



LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

July 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

New Department for Education Attendance and Penalty Notice Regulations and updated Lighthouse Schools Partnership Attendance Policy

I am writing to you with important information about the changes to the national approach to school attendance and the subsequent changes to our trust-wide attendance policy which applies to all schools within the Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP).

Some of you may be aware that the Department for Education (DfE) has issued new, statutory guidance for schools and local authorities entitled '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)', which comes into effect from Monday 19 August 2024. The document talks about the importance of school attendance for all children and for schools, and other partners, to work in collaboration with pupils and parents to secure good attendance. I am really pleased to say that overall attendance across our LSP schools has remained good, particularly in comparison to national figures. We also recognise the importance of positive relationships in maintaining good levels of attendance and this is something that we are keen to strengthen further with you as parents/carers.

In line with the new national guidance, we have updated the our trust-wide Attendance Policy which will be available on our website ready for the new academic year when it comes into effect. Each LSP school will personalise this policy with specific contact details and timings relevant to their setting and structure.

In advance of our updated policy being published I do want to bring to your attention the changes that will come into force (from Monday 19 August 2024 onwards) for Penalty Notice Fines issued for unauthorised term time absence as there are significant changes to the severity of these with the introduction of a 'National Framework for Penalty Notices'.

From August this year, Penalty Notices will continue to be issued for term time, unauthorised absence of five or more days but **finer will also now be considered when there have been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period** (currently it is 10 sessions within a six-month period); please note that each school day contains two sessions.

The other change relates to the recurrence of unauthorised term time absence and the severity of the consequence of this for parents. Each local authority will publish a Local Code of Conduct for issuing fixed penalty notices as per paragraph 195 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#). The codes of conduct for North Somerset, BANES and Bristol will be linked in our policy so you can refer to the specific local authority relevant to you, but they will follow this structure:

- If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. This is per parent and per child and is for Term Time Leave or for Irregular Attendance. These are detailed in paragraph 190 of [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)
- If a **second** penalty notice is issued (within three years) to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. This is per parent and per child and is for Term Time Leave or for Irregular Attendance.

- A **third** offence and any further offences within three years will result in legal steps such as the case being presented to the Magistrates' Court. This is likely to lead to a substantial fine per parent, per child. The details of this are published at local authority level as detailed above.

Please be assured that any Penalty Notices already issued (either this academic year or in previous years) will not be included in this new framework.

However, these changes do emphasise the importance that the Department for Education is placing on regular school attendance, particularly in relation to term time holidays. These will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances as listed in the new guidance and referenced in our upcoming Attendance Policy.

As well as changes to the framework for penalty notices, there are also a number of changes to the codes used for absence and you will find a list of those in the appendix to our Attendance Policy.

We want our young people to be happy, safe and successful and to leave school ready for the next stage of their lives. Attendance is a crucial element to this success: to make the most of education, pupils need to be present. I am happy to [answer any questions](#) you have about the Attendance Policy when it is published and if you have specific questions about your child or their school, the Headteacher or Attendance Lead will be able to help.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Yours sincerely



Natalie Wilcox
Director of Secondary Education