

Wednesday 11th September 2024

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO PENALTY NOTICES FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

Dear parents/carers,

At The Willows Primary School, we firmly believe that regular school attendance is essential for the educational progress and overall wellbeing of our pupils. We share the Department for Education's ambitions to improve school attendance. In this letter we have highlighted some of the support on offer from The Willows. However, we also want to explain the important nationwide changes that came into force on 19th August 2024 in relation to the issuing of fines.

Why regular attendance matters

Consistent school attendance allows your child to:

- Fully engage in learning and make academic progress
- Develop critical social skills by interacting with their friends and teachers
- Grow in confidence in a supportive and nurturing school environment
- Build a sense of routine and responsibility, essential for future success

Support First

As a school, we understand that some pupils may face challenges that impact their attendance. We are here to provide support and guidance to pupils and families in such situations. If you encounter any difficulties related to attendance, please do reach out to Mrs Stott, our attendance officer.

What happens if my child has a period of unauthorised absence?

One of the main changes from the Department for Education is how sanctions for unauthorised absence are used.

If you take an unauthorised holiday in term time or have other periods of unauthorised absence the school may request that Manchester City Council issue a fine (known as a fixed-penalty notice). If issued with one, you'll need to pay this directly to the local authority – £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

The decision whether to issue a fine will take into account whether a national threshold has been met – this is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks – as well as other factors. *One school day is equal to two sessions.*

If there was a second period of unauthorised absence within a three-year period then a second penalty notice could be issued, and this would be at the higher rate of £160.

Further periods of absence within three years, could mean that you are taken to court with no option of a penalty notice.

These rules have come into force as part of the Department for Education's drive to improve school attendance.

Term-time holidays are generally not permitted during the school year. Absences due to term-time holidays are disruptive to learning and lead to missed opportunities in the classroom.

However, we recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances and in such rare cases, please submit a formal request to the Head of School well in advance. The Head of School will carefully consider each request on an individual basis.

Please get in touch with Mrs Stott if you have any questions, and she will be happy to discuss them with you.

Thank you for your co-operation and commitment in ensuring your child is in school every day.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Croke
Head of school