WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

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East Annexe
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Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to inform you about the latest updates regarding school attendance and the use of penalty notices as outlined in the 2024 government guidance "Working together to Improve School Attendance". This updated guidance emphasises the importance of regular school attendance and sets out clear areas where we should consider the use of penalty notices. This is laid out in law and all local authorities must adhere to this.

The Department for Education has reinforced that good attendance is essential for every child's educational progress and wellbeing. The guidance highlights several key changes that we want to ensure all families are aware of.

Clear Thresholds for Penalty Notices. Penalty notices may be considered if one of the three criteria below are met.

- Code U – late after the close of registration. If there are 10 or more sessions missed over a 10-week period and a notice to improve has not brought about a change.
- Code G – if there are two or more holidays in term time over a 12-month rolling period.
- Code G or O – if there has been one extended period of absence which is greater than 10 sessions.

Note: A typical school day consists of two sessions – a morning and an afternoon. The 10 sessions referred to above will be equivalent to 5 typical school days.

- If any of the above criteria are met, Warrington Borough Council may issue each parent a fine of £80, rising to £160 if you do not pay within 21 days.
- Each parent may get up to 2 fines for the same child in a 3-year period.
- If you get a second fine in 3 years it will be £160 – there is no option to pay at the lower rate.
- If you do not pay the fine in 28 days, you may be taken to court and prosecuted.
- If your child is off school 3 or more times within the 3 years and the above criteria is met you will not be fined again but may be taken to court, which could result in a criminal record.

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Stronger Emphasis on Early Support. The updated guidance focuses on early intervention. Your school will work closely with families to address any concerns that may affect your child's attendance. We encourage parents to engage with schools early if you have identified any challenges in maintaining regular attendance for your child.

Collaboration with Local Authorities. There will be enhanced collaboration between schools and Warrington Borough Council's attendance team to monitor attendance and support families. The penalty notice process will be part of a wider strategy that aims to identify and address attendance issues as soon as they arise, ensuring parents are aware of concerns before formal action is taken.

What this means for parents. Please be assured that our priority is to work together to support your child's education. We understand that circumstances may arise that could impact attendance, and we are here to help in the first instance. If you have any concerns or need assistance, please contact your child's school. It is important that you notify the school as early as possible regarding any planned absences and that you provide documentation if your child is unwell for extended periods.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Parlane
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