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Dear Parents and Carers

NEW ATTENDANCE RULES PARENTS NEED TO KNOW FOR SEPTEMBER 2024

New rules around school attendance have been published which became mandatory from September 2024.

You will know that if a child misses just one day of school, that is one day's worth of education lost. If it is more than one day, those losses will be cumulative and the effect on long-term prospects could not be more damaging. Since the lockdowns due to Covid, it appears attitudes towards attendance have changed and we are now seeing a steep increase in absenteeism once again.

Here's what you need to know:

- **£80 fines and Improvement Notices**

Absence fines charged to parents will rise from £60 to £80, or £160 if not paid within 21 days. From the Autumn term 2024, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period. Any notice thereafter will automatically be charged at £160. Parents will also receive "improvement notices", where they are informed that this is their last opportunity to engage with education and improve their child's attendance before a fine is issued.

- **National fine thresholds**

From September, schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. They should "not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices". The threshold can be met with "any combination of unauthorised absence". For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late.

- **Long-Term Sickness to be Flagged with Local Authorities**

Schools will have to give councils the name and address of sick pupils who they believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days. Schools will also be "expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school".

- **Mental Health Awareness**

All schools should now be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support. The guidance acknowledges "many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods". But it is "important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly".

Yours faithfully

Andrew Miller
Deputy Head Teacher/Attendance Co-ordinator

