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Dear Parents and Carers

School Attendance Expectations and Government Policy

Regular attendance is essential for your child's success. This letter explains the expectations set out by the Central Government and Surrey, our Local Education Authority, the impact of absence and the legal framework for enforcement. My aim is to outline the responsibilities we all share in ensuring that every child receives the full benefit of their education.

The **Department for Education (DfE)** has made it clear that **school attendance is a national priority**, with strong evidence showing that regular attendance is directly linked to improved academic outcomes and future life chances. Children who attend school consistently are more likely to achieve higher grades and enjoy better employment prospects later in life. Please [click here](#) to read more on the Government's blog page.

In line with this, **all children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year**. Absences should only occur in cases of genuine illness or exceptional circumstances. **Term-time holidays will not be authorised**, except in rare and exceptional situations. Unauthorised absences, including holidays taken during term time, can significantly disrupt a child's learning and progress.

Furthermore, **pupils who arrive late may be marked as absent for that session**, as lateness not only affects the individual child's learning but also disrupts the classroom environment. Repeated lateness can accumulate and contribute to persistent absence, which is defined as missing 10% or more of school days.

The impact of absence and lateness is substantial. Research shows that missing just 10 days of school per year can reduce a pupil's likelihood of achieving expected standards by up to 50%. Persistent absence can also affect a child's confidence, social development, and long-term earnings potential.

Legal Framework and Penalty Notices

As a school it is **our duty to follow the legal framework** and guidelines set out by the Central Government and monitored by the Surrey County Council as our Local Education Authority. From **August 2024**, the Department for Education introduced a **national framework for school attendance enforcement**, ensuring consistency across all local authorities in England. Under this framework, **schools must consider issuing a penalty notice when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 full school days) for unauthorised reasons, including term-time holidays**.

Penalty notices are issued by the local authority on behalf of the school and are intended as a **last resort**, after support has been offered to families to improve attendance. In Surrey, schools must provide supporting evidence and follow a formal process when requesting a penalty notice, including documentation of unauthorised absences and communication with parents.

Confidently me - Belonging Together - Challenged to contribute
Achieving together in God's light



The fines are as follows:

- **£80 per parent, per child** if paid within 21 days.
- **£160 per parent, per child** if paid between 22 and 28 days.

If the fine is not paid within 28 days, **parents may be prosecuted**, which could result in a fine of up to **£2,500**, a **community order**, or even a **custodial sentence of up to 3 months**.

Under the Government Guidelines:

- Each parent can receive **up to two fines per child within a three-year period**.
- After two fines, further unauthorised absences may lead directly to prosecution rather than additional fines.
- Absences are now tracked **cumulatively**, meaning that multiple short periods of unauthorised absence over time can trigger enforcement action.

This includes **term-time holidays**, which are almost always unauthorised unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It also includes **persistent lateness**, which may be recorded as absence if a pupil misses a significant portion of the school session.

These measures are designed to reinforce the importance of regular attendance and to ensure that all children have access to uninterrupted learning. We urge parents to avoid term-time holidays and ensure their children arrive at school on time every day.

Key Points to remember:

- Children should aim to attend **all 190 school days**.
- Absences **only for illness or exceptional circumstances**.
- Term-time holidays **will not be authorised**.
- Arrive **on time every day**.

We appreciate your continued support in ensuring your child attends school regularly and punctually. If you are experiencing difficulties that may affect your child's attendance, please contact the school so that we can work together to provide appropriate support.

Together, we can ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Yours sincerely



Mr Timothy Samuel
Executive Headteacher