

12th January 2018

Dear Parents

Changes in Local Authority guidance regarding unauthorised absence

Attendance at school has a huge impact on progress and attainment, as well as the social and emotional development of your child. Schools are expected to ensure that children attend school except when they are too ill to do so, are likely to pass on illness to others, or are attending a medical appointment. If you require your child to miss school for another reason, you must submit an absence request form. Authorisation for absence may be granted **in exceptional cases only** and parents are expected to notify the school of all absence, so that we know your children are safe.

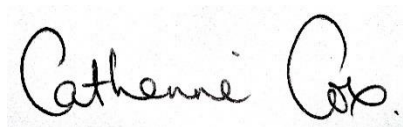
The Local Authority also play a role in attendance at school, despite your school being an academy and part of Equals Trust. Recently the LA changed their policy in relation to absence and have asked us to inform you of the following:

'The Education Act requires that pupils attend school regularly. For a pupil to be considered to be attending school regularly they must be present on every day that they are expected to be at school by the head teacher. Any leave of absence must therefore be agreed with the head teacher. Head teachers can only agree a leave of absence from school during term-time in exceptional situations. If your child is not at school without agreement from the head teacher then the absence may be marked as unauthorised in the register and you are at risk of being prosecuted for your child not attending school regularly.'

As an alternative to being prosecuted at court schools and the local authority have powers to issue parents or carers with a Penalty Notice fine of up to £120. The fine can be issued to both parents for each child who had an unauthorised absence. In Nottinghamshire there has been some recent changes to the threshold for when a fine can be issued to parents whose child have an unauthorised absence from school. From the 6th November 2017 if your child is absent from school without agreement from the head teacher for more than 3 days during a 6 week period then a fine could be issued to you. It doesn't matter whether the unauthorised absence is because of a family holiday or simply because your child was absent from school without good reason that has been accepted by the school. Penalty Notice fine are similar to speeding fines in that they must be paid in one go and within a specified timescale if a parent is to avoid being prosecuted at court. By paying the fine parents are accepting that they are responsible for an offence but they avoid having a criminal record. '

We understand that most parents/carers take this issue very seriously and we do not have concerns regarding the attendance of most of our pupils. We will continue to work with parents and carers of children who have absence rates that are a cause for concern to help them overcome barriers to attendance.

Yours faithfully



Catherine Cox (Mrs)

Trust Administration and Governance Manager