

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you of a new national framework which has been introduced to manage absences from school.

**This new framework takes effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.** The new framework is designed to improve consistency in the use of penalty notices (fines for non-attendance at school) across England.

### **National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence**

Key information is as follows:

- **A penalty notice must be considered where there is 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) unauthorised absence in a rolling 10 week period.**
- The 10 sessions of unauthorised absence can include any type of unauthorised absence (i.e. holiday taken in term time, arriving significantly late after registers have closed or odd days taken without explanation).

**This means that, in any rolling 10 week period, if a child is absent for a holiday for 4 days (8 sessions of school) in week 1 of the rolling 10 week period and then has a further day off school which is not authorised in week 8 of the rolling 10 week period, parents/carers may be liable for a fixed penalty.**

Unauthorised absences do not have to be 10 consecutive sessions (or 5 consecutive days) for a penalty to apply. Any 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in the 10 week rolling period may be counted. The absence does not have to be in one single block of 10 sessions for the penalty to apply.

**The 10 week rolling period starts from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.**

**The penalty amount will also increase** with effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August. The penalty will rise from £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days and from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days.

### **What happens if there is further unauthorised absence after a fixed penalty has been issued?**

A new national limit of 2 penalty notices can be issued to parents for the same child within a rolling 3 year period.

If a second fixed penalty is issued for further unauthorised absence within a rolling 3 year period, the fine applied is charged at a higher rate of £160 per parent, per child.

There is a national limit of 2 penalty notices which can be issued to the same parent(s) for the same child. So, at the third or subsequent offence, another course of action such as prosecution or legal intervention will need to be considered by the school in collaboration with the Education Welfare Service.

The 3 year rolling period crosses over into secondary education. This means that if your child leaves us for secondary school, the rolling 3 year period runs continuously.

### **What this means in our school**

**We are obviously duty bound as this is a national directive which applies in all English schools. We are required to follow the Cheshire West & Chester Local Code of Conduct which is being updated to reflect the national changes.**

**We seek to work with families in a positive way to help to avoid absence being coded as unauthorised.**

This will be increasingly important moving forward.

**Please ensure that you always contact school to inform us when your child is absent from school.**

Where we are not contacted and cannot make contact with you, the absence is coded as unauthorised.

**In some cases**, we may ask families to provide medical evidence to verify absence due to illness. We ask for this to try to help as we can then code the absence correctly, rather than it being coded as unauthorised absence. **If you are asked to provide medical evidence**, please work with us so that we can avoid your child being shown as accruing unauthorised absence.

Please also be aware that when children arrive at school after 9.20am, a U code has to be entered into the register. **The U code affects your child's attendance percentage and is counted as a session of unauthorised absence.** This means that if your child arrives on or after 9.20am, 10 times in a rolling 10 week period, you may be liable for a penalty notice. If you are experiencing difficulties getting your child to school on time, please discuss this with us so that we may offer help and support.

**I would also urge families to avoid holidays during term-time, even for less than five days.** Any holidays taken during term-time will automatically count towards the 10 sessions (5 days) unauthorised absence in any 10 week rolling period. This means that the family will be on the pathway to the second higher penalty if a further break is taken within a rolling three year period.

**I sincerely hope that families know us well enough to know that school takes absolutely no pleasure in issuing penalty notices. However, regardless of our personal opinions, we have to follow national and local directives. School does not receive any income from penalty notices issued.**

**We are always keen to work with you where we can to avoid penalties and legal intervention. If you would like to discuss any aspect of attendance or punctuality, our Attendance Officer, Colette Williamson, and our Learning Mentor, Elaine Robertson, will be happy to assist you. You may arrange a meeting with either Ms Williamson or Mrs Robertson via the school office.**

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Yours sincerely,

R. Flanders  
Headteacher