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8th July 2024

Dear Parent / Carer,

School Attendance Update

The Department for Education has released new guidance in relation to Attendance in schools which applies from 19th August 2024, and therefore will come into effect at Bromfords in the new academic year. Our Attendance Policy will be updated accordingly and available from September. Our current Attendance policy can be found on our website:

<https://www.bromfords.essex.sch.uk/documents/policies/Attendance-policy-years-7-11.pdf>

Some of the key changes that will be made due in the new statutory guidelines (*Working together to improve School Attendance*) are outlined in this letter.

Recognising Positive Attendance

For those students who attend school regularly and punctually, there are several incentives and rewards on offer:

- Half-termly certificates awarded to students with 100% attendance.
- Termly badges awarded for 100% attendance.
- Fast-track *Golden Ticket* passes to the canteen for students with termly 100%.
- Merits awarded for students with weekly 100% attendance.

The Impact of Positive Attendance

Data shows that there is a clear link between a student's attendance and how well they achieve in school.

- Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the Key Stage, compared with 5.2% absence among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% absence among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.
- Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.
- Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

What does this mean?

<p><u>Above 97% attendance: Less than 6 days absence a year – Less than 30 Hours of Learning Lost</u></p> <p>Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best levels/grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.</p>
<p><u>95% attendance: 10 days absence a year – 50 Hours of Learning Lost</u></p> <p>These pupils are less likely to achieve their target levels/grades and will start to find it difficult to maintain a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 2-week holiday every year can only achieve 95% attendance.</p>
<p><u>90% attendance: 19 days absence a year – 95 Hours of Learning Lost</u></p> <p>The Government classifies pupils in this group as “Persistent Absentees”, and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work and achieve their target levels/grades. Parents of young people in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority, including the issuing of Penalty Notices and Fines.</p>

Reporting absence from school

There are very few reasons why your child should be absent from school. You should notify the school as soon as you know your child will be unable to attend, by calling **Attendance Line on 01268 474500** or email – attendanceoffice@bromfords.essex.sch.uk

Types of absence that are considered reasonable, and which will be recorded as authorised absences:

- Illness (not including minor sickness such as headaches, coughs, and colds.) For students who are persistently absent, you may need to provide medical evidence from your doctor.
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement.
- Medical appointments, which should be arranged outside of school hours, unless there is no alternative.
- Religious dates and festivals officially recognised by the parents’ religion.

Please note, should your child be absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, there is no 48-hour rule. If your child is no longer showing symptoms of vomiting or diarrhoea, and feels well enough to return to school, they should do so.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable, and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with Parents.
- Birthdays (own or family).
- Minding younger siblings in the family.
- Supporting family members with medical appointments.
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell.
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed by the school.
- Truancy (recorded as an O code).
- Parents/Carers inability to provide correct school uniform for the student.
- Parents/Carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g., because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.

Punctuality

A late mark is given if a student arrives after registration is taken at 8.30am and before 9am. They must sign in as late on the Inventory system in student reception.

Children who arrive at school after the close of registration (**9am**) are marked using a 'U' code. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, is counted as an absence for the session. This will have a negative effect on your child's attendance.

Unauthorised Term Time Leave

As outlined in the Essex County Council guidelines, you could be issued with a penalty notice if your child is absent from school without permission. Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. This includes taking a student out of school for a holiday in term time. Any absences just before or immediately after any school holiday will be seen as an extension of the holidays (unless medical evidence is provided to authorise these days).

It is important that all Parents/Carers are aware of the increased cost of penalty notices and implication of repeat offences. These are explained fully in a separate document attached to this letter.

Reasons for penalty notices include:

- Truancy.
- Unauthorised absence.
- Your child was identified during a school attendance and exclusion sweep.
- Holidays in term time without permission.
- Excluded pupils found in a public place during the first 5 days of exclusion.

We want to work collaboratively with Parents/Carers to ensure the best outcomes for our children and are appreciative of your support on this matter. If you have a concern about your child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it is important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between you as Parents/Carers and the school, so we can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Jochen Tree
Headteacher



Essex County Council

Helping parents to understand the changes to fines for term time holidays

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued for unauthorised holidays recorded by schools after 19th August 2024.

Who may be fined?

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each parent who allows their child to be absent from school.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent who allowed the holiday receiving 3 separate fines.

First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for an unauthorised term time holiday the fine amount will be:

£80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Increasing to £160 if paid between days 22-28.

National Threshold

There will be a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

For example: a 5 day holiday would meet the national threshold.

The 10-school week period can span different terms or school years.

Second Offence

(within 3 years)

The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be:

£160 per parent (who allowed the holiday), per child, payable within 28 days.

Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed a Penalty Notice will not be issued and local authorities will need to consider other available measures to address the absence concerns. This may mean that cases are presented before a Magistrate's Court.

Prosecution can result in criminal records and fines of up to £2,500.

Cases found guilty in the Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.