

Dear Parents/Carer

Department of Education changes to Attendance

As the end of the 2023-24 academic year approaches, we wish to inform you of forthcoming updates to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance on school attendance, most notably around penalty notices issued for absenteeism and irregular school attendance. These take effect from 19th August 2024.

As you know, leave during term time cannot be authorised by Heads of School unless there are 'exceptional' circumstances. This is in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) legislation and the Aspire Attendance Policy.

Before booking leave, we strongly advise you to speak to the Head of School, particularly if you are unsure as to whether your request is deemed 'exceptional'. Where Heads of School are not able to authorise, you may be at risk of a penalty notice, in line with Local Authority guidance.

From September 2024, updated DfE statutory guidance sets out the new National Framework for issuing penalty notices and there are some changes you should be aware of. The penalty notice costs issued by the Local Authority are rising to £80, if paid within 21 days and £160 if paid between days 22-28. If the penalty notice is not paid, the Local Authority can consider prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Penalty notices are issued on a per parent, per child basis.

IMPORTANT: It is not the school/trust issuing penalty notices to parents, and any monies generated from these fines remain *within the Local Authority* to provide attendance support.

The government is also changing the guidance around how many penalty notices can be issued to a parent. The new guidance states that only 2 penalty notices can be issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil, within a rolling three-year period.

The first penalty notice costs are as outlined above. If a second penalty notice is issued, this is at a flat rate of £160. A third penalty notice cannot be issued and instead consideration must be given to alternative action, including prosecution.

We attach a summary of the changes.

With regards to the day-to-day attendance procedure within your child's school, there will be little noticeable change from September 2024. If your child is absent for any reason, we will still ask you to contact the school office by 9am and staff will continue to regularly communicate home the importance of attendance, through the school newsletter, letters via email and/or face-to-face conversations.

If you are worried about your child's attendance, please talk to your child's class teacher or the Head of School at the earliest opportunity so we can work with you quickly and effectively to support positive change.

Thank you for your ongoing support.