

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Dear Parents / Carers,

## Whole School Attendance

Many of you will know from the Weekly Roundup, we are fortunate that our attendance figures are exceptionally good. Last academic year our average attendance was 96.66%. We thought it might be useful to write to you at the very start of the year just to ensure that you know how we monitor attendance, what we do when attendance drops below a certain level, and what we will do to support and intervene along the way.

It goes without saying that good attendance is crucial to every child's progress within their education and children of school age are legally bound to be in education every day unless ill. As such, we monitor our pupil's attendance regularly. Good school attendance at school is categorised as attending 96% and above, and where a pupil's attendance falls below this level we will work with parents and carers to improve this. This is something that we are required to do by the Department for Education and by Norfolk County Council. We appreciate that there may well be occasions when you have absolutely no other option other than to keep your child off school. Whenever we have cause to work with parents and carers to address issues around attendance, we will make every effort to ensure that it is done in a constructive and meaningful way and it is hoped that any communications that you receive from us about attendance, good or bad, will be taken in this way.

Pupils are considered a *persistent absentee* when they miss 10% or more of schooling across the year (for any reason). Pupils are considered a *serious absentee* when they miss 50% or more of schooling across the year. When a child's attendance falls below 96% we will look in to the reasons why this is in order that we can identify the barriers to their attendance and provide the necessary support. Action taken includes but is not limited to; parents receiving warning and information letters, parents being asked to attend a meeting in school, the involvement of the Norfolk County Council's Attendance and Entitlement Officer, being referred to an Attendance Panel, Fixed Penalty Notices (in line with Norfolk County Council guidance which we have attached below) and eventually things could lead to court proceedings. Please note that when we are deciding whether or not to issue Fixed Penalty Notices, we may require parents to provide us with proof of travel. We will of course also let you know when your child's attendance is exceptionally good, and we consider it just as important to share this information with you!

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us, and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment. We want to make sure that we can support every child's education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address any gaps in learning due to absence. We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different, and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

*Try Hard, Be Kind, Be You*

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Whilst we appreciate that children will be unwell and may sometimes need to stay off school as a result, we are hoping that when we have reason to highlight your child's attendance, this gives you an opportunity to improve their attendance by avoiding any avoidable unauthorised leave (such as holidays or day trips in term time), by minimising/reducing time taken off school for illness, where appropriate, and for any other reason.

Please be reminded that as a school, it is our policy not to authorise holidays in term time, except in exceptional circumstances, due to the impact these absences have on a pupils' social interaction with their peers and their academic achievement. There are 175 non-school days in the school year for holidays to be taken.

In addition to this information, please see below which is taken from the document 'Norfolk County Council: Penalty Notices regarding school absence - Guidance for parents'. This can also be found on the Norfolk County Council website:

### **Regular school attendance and parent's legal responsibilities**

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.

### **The important legal information – New from August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

The Government have 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.

In line with national guidance, the Local Authority (LA) retains the discretion to issue a penalty notice before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, where parents have taken several term time holidays below the national threshold. The LA also retains the discretion to consider going straight to prosecution where appropriate.

A maximum of 2 penalty notices per parent, per child can be issued within a rolling 3-year period. This period will start from the issue of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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. In Norfolk, where a pupil's attendance has met the national threshold for a third time within 3 years and the parent/s have already been issued with 2 penalty notices within that period, consideration will be given to prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which can result in a criminal conviction and fine of up to £2,500.

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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 parent/s who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

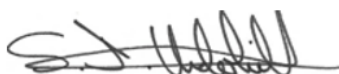
The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £160 to be paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second penalty notice, the second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years of the first offence, is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable 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' (Department for Education, August 2024) 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 schools 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.

Yours faithfully



Mr. Simon Underhill  
Headteacher

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