



Ref: AttUpdate/RCH/Sept24

2 September 2024

Dear Parents/ Carers

RE: Attendance Update – September 2024

At The Link Academy we have worked hard to form strong partnerships with our families and wider communities in order to support our learners with their attendance. As part of this we have increased our pastoral provision further this year to offer a wider range of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) support for learners who are struggling with attending school.

We are in a changing landscape in terms of the focus on attendance from the Department for Education (DFE) and guidance for schools is towards a much tougher stance on being absent from school. We feel it is important to let you know about the changes as we begin the new school year. Please be assured that with all attendance situations we consider the individual learner and their needs. We will work closely with you if there are issues around attending school. Proceeding to fines is not something we like to do but it is something we have to do if all other alternatives fail. We will clearly communicate a learner's attendance journey and if fines are a possibility, we would make sure parents and carers are clear about this and what needs to be done to avoid these being issued.

There is a graphic at the end of this letter to give you the overview of how the DFE are expecting the Education Support Services (ESS) team to work with schools when it comes to fines, and what these will be issued for. It is important to note that the guidance around holidays has not changed and that all holidays that are taken in term time will lead to a fine being issued by the ESS team. This has always been our standard practice.

The biggest change is that the DFE is tightening up on poor attendance and taking recurring leave of absences. The thresholds for these are now shown below. These will come into effect for the new academic year. Meeting these thresholds means that parents or carers could be referred to ESS for a fine. Just to clarify that one day equals two attendance sessions, so 10 sessions of absence equate to five days absent from school.

- The threshold for referral to ESS is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). Arriving late after registers close is given a U code.
- These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks).
- The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term)



The Link Academy

Simms Lane, Netherton, West Midlands. DY2 0PB
T: 01384 986550 E: info@thelinkacademy.org.uk
W: www.thelinkacademy.org.uk
Principal: Mrs E Edwards-Morgan



As a school we understand the complexities of young people and their SEMH needs. We want to work closely with all of our families to ensure attendance is the best that it can be for that young person. We want them to thrive and be well equipped for the wider world of work and life beyond the school gates when they leave us. This is why we strive for all learners to have 100% attendance and 96% attendance is the minimum we expect. Research shows that learners who achieve this level of attendance have significantly better outcomes in terms of GCSE grades than those below 90%.

To avoid meeting these thresholds the following things can be done.

- Do not take a family holiday in term time.
- Book dentist/doctor appointments outside school hours
- Send your child to school if they have a headache or cold. We would always send them home if they worsen throughout the day.
- Do not collect your child from school unexpectedly during the school day.
- Do not keep your child away from school if they have had a falling out with a friend or an issue on social media. We can only resolve a situation with your child present.
- Provide medical evidence for any period of absence and contact the school for every day they are absent.
- Please do not allow your child to contact you themselves during the school day as mobile phone use is not allowed.

To further strengthen our attendance procedures, if your child is in Years 7, 8 or 9 and is absent then please contact Miss Quinn either on the school telephone number, via WEDUC or by email on cquinn@thelinkacademy.org.uk. If your child is in Years 10 or 11, then please contact Mrs Reynolds in the same way or via email at lreynolds@thelinkacademy.org.uk.

Please be assured we will work with you on an individual case by case basis and our aim is to support and improve the attendance of all learners. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either Miss Quinn or Mrs Reynolds and they will be happy to talk things through with you.

Yours faithfully

Mr R Chater
Assistant Principal



Penalty Notice Fines for Parents are Changing.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force from September 1st 2024.

Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice Fines are issued to each child that has been absent
For Example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

First Leave of Absence (Holiday)

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. This is reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

Second Leave of Absence (within 3

Third Leave of Absence 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 within a Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to "failure to safeguard a child's education".*

5 consecutive days of term time leave

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days. INSET days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave.

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period

The Local Authority does not accept the following as exceptional circumstances for a leave of absence:

- Work not allowing a parent or carer to take a holiday during the school holiday periods, even if they provide a letter.
- A child needing a holiday at quieter times.
- A holiday that has been gifted and paid for that falls in term time.
- If the child already has good or 100% attendance. Attendance at school in term time is compulsory.
- Reporting a holiday as illness—school will carry out home visits. If a holiday is suspected school will report to the LA for a penalty notice fine.
- Extended family deaths abroad leading to extended periods of absence.

The Link Academy will work on a case by case notice but it is highly unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted in the academic year of 2024 -2025. Please do not be surprised if you are fined for taking your child out of school or if they have irregular or poor attendance.