



Wednesday, 03 July 2024

Dear parents / carers,

National changes related to pupil attendance from September 2024

I am writing to update you on changes regarding pupil attendance from September 2024. This is related to new statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE).

Across all our academies, expectations remain as they have always been. Pupils are expected to:

- Attend everyday
- Attend on time
- Attend ready to learn

Every day in school is important. Even at 95% attendance, a child is missing nearly two weeks of learning over the year and this adds up to approximately a term's lost learning over their primary schooling. It is vital that all our children come into school every day they can (with noted reasons for authorised absence given below).

For most of our pupils, these changes will not alter anything as they already have high levels of attendance. Where a pupil is unable to come to school due to an authorised reason this will be noted on their attendance record. Where an absence is not authorised, it will be marked as unauthorised and may be subject to the DfE national framework for penalty notices (see below).

We know that children with long-term medical or more serious mental health conditions and those with special educational needs and disabilities may face additional barriers to attendance. We will always work with families (and where relevant other agencies) to support them to access education every possible day.

Types of absence which would be considered authorised:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances. This may include absence for a medical appointment for the child which could not be arranged outside of the school day. Please make sure you let school know before the absence occurs.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance (maximum one day per episode of observance)
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet.
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school.

Please note: The DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. If you are unsure, please speak to your academy before making any decision to take a day's absence.

Chief Executive: Mr Antony Hughes

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Unauthorised absence includes

- If a child is absent for a reason which is not mentioned above, the absence will be unauthorised.
- If a child is late after the register has closed (1/2 hour after the start of the morning or afternoon session)
- If no valid reason is given for absence
- Holidays during term-time

The below refers to *unauthorised* attendance only – that which is not agreed by the academy.

National Framework for Fixed Penalty Notices

In most cases, schools and the local authority will try to provide support to help you improve your child's attendance first. However, if this isn't effective or the absence is for unauthorised term time holiday, parents may face paying a fine.

Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) within a 10 week school period for unauthorised reasons. The decision will be made based on individual circumstances and in line with the national guidance.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Fines are a last resort and parents will always be offered support to help improve their child's attendance first. Most fines for unauthorised absence are issued for term-time holidays.

We hope that such action will not be needed. But it is important that all parents and carers are aware of the national changes in advance of the new academic year and that our Principals must follow the national guidance.

As always, we look to work in partnership with yourselves to ensure all our pupils receive the education they deserve and therefore can make excellent progress.

Yours sincerely

Wendy May Assistant Director: Safeguarding, Estates and Compliance, The Harmony Trust.

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