



Christ Church CE (C) Primary Attendance Policy

Principles

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The school will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through its curriculum along with frequent reminders in fortnightly newsletters, on the school website and through letters to parents/carers. School will also promote positive attendance through discussions with the children. Any problems that arise with attendance will ideally be resolved between the school, the parents and the child. However, when attendance is a concern, school will follow a procedure (documented below) which includes contacting parent/carers via letters and intervention from the Education Welfare Officer.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence or lateness is unavoidable.

Reluctant school attendees

There may be times when children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is not advised to cover up their absence or to give in to any pressure to excuse them from attending; this can then give the child the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Please understand that permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties getting their child to school should contact the school at an early stage so that they are able to work together with the school and staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the concern to the Education Welfare Officer from the County Council so that further support can be offered.

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The school employs a Staffordshire County Council Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to support school in ensuring that attendance remains high. As part of the role, the EWO may contact parents/carers whose child has been identified by school as having attendance below 90% and/or more than 5 late marks during a half term. The EWO will offer support and guidance to these parents/carers where needed, to ensure a child's attendance at school improves.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, Education Welfare Officers can issue Penalty Notices or use court proceedings to prosecute parents. They are also able to seek an Education Supervision Order for the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.



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Referral agreements

The attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils. Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to contact the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Education Welfare Service.

Register

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

Registration

KS1 and KS2 children should arrive at school no earlier than 8.40am. Members of staff are on duty at the doors from this time to ensure supervision of the children. Children enter the school and go straight to their classroom. The doors for both KS1 and KS2 children close at 8.55am and this is the time when the register is taken and then closed.

If a child arrives after the register is closed, they will be given a late mark. If a child arrives after 9.10am an unauthorised absence will be recorded which is reported to parents, governors and the LEA.

At the end of the school day

Children will be taken to an allocated door by their teachers, who will ensure they are collected safely. Where possible, we encourage children from Year 4 upwards to meet their parents/carers at the school gates to reduce adults coming onto the site.

The school should be notified if anyone other than a parent/carer is collecting a child at the end of the day. If parents/carers take another child home (e.g. for a neighbour or friend) they should inform the school so each child is accounted for and is safe. Older children



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sometimes walk home on their own and the school needs to be aware of this to ensure their safety.

- Children in Reception finish school at 3.15pm
- Children in KS1 finish school at 3.20pm
- Children in KS2 finish school at 3.20pm

In the case of an **emergency** and parents/carers are unavoidably delayed, they should contact the school giving their estimated time of arrival. The staff will then ensure the child/children are kept on the premises until collected. If the delay is likely to be more than 20 minutes after the school has closed, parents/carers should make alternative arrangements for someone else to collect their child.

Children who are consistently collected late from school will be referred to Social Services (via Staffordshire Children's Advice and SCAS).

Illness

The school should be notified if the child is unable to attend. This may be done verbally, by telephone, by letter or by email. The school will contact parents/carers if notification is not given by 9.10a.m. to ensure the child's safety.

If a child is ill while at school, the parents/carers will be notified and asked to fetch the child. No child will be sent home without an adult. If a child is sick, they must stay off school for 48 hours after the last bout of sickness.

School have a duty of care for the children who attend our setting. If your child is off school for more than a day, we require parents/carers to have a telephone conversation with a member of our office staff so that school has a full understanding of a child's illness.

Leave of Absence in term time

The Head Teacher will not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

In the event of the leave of absence being denied, the Head Teacher will inform parents/carers in writing why the request for leave during term time is being denied and will advise the parents/carers that they may receive a penalty notice if they take the children out of school.

It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for events which are not classed as exceptional. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time. We do expect routine medical/dental appointments to be made outside of school time.



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Schools must follow up on any absence. We therefore require a phone conversation with parents/carers after the first day of absence.

Staffordshire County Council will give a penalty notice if:

- *A call is made and there is an international dialing tone.*
- *A child has told a member of staff that they have been/going on holiday.*
- *A letter is sent to the home and not responded to within the given timeframe specified in the letter.*
- *A home visit was completed and there was no answer at the home.*
- *School have other evidence which questions a leave of absence.*

Please note, it is Staffordshire County Council who issue the fines. School does not make this decision nor do they receive any of the money when a fine is issued.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2024

The penalty notice fine would be:

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days, you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £2500 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.



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Absences and Punctuality

On a half termly basis, the Head Teacher will contact parents/carers, via a letter, of children who are habitually late or have unexplained absences during a half term. The Head Teacher will also write to parents of children with an attendance record below 90% over a half term. Please see below for an example of the letter template which is sent out to all who meet the above criteria.

If attendance, unexplained absences or lateness continue to be a concern, the Head Teacher will send a further letter to parents/carers and ask the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to contact the parents/carers. During the conversation with the EWO, they will try to establish any reasons behind the attendance concern, offering strategies to improve it and remind parents/carers of their responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school.

We do expect routine medical/dental appointments to be made outside of school time. If, in exceptional circumstances a child has an appointment during school hours, it is expected that parents/carers provide appointment slips as validation.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 85% in any term without good reason, or there is no clear improvement in a child's concerning attendance, then a further letter outlining action which can be taken if attendance is not improved will be sent and further advice will be sought from the EWO. Following this, an investigation may take place and any unresolved issues could result in the parent receiving a Penalty Notice or ultimately a prosecution under the Education Act 1996 s.444.

