



Radnor Road
Wallingford
Oxon OX10 0NY
Phone: 01491 836341
e-mail headteacher.2578@fir-tree.oxon.sch.uk
Headteacher: Marc Knight

September 2024

Dear Families,

Some of you may have seen or heard the news that this academic year there will be changes to the procedures **all schools** are required to follow with regard to attendance.

On 19th August a new version of '*Working together to improve school attendance*' was published. This document is statutory guidance for all schools. This document outlines the expectations for schools, parents and local authorities.

It is important that we make the point that sometimes families have exceptional circumstances, such as a bereavement or religious observance which means that children are unable to come to school. Some families have barriers to school attendance such as transport. School staff will continue to work with families to support with school attendance in any way we can.

During the academic year that ran from September 2023-July 2024, some children were absent due to unauthorised holidays during term time. The new statutory guidance for schools is aimed at reducing the amount of children with persistent absence due to avoidable circumstances.

Therefore, it is important that you are aware what the potential implications for families will be now this change to government policy has taken effect. There will be an absence trigger point for fines and the amount parents are fined will increase compared to previous years.

This is outlined below:

- The trigger point for potentially triggering a fine will be **10 school sessions of unauthorised absence within 10 weeks**. There are 2 school sessions within a single school day – the morning and afternoon session. This means that **more than 5 days of unauthorised absence may trigger a fine** dependent on individual circumstances.
- Fines will be £80 per child per day, rising to £160 per child, per day if they are not paid within 21 days.
- Penalty notices will be issued to each parent that has allowed the absence, regardless of who applied for the leave of absence if it was not authorised and regardless of relationship/marital status.



Contextual Information

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an appropriate reason, such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school late after the register has closed and are therefore given an unauthorised absence mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

We attach a FAQ document on penalty fines produced by Oxfordshire County Council for your reference.

We very much look forward to working in partnership with you this year

Mr Knight – Headteacher

Mrs Stockley – Home School Link Worker
School Office