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Autumn Term 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

In August 2024 new statutory guidance relating to school attendance; Working Together to Improve School Attendance was released. A summary of changes are detailed below and the school attendance policy has been updated to reflect these changes.

Regular school attendance and parents' legal responsibilities

At The Diocese of Worcester Multi-Academy Trust our aim is to collaborate with parents to ensure that all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential.

This guidance is to remind all parents about the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The Government is clear that no child should miss school apart from in exceptional circumstances and schools must take steps to reduce absence to support children's attainment.

Important legal information – New from August 2024

The Government has introduced a single national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England. This threshold is 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. These sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence. The period of 10 school weeks can span different terms or school years.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a 3-year rolling period. This period will start from the issue of the first penalty notice. The national framework also sets out the escalation process which applies to such penalty notices. If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, another tool should be used. This is likely to be forwarded to the LA for their consideration to prosecute under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 which can result in criminal conviction and a fine of up to £2500.

A parent includes any person who is not a natural parent but who has parental responsibility for the child or who has care of the child, as set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will usually be issued to the parent/s with day-to-day responsibility for the child's attendance or the parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for leave of absence).

The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. **There is no reduced sum available in this instance.**

Part payments or payment plans are not acceptable and fines must be paid in full within 21 or 28 days, at the rate specified within the penalty notice. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

Requests for leave of absence

[Working together to improve school attendance](#) advises all schools that they should only grant a leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on a case-by-case basis. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. Although we recognise the value and benefits of family holidays, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for a family holiday as the Government '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.'

Requests for leave must be made in advance, otherwise we will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Headteachers are not obligated to reconsider authorising leave if an application was not made in advance. Please use the term time absence form located on the school website or contact the school office to request an application form to include details of the leave of absence including dates and reason.

Support with ensuring regular school attendance

The school day is divided into 2 sessions for registration, the morning registration and the afternoon registration. Each of these sessions is counted as one present mark, therefore, attending for even part of the day unless there is an authorised reason, is vitally important so that unauthorised sessions are kept to a minimum.

The school expect medical appointments to be made outside of school hours or during holiday times, if this is unavoidable pupils should attend school either side of their appointment. The school must be made aware in advance of any appointments affecting a pupil's attendance at school.

Regular attendance leads to better academic outcomes and brighter futures. If you need help encouraging your child to attend school, please contact us at school. We're here to support you.

Yours sincerely



Head of School