

Tuesday 3rd September, 2024

Dear Parents, Families & Carers

New Department for Education Attendance and Penalty Notice Regulations

I hope that you have all had a wonderful summer with your families and that the children are refreshed and looking forward to the academic year ahead. I am writing to you with important information about the changes to the national approach to school attendance and the subsequent changes to attendance policy which applies to all schools within the Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust (CBAT).

Some of you may already 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 came into effect on Monday 19th August 2024. This document talks about the importance of school attendance for all children and for schools, and other partners, to work in collaboration with pupils, parents and families to secure good attendance.

In general, I am really pleased to say that overall attendance across our family of 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, families and carers.

Across the Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust, our schools will be adopting this new national guidance and updating their attendance policies with specific contact details and timings relevant to their setting and structure. As a result, I wanted to bring your attention to the changes that have come into effect 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 consists of two sessions.

The other change relates to the recurrence of unauthorised term time absence and the severity of the consequence of this for parents and carers. 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](#) and will follow this structure:



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- 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 by the Local Authority.

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.

As well as changes to the framework for penalty notices, there are also a number of changes to the codes used which can also be found in Chapter 8 of the new guidance.

We want all of our children and 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 their education, pupils need to be present.

Thank you, as always, for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Cook

Director of Education
Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust