

CAM WOODFIELD INFANT SCHOOL

GROW – EXPLORE – DISCOVER

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Dear Parents / Carers,

The local authority have asked schools to share some information about **new statutory attendance guidance**. We appreciate that this is a lot of information to take in but it is important that you are aware of the Department for Education's (DfE) expectations moving forward and what the expectations for schools to uphold this will be.

New DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Attendance Counts'

There has been growing national concern about declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance which became effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

'Support First'

As the DfE notes, '*Improving attendance is everyone's business*', it is important that we work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that '*the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.*'

If you are concerned about your child's attendance please contact your child's class teacher, Miss Margetts (Parent Support Advisor) or Mrs Law as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood, and appropriate support can be put in place with the aim of preventing further absences.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we are expected to work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA).

Each day of absence from school is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- absence where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place,
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period of notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carers responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

The penalty amount has increased to £160 from September (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but we feel that it is important to inform you of these changes expected by the DfE.

Nationally, Headteachers are:

- not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and
- are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

New policy also states that *all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria is met*. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

If you would also like more information, please visit the LA's public attendance pages [Attendance and absence from school | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

Best Wishes

Jane Law

Headteacher