



11th September 2015

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s)

RE: Absences and Lateness during Term times

Each year we have a duty to remind parents/carers about the need for children's regular attendance and punctuality. Like you, we want the best for your child and know that that having a good education helps to open up more opportunities in adult life.

From the beginning of September the government has reduced the persistence absence threshold for all schools from 15% to 10%. The current persistent absence threshold of 15% means a pupil is absent for 56 sessions (28 days) of school before being classified as persistently absent. This is a great deal of schooling to miss and, in the government's opinion, the bar has been set too high. They have urged schools to inform parents of the changes to the legislation. The Education Welfare Officers will also be reminding Head Teachers of this raising of the threshold during their visit to the school when they monitor registers.

The Government legislation does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child out of school during term time. The recent advice school has received is that any request for absence during term time should not be granted, unless in very exceptional circumstances, and therefore any absences will be classed as unauthorised absence and could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) being issued. Fixed Penalty Notices will be considered by the Local Authority when 10 sessions (5 school days) or more are missed. These do not have to be consecutive days i.e. it could be 5 days over two consecutive half-term periods.

From September therefore, if your child has more than this period of time away from school and the absence is deemed to be unauthorised then the advice we have received states that a FPN should be issued and charges applied.

We have also been advised that even if the child has had 100% attendance during the year that this must not be taken into consideration and that the decision to authorise or not should be purely based on the circumstance relating to the application.

Parents who make a decision to take their child out of school despite the above, must send a letter to me requesting leave of absence, stating the reason for the request, well in advance of the planned absence. Email requests may also be sent to me at the address given on this letter.

It must clearly state in the letter or email what the exceptional circumstance is that requires the leave of absence being taken in term time. On receipt of the request, you will be sent a response indicating whether the school is able to authorise the leave of absence or not.

If parents, contrary to the school refusing the request, still decide to take their child out of school for a leave of absence then the absence will be coded as unauthorised.

Please also note that in previous years if a child's absence fell below 85% it was classed as persistent absence and this may have resulted in intervention from the Education Welfare Officer. As outlined above, this 85% figure has changed and the persistent absence trigger is for any child with attendance less than 90%.

Last year there were several cases where anecdotal (and at times this was backed up by hard evidence) that some parents lied or got their child to lie about their absence explaining the child was sick. However, asking





your child to lie is both deceitful and can cause distress to a child as staff will always check on the well-being of your child on their return to school if they have been off school with sickness.

Lateness

Registers open when morning registration takes place at the start of academy school day at 8.40am. The attendance register is collected electronically using the SIMS Attendance Manager program. Doors and registers will remain open until **8:50am**; any pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'late (L)'.

Pupils arriving after **9.00am** will be required to report to the school office to sign in and will be marked as having an **'unauthorised late' absence**. Please note that each unauthorised late will count towards the unauthorised 10 sessions and once this threshold is reached the Academy will refer the details to the Local Authority Educational Welfare Officer.

The FPN charges are listed below. **The LA issue the FPN at the school's request and the fine is paid to the LA not to the school.**

Penalties for unauthorised absence		
Timeline	One child	Two children
Paid within 21 days	£60 per parent	£60 per child = £120 per parent
After 21 days and before 28 days	£120 per parent	£120 per parent £120 per child = £240 per parent
After 28 days	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds the parents have failed to secure their child's regular attendance	The parents will receive a summons to appear before the Magistrates' Court on the grounds the parents have failed to secure their child's regular attendance

(NB: Definition of Parent: natural parent OR person who has responsibility for the care of a child)

I know that some parents/carers will find these measures severe but we believe that regular and high attendance is in every pupil's best interests and helps to maximise their achievements and enjoyment of school. Evidence shows that children with poor attendance are unlikely to succeed academically. All schools have a statutory obligation to provide information to the Local Authority and the DFE regarding attendance and the Education Welfare Service monitors attendance in all schools.

This letter reflects accurately the current legislation and as a school, we have a duty to point this out to parents/carers.

Yours sincerely

L.W. Dooley Mrs L Dooley
Headteacher

