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Dear Parents and Carers,

In February 2024, the Department for Education published Working together to improve School Attendance. Within this document, in Chapter 6, it lays out the changes to issuing penalty notices to parents and carers of school aged children.

I am writing to make you all aware of these changes which will come into effect from the 19th of August 2024. This means that any unauthorised absences taken after this date will be dealt with under the new Regulations.

The changes to the regulations are significant so it is important we ensure you understand them, so you can consider the consequences for yourselves as parents and carers, before any absences your child might have from this date.

National threshold for issuing penalty notices.

You may have heard about the new national threshold for issuing penalty notices which has been set at 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.

Staffordshire County Council have advised us that if in an individual case the local authority believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one **before the threshold is met**. So, for example, where parents and carers are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events.

It is important for you to know that in the new regulations when a school becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected **in every case** to consider whether to request the county council issue a penalty notice. Therefore, we are being asked to notify Staffordshire County Council of all unauthorised leave in term time that meets the threshold of 5 school days, and any below this threshold that schools want them to consider if it falls within their discretionary powers to issue one (as in the example given above).

New two penalty notice limit in a three-year period

The three-year rolling period starts for parents and carers when the first penalty notice is issued to them after the 19th of August 2024.

The first Penalty Notices for leave in term time will increase to £160 per parent/carer per child but can be reduced to £80 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days.

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If a second penalty notice is issued within three years of the first penalty notice, then this will be at a fixed rate of £160 per parent/carer per child, with no reduction for early payment. A third penalty notice cannot be issued within the three-year period; therefore, the county council will deal with any further unauthorised leave through prosecution in the Magistrates Court. If the parent is found guilty, the potential fine is up to £1000.

Please note.

If a parent or carer books a holiday now to take place after the 19th of August 2024, they will be dealt with in line with when the actual unauthorised leave from school occurs, **not the date of the booking**. If the penalty notice is not paid within the given period, the county council will prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies.

Staffordshire County Council will publish a new code of conduct for issuing penalty notices in August 2024 to coincide with the new regulations coming into force. This will contain the details of how the penalty notices will be issued and other uses of penalty to improve attendance. Once we have this, I will write to you all again with this information.

Further information can be found on the attendance page of our school website, or please contact one of our attendance team.

Yours sincerely



Mr Lee Nixon
Principal