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Monday, 16th September 2024

Dear Families,

I am writing to you to inform you of some national changes that have been introduced by the Government during the summer break and have been in place since 19th August. The changes will affect our families and I wanted to make you aware of what it means for you. **The new national framework that has been introduced for fines due to unauthorised absences means there are significant changes that you need to be aware of.** We would like to stress that this is a national framework that all school will need to comply with. This is not a case of 'Castleway fining you' but the national framework being followed and the Local Authority (Wirral Council) issuing the fine.

Penalty Notices are increasing to £160. This can be reduced to £80 but only for the first Penalty Notice issued, if paid within 21 days – this reduction does not apply to any subsequent Penalty Notice.

Any 2nd Penalty Notice, to the same parent for the same child, issued within three years of the date of the first Penalty Notice will be charged at £160.

A third Penalty Notice will not be issued within a three-year rolling period, to the same parent for the unauthorised absence of the same child, – alternative action or legal measures will be utilised for subsequent offences.

In some circumstances a 'Notice to Improve' may be issued – However, a Notice to Improve will only be used in cases where support is appropriate. They will not be issued in cases of unauthorised leave in term time for holidays, where information for families is included on our website or a simple warning by the school that a Penalty Notice could be issued if unauthorised leave in term time is taken will suffice. In line with the Wirral Attendance Policy, if your child is absent for 10 school sessions within a 10-week rolling period and that absence is unauthorised, you may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine.

Whilst we understand absence is unavoidable at times, we must ensure that children are attending school as regularly as possible. We will continue to support you in ensuring your child attends school as much as possible and work together to enable your child to make the most out of each and every CastleDay.

If there is anything we can do to further support please get in touch. Mrs. McCarthy is the main contact in regards to attendance and will be happy to answer any concerns or queries you have in this area. Although, you should always apply to me as the Headteacher for any request for leave in term time by completing a request form available from school. Only the Headteacher has the right to approve any leave from school. Family holidays are not authorised and only absence from school with exceptional circumstances will be approved. (DfE guidance states schools should not authorise leave retrospectively so any leave in term time taken without a request being submitted will always be unauthorised absence). I appreciate this is a lot of information but as a school we have a duty to share this with you in order for you to understand the changes and have the necessary information regarding attendance.

Kind regards,

Mr. S. Mycroft
Headteacher

Headteacher: Mr. S. Mycroft

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PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS CHANGING

1

FIRST OFFENCE

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

2

SECOND OFFENCE (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

3

THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10-WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

Please follow the link for the Publication that will start from 19th August 2024.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

