lessons

Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

Many thanks



Mr J Topham  
Headteacher