

September 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

Good attendance at school is the single most important factor in ensuring that your child will maximise their learning opportunities. By attending school every day your child takes an important step in reaching their full potential. Research completed by the Department for Education found that every day missed was associated with a lower attainment outcome at both KS2 and KS4. The more time your child spends around other children, the more chance they have of making friends and feeling included, boosting their social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Promoting positive school attendance is therefore everyone's responsibility.

You may be aware that school absence in Doncaster is one of the highest in England and schools have been working with Doncaster Council to look at how we can ensure all children attend school as much as possible. The school wants your child to have the education and skills they need to live a happy and fulfilling life. With this in mind Doncaster Council has made two major changes in how it will respond to requests from schools when schools are considering enforcing poor attendance.

#### **Unauthorised Leave (Holidays in term time)**

You will be aware that no leave of absence from school for a holiday in term time can be taken without the authorisation of the Headteacher and should you take your child out of school for a holiday you may be issued with a Penalty Notice. From September 2018 Doncaster Council will continue to issue Education Penalty Notices to each parent for each child they take out of school for a holiday.

#### **Irregular Attendance at School**

The school may write to you to advise there are concerns with your child's irregular attendance at school. It is very important that you work closely with the school to ensure your child is able to attend school every day wherever possible. If your child's attendance is not at the expected level the school will offer support to you and your child to ensure an improvement in attendance is made. However, should the support not have the required improvement in attendance we may send you a penalty notice warning letter. If there are any further unauthorised absences in the following 15 school days the school may request Doncaster Council to issue you with an Education Penalty Notice. The penalty notice is a fine of £120 but reduced to £60 if you pay it within 21 days. Doncaster Council will decide if a penalty notice can be issued but may decide to prosecute you instead. Where Doncaster Council decide a prosecution should take place, they will write to you offering you to attend a meeting with an Enforcement Court Officer. Following this meeting the Enforcement Court Officer will decide if a prosecution will take place and a summons will be requested from Doncaster Magistrates Court.

If you are experiencing any difficulty with your child's attendance, please contact us immediately so we can work together to ensure improvements are made.

Yours faithfully



Mrs L Fox  
Headteacher



## **Information for Parents**

### **What is an Education Penalty Notice?**

The Anti-Social Behavioural Act 2003 introduced Legislation that made provision for a Local Authority to issue Education Penalty Notices. These notices require a fine to be paid by parents/carers of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school during term-time.

### **An Education Penalty Notice (EPN) can be issued in three situations:-**

- 1. If a Holiday or other leave of absence is taken during term-time without the authorisation of the Headteacher.**
- 2. If a Pupil has a period of unauthorised absence from School following an EPN warning letter, and the attendance does not improve within 15 days.** *(If you do receive a warning letter from your child's school about their attendance you should get in touch with the school as soon as possible.*
- 3. If a pupil is excluded and is found in a public place during school hours.**

Any absence which does not meet the criteria of being 'an exceptional circumstance' will be marked as unauthorised absence and as such you may be at risk of receiving an Education Penalty Notice. Please be aware that BOTH parents are at risk of receiving an Education Penalty Notice for EACH child of the family with a period of unauthorised absence from school in line with Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

### **What are the Penalties?**

If an Education Penalty Notice is issued the penalty is **£60 per parent per child** when the payment is made within **21 days**. If payment is not made within **21 days** the penalty amount will double to **£120 per parent per child** and must be paid by the **28<sup>th</sup> day of issue**.

Failure to pay within **28 days** will result in a summons to appear before the Magistrates Court on the grounds that you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance at School. If the case progresses to Court you may receive a Fine of up to **£1000**.

### **What must I do?**

If you are having difficulties in ensuring your child attends school regularly, you should contact your child's school in the first instance. If you receive a warning letter from your school or Doncaster Council about your child attendance you should get in touch with the school as soon as possible, to discuss the reason for your child's absence from school.

You should avoid taking your child out of school for a holiday unless there are exceptional circumstances as you may receive an Education Penalty Notice.

### **Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?**

The Local Authority supports schools, parents and pupils so that high levels of attendance can be achieved. In the first instance you should contact your child's school who will offer advice and support. You can also seek advice from the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service on 01302 736504.

Every school in Doncaster is supporting the message that school attendance is a high priority. We hope that parents will help us to ensure that all Doncaster children achieve the very highest levels of attendance at school.