

# Malmesbury School

Corn Gastons  
Malmesbury  
Wiltshire  
SN16 0DF

T: 01666 829700

admin@malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk  
www.malmesbury.wilts.sch.uk

Headteacher: Brett Jouny

Dear Parents and Carers,

## **New DfE statutory attendance guidance- 'Attendance Counts'**

Following the Wiltshire Local Authority letter we sent regarding the changes last academic year, we wanted to follow up to remind you, and new parents, that the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced some new statutory guidance for schools and Local Authorities for managing school attendance.

### **'Support First'**

You may be aware that there has been national concern about falling school attendance rates across the UK. The Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance which took effect from 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, which is aimed specifically at reducing the number of term-time holidays and unauthorised absences.

As the DfE notes, *'Improving attendance is everyone's business'*, and it is important that we, as your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that *'the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... it is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'*

### **Formalising and intensifying the support**

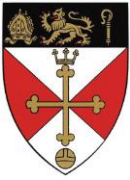
From September 2024, as part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification. Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon).

Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time



A charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales, as The Athelstan Trust  
Company No: 7699625



These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings. The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a penalty notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carer responsible for the child. You can find the DfE guidance on this link ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) and our revised school policy [here](#).

Days of unauthorised absence for a holiday are now likely to attract a penalty notice. The law is specific that Headteachers are expected to enforce these penalty notices robustly. The fine has increased from September, to £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 28 days). If a parent gets a second penalty notice within a three year period, the fine is £160. Every adult with whom the child lives (including step-parents) will receive the fine, and the fine applies to every child that is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the fines will amount to £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 28 days). Please be aware that this money goes to the local authority, NOT the school. We understand that these penalty notices will not be popular with families. Headteachers have not been allowed to authorise holidays in term-time unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances for many years and you may be asked to provide evidence of the circumstances you refer to. You can find the form to complete an absence request [here](#).

Fundamentally, of course, these measures are in place to encourage families to ensure that children do not miss their education. Every session of learning is an important building block in your child's education, and absences can seriously affect your child's progress. Thank you very much for working with us to support your child's learning.

Yours faithfully,

Emma-Jane O'Neill

Assistant Headteacher