The role of the Class Teacher

1. To ensure that children are registered and the Head Teacher is notified of any absences.
2. That younger children are collected safely at the end of the day.

The role of the Head Teacher

1. To ensure registers are kept according to regulations.
2. That the school knows the whereabouts of absent children.
3. To liaise with the appropriate authorities as and when situations arise.
4. To report at governor meetings across the year, the percentage attendance for the last term of the whole school.
5. To report any exclusions and unauthorised absences.
6. To actively promote good attendance and address any concerns involving attendance

The school actively promotes and celebrates good attendance. Classes with the best attendance are published in the school newsletter.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.



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Appendix 1: A Sample letter in response to an absence request which is unauthorised

CHRIST CHURCH CE (c) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Christ Church Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8AY

Head Teacher: Mrs. Julie Pilmore

Telephone: 01543 227 210

Email: office@christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Website: www.christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Date

Dear

Thank you for your recent letter, dated [REDACTED] requesting permission for [REDACTED] to be absent from school on [REDACTED]

As you are aware, the Department of Education (DfE) made important changes to the law in 2013 for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless they are exceptional circumstances.

Staffordshire County Council are issuing fines for families taking holidays during term time. This can be as little as one day of absence if it is not seen as an exceptional circumstance or illness.

As a Staffordshire school, we are legally required to send Staffordshire County Council any applications of unauthorised absence that we receive into school. We ask that you understand that it is not a school decision whether or not to fine parents. This is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.

The penalty notice fine would be:

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
 - £160 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days
 - If the fine is not paid within 28 days, you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £2500 per parent, per child.
- This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.



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- A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school. I am sure that you understand that our key priority is to ensure that your child is as successful as possible and gains maximum benefits from their educational experience.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve this leave of absence, as the circumstances do not qualify under the DfE's definition of exceptional.

Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period, it will be recorded as days of unauthorised absence.

Yours sincerely, Julie Pilmore (Head Teacher)



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Appendix 2: A Sample letter in response to an absence request which is authorised

CHRIST CHURCH CE (c) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Christchurch Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8AY

Head Teacher: Mrs. Julie Pilmore

Telephone: 01543 227210

Email: contact@christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Website: www.christchurch-lichfield.co.uk

Date

Dear,

Thank you for your recent letter dated [REDACTED] regarding [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I have considered your application very carefully. As this is an exceptional circumstance, I am able to authorise this absence.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Pilmore
(Head Teacher)



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Appendix 3: Example letter for a child who has attendance below 90%

Date

Dear parent /carer,

Attendance – Below 90%

(Please note that as a Staffordshire County Council School, we are required to send out the information below and the content forms part of a legal requirement to inform parents/carers about the official processes)

As you were made aware by the phone call you received from the school office, your child's attendance is causing concern. As from the end of the last half term, your child's attendance for this term was below 90%.

Your child's absence since September means that they have missed: ____ days of learning this academic year.

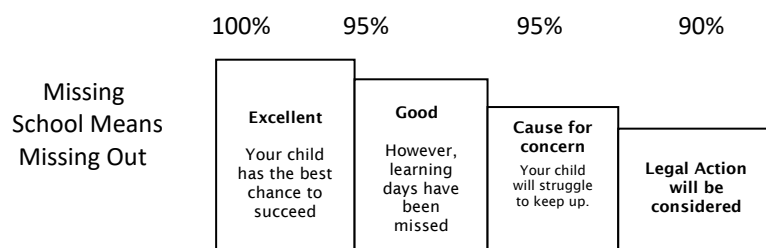
Attendance expectations

Full school attendance is a legal requirement.

This includes:

- Parental duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil.
- Schools' responsibility to record attendance and follow up absence.
- The ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with the Local Authority Code of Conduct.

Any absence from school is a cause for concern. Only by attending everyday will your child have the best chance to get the most from their education. The following graph shows the effect of missing time from school over a year. Every school session is important if your child is not going to fall behind with their education.



I must remind you that as a parent/carers, you are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school regularly.

There are only four legitimate reasons for absence:



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- Religious observance
- Illness of the child
- The death of a close family member
- An urgent medical or dental appointment

As of September 2013, school is no longer able to authorise any absence for holidays and any holidays taken during term time are now marked as unauthorised.

School has a responsibility to inform you that Education Welfare Service can take legal action against you if you fail to make sure that your child goes to school regularly and there is no legitimate reason for the absence. This action may take one of two forms:

- The issuing of a penalty notice
- Prosecution in the Magistrates Court

As we are a Staffordshire County Council School, the Education Welfare Service are able to access our attendance records at any time, looking at attendance concerns. As a consequence of this, you may receive a phone call from them to discuss your child's attendance and to offer support on how it can be improved.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact the school office in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Pilmore
Head Teacher



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Appendix 4: Example letter for a children who has 5 or more late marks

Date

Dear parent /carer,

Late Marks

(Please note that as a Staffordshire County Council School, we are required to send out the information below and the content forms part of a legal requirement to inform parents/carers about the official processes)

As you were made aware by the phone call you received from the school office, your child has now accumulated 5 or more late marks during last half term.

May I remind you that your child needs to be in school by 8.55am; this is the time when the registers are taken. If your child arrives after this time, they will receive a late mark. It is vital that your child arrives at school on time; when they are late, they miss out on vital learning