



4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

You may well be aware of the Government's continued desire to improve the attendance of children to school, which has been well publicised in the media over the past 12 months or so.

Nationally, there is a clear correlation between attendance of children at school and achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 in SATS and Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations. Taking children out of school during term time can damage their education; for example, if children are taken out of school for a one week holiday every year and have an average number of days off for sickness and medical appointments, then by the time they finish Year 11 at age 16 they will have missed the equivalent of two entire terms of their schooling.

New statutory guidance came into force for schools in August and it is important that you are aware of some of the key changes which will affect parents.

The new guidance states that 'where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends that school regularly'. To support schools in improving attendance of students the Government has made a number of changes:

- There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice (previously called a fixed penalty notice) must be considered by school of 10 sessions, i.e. 5 days, of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. School will unauthorise absence if you do not advise us of the reason for your child's absence, if the reason is not sufficient for us to feel able to authorise the absence or if, due to already high levels of absence, you have already been notified that further absences won't be authorised without some further evidence of the need for an absence from school. **Holidays are not authorised by school unless it can be demonstrated that an absence during term time is as a result of exceptional circumstances and only if requested in advance by the parent the child normally lives with. Exceptional circumstances are, by nature, rare occurrences.** Generally the expectation is that family holidays will take place in the 13 weeks of school holiday time within an academic year.
- There has been an increase to the rate of a penalty notice from £120 to £160 if paid within 28 days, and £60 to £80 if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period will now be charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

- There is a national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool will have to be considered by school which includes prosecution. Please note that the 3 year rolling period can cross school phases, i.e. from Primary School to High School.

If you require any support or guidance with regard to your child's attendance at school, please get in touch with Mrs Nixon, Education welfare and Attendance Officer, at [lnixon@helsbyhigh.org](mailto:lnixon@helsbyhigh.org).

Yours faithfully,

Martin Hill  
Headteacher