**IMPORTANT CHANGES TO ATTENDANCE**

Dear Parents and Carers,

***I am going to start my letter with ‘don’t shoot the messenger!’ The information shared below has come from the Department of Education. It is not something we have a choice in as it will be compulsory in ALL schools from the 19th August 2024. All Stockport schools are notifying their parents of the changes over the next few weeks. The aim of the new rules is to reduce the number of days missed by children due to unauthorised absence, especially for unauthorised term time holidays.***

***So here goes ……***

These changes cover various aspects of school attendance:

**Education Penalty Notices**

Education Penalty Notices are mainly issued to parents who take their children out of school for term time holidays, weddings, family visits and other purpose. These fixed penalty fines will be issued by the Local Authority where 10 or more sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence take place. These 5 days can take place either side of a holiday so not necessarily 5 consecutive days. Parents are reminded that schools are only able to authorise leave of absence if satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances. This will rarely be the case for family holidays. ***As a school we do not make any money from these fines.***

Parents are therefore asked to ensure that all holidays are arranged to take place in the school holidays.

If you wish to request a leave of absence please ask the school office for a ‘leave of absence’ form. This will then be passed to me for consideration.

The new rules are:

* The fine amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
* Each parent will be issued a separate education penalty notice, for each child who is absent. For example, 2 parents and 3 children, each parent will receive 3 education penalty notices for £160 each, with a family total of £960 in fines.
* This will be considered your first offence.
* The second time an offence occurs, within 3 years of the date the first education penalty notice is issued, the fine will be increased to £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, with no reduction.
* The third time an offence occurs this will be presented to Magistrate’s court with no education penalty notice issued.

For irregular attendance – where a child has unauthorised absences of 10 sessions (5 school days) or more in any 10-week period, the school is now asked to consider escalation to prosecution. Sessions refer to each half a school day, we have 2 sessions a day, morning and afternoon. The school must consider the reasons for the absence, the support already offered, and the engagement of the parents/carers and young person. These 10 sessions could be made up of unauthorised term time leave, unauthorised late marks, or unauthorised absence.

It is therefore important to notify school every day that your child is absent, providing a reason, and where appropriate evidence of medical appointments or prescribed medication. We will consider NHS guidance [Health protection in children and young people settings, including](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities) [education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities) and Is my child too ill for school? - NHS (www.nhs.uk) when making a decision whether to authorise absence due to illness.

**Updates to the Working Together to Improve Attendance Guidance**

From August 2024, the DfE’s guidance on attendance will become statutory. [The current guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) [and statutory guidance can be found at this link.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance) This clarifies the expectations for parents, schools and the Local Authority to promote the importance of regular attendance at school, and to provide ideas for support and interventions when a young person is not attending school on a regular basis.

**Attendance data sharing will be compulsory by the 19th August 2024.**

This means that your child’s attendance will be shared with the Department for Education and the Local Authority every day. This will be live data. This will allow the DfE to provide schools with the tools to monitor and see improvements in attendance, and will allow the Local Authority to provide advice, support and Early Help services. It will also allow tracking of attendance trends for example a child reported as ill in the same week each year, or a certain year group or cohort with patterns of absence.

***With all these changes, the priority is supporting children to be in school every day. Every lesson counts! Our attendance continues to be well below 96% which is the minimum expectation for all schools. Some of our children with poor attendance really struggle to keep up with their learning so as much as we know these new rules will be tough we know long term children will benefit.***

Kind regards,

Emma Harding

Mrs Emma Harding

Headteacher