

Dear families,

Our school has close working relationships with our neighbouring schools and form part of the abc community hub. For several years we have had a shared attendance policy so we are writing to you collaboratively to share with you the updated expectations which apply from August 2024. Our new attendance policy will be shared in September but we feel it is appropriate to share the key points now.

The changes being made are due to updated statutory guidance from the DfE which you can read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Our current shared attendance policy is based on support and encourages working together with families. This will continue in a similar way.

The focus of the policy will be to:

- **Expect:** Aspire to high attendance standards from all pupils and parents, building a culture where everyone wants to be in school and ready to learn.
- **Monitor:** Use attendance data rigorously to identify poor attendance patterns early, enabling timely intervention.
- **Listen and understand:** Discuss attendance issues with pupils and parents to understand barriers and work together on solutions.
- **Facilitate support:** Remove in-school barriers and help families access necessary external support, possibly through an early help or whole family plan.
- **Formalise support:** If absence persists, clearly explain consequences and ensure support, potentially through an attendance contract or education supervision order.
- **Enforce:** As a last resort, enforce attendance through statutory intervention, such as a penalty notice or prosecution, to protect the pupil's right to an education.

The key changes we feel we should share with you are;

- Penalty notices will be issued for 10 unauthorised absences (5 days) within the most recent 10 school weeks.
- The penalty notice is £160 per parent per child (£80 if paid within 28 days).
- A second penalty notice within three years for the same child will be £160, payable within 28 days, with no discount.
- Further unauthorised absences for the same child within three years of the first penalty will lead to prosecution in Magistrates' Court, with fines up to £2,500 per parent per child.
- Unauthorised absences contributing to the 10 in the most recent 10 school weeks do not need to be consecutive.
- Unauthorised absences due to arriving late after the register closes will also count towards the 10 days.

The new guidance provides schools with clear descriptions of reasons absences may be authorised, including exceptional circumstances at the school's discretion. The headteachers of the community hub schools work together and support each other in these decisions. Exceptional circumstances rarely apply to extended leave.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in adhering to these guidelines. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or require further clarification.