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## RE: Attendance and Absence

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

Good morning,

I am writing to remind parents and carers of the new laws in place around attendance and absence. I am worried that some social media posts are promoting misinformation, and that this may lead to some of our community getting fines, or worse, ending up in court.

The new statutory laws have been in place since September 2024. As a school we recognise that holidays out of term time are really expensive, and we know how much financial strain families are under at the moment. Despite this, we are **legally obliged** to follow these new statutory laws - there is no wriggle room for us. Attendance is one of the areas monitored by Ofsted. If we didn't enforce the rules correctly, or if our attendance drops below national average, our school will not be in a good position and that will have a negative impact on your children.

**Below are a few of the main points that you need to be aware of and all of the details are attached to this email and also on our website.**

- All holidays in term time are classed as **unauthorised absence**
- There are hardly any circumstances that constitute as "**exceptional circumstances**" to take an authorised holiday. These circumstances are often around officially proven disabilities, or a parent being in the forces.
- Taking a child abroad to see a **sick relative**, or attend a funeral, is not an exceptional circumstance and is an unauthorised absence.
- Going on a religious holiday that could be taken at another point in the year is not an exceptional circumstance and is an unauthorised absence.
- If you tell us that you are going on holiday, we are now required to ask for proof your **booking details**, particularly your return details. This is because of the number of people across England saying that they are going away for 4 days and then calling in sick on the 5<sup>th</sup> day.
- The local authority expects us to check with a child if we suspect that they have been on holiday when they have called in sick. The local authority state that it is the role of the parent/carer to prove that they haven't been on holiday e.g. through a doctor's appointment etc



## Fines/fixed penalty notices:

- A fixed penalty notice (FPN) should be issued when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (5 days) within a rolling 10 week period.
- The absences can be scattered over the 10 weeks, or in a block.
- Lateness beyond a certain time is classed as an unauthorised absence.
- **First penalty** is £160 *per parent, per child* (included parents who don't live in the same household). This is reduced to **£80** if paid within 21 days. So if you have two children, an unauthorised holiday may cost you up to £640 in fines.
- If a **second penalty** is issued within a three year period, it is a flat rate of **£160** per parent, per child with no discount for paying quickly.
- If a **third penalty** notice is issued within a three year period, then there will be **court proceedings**.
- School do not receive the money from these fines.

We recognise that many of our families have close relatives who live in a different country. We sympathise with the complexities this brings, particularly when there is an illness or bereavement. However, the guidance doesn't allow us to be flexible on attendance for these reasons.

The logic behind this statutory guidance is sound: if we want our children to be successful and have the best life chances, then they need to be in school to learn. The curriculum moves at such a fast pace and missing a few days can leave a child feeling behind and lost. Poor attendance also affects friendships in school.

We won't apologise for chasing up low attendance, and our hands are tied when it comes to issuing fines. However, we are sorry that these conversations can sometimes put a strain on our relationships; this is really not what we want. We want our children to enjoy all that school has to offer so that they leave us with the opportunities to access whatever future they wish to access.

Currently our school attendance is sitting at 94.6%. National attendance is 94.5%.

*Emma Hodge*  
Headteacher

Yours sincerely,

