

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Attendance changes from September 2024

I am writing to you because the Department for Education (DfE) have introduced new attendance guidance for schools for managing and supporting school attendance. They have also introduced a new national framework for penalty notices and amended the law. These changes came into effect from the 19 August 2024 and all schools across the country are expected to follow the new statutory guidance. I would like to draw your attention to some of the key information below.

At Avondale School we aim for children to achieve at least 97% attendance for a full school year. There are clear links between poor attendance and poor attainment. If children are absent from school, they may miss key learning opportunities resulting in gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This can significantly impact upon their learning and development. Absence from school should only occur when a child is unfit to learn, where there is an exceptional circumstance, or when your child has a day of religious observance.

If you have exceptional circumstances and wish to request a leave of absence during term time, please complete the request form (available on our website) and email it to the office as far in advance of the requested leave period as possible.

Support first

The importance of regular attendance at school cannot be stressed enough. We will promote school attendance and provide support when a student is struggling to attend school. This may mean that we raise the issue of attendance even if your child has only had a couple of days off ill. This is not because we don't believe you. By working with you, the school can step in early to help to prevent patterns of absence developing. We may identify other underlying issues that are making your child reluctant to attend school and be able to help you and your child. For this to be successful we would ask you to support and work with the school.

National framework for penalty notices



You may be aware that the Department for Education has recently announced national changes to fixed penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence in term time.

To provide consistency, the Government have introduced a new national framework for schools and Local Authorities. All schools are now required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 sessions (5 school days) for unauthorised reasons.

These changes will come into effect on 19th August 2024

The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19th August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of **£160** per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent, for the same child, within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days, with no option for a discounted rate. This means if you book two holidays in three years that the fine will be £160 per parent per child with no reduction
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period¹. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or academic school years e.g. July-October.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions). This means that if you take three term time holidays in three years then the local authority will issue court proceedings

Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19th August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Term time holidays

Pupils should not be taken out of school during term time unless it is completely unavoidable. Schools are required to consider requests for leave of absence in term time. A family holiday is not an acceptable reason for a child to miss school. If a student is absent for 5 days or more then the school is required to refer the matter for the consideration of a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority. Nationally and as a school we saw an increase in term time holidays last academic year. I know the cost of holidays are so much cheaper in term time however, please consider the cost of the fines on top of the holiday figure. Just a reminder that school do not benefit financially from any fine issued as whilst all the paper work has to be completed by school, an additional job, the fines are issued by the local authority and monies received goes to them.

Illness

Evidently if your child is unwell with a childhood illness or sickness then obviously school isn't the place for them that day and they are best at home recovering. If they are just a little under the weather, please send

them in and if we need you to collect them, then we can always give you a ring and ask you to come to school. If children are repeatedly off for odd days due to illnesses and their attendance becomes a concern (below 90%) or a pattern in their attendance is noticed, then Miss Braysford will contact you to see how we can support you. It may be necessary that doctor's notes are required to authorise the absence. Again we want to work with you to support children being in school as much as they can so they can learn, smile and remember.

We appreciate that there are a lot of changes and we are currently updating our attendance policy in light of the recent changes. For many of you these will have little or no impact. However, if your child is struggling at school and you are worried about any aspect of your child's attendance, please speak with your child's class teacher or ring and ask to speak to Miss Braysford, who is our attendance lead. We are here to explore what support can be provided to help your child to attend school regularly. A huge thanks in advance for working with and promoting positive school attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Brown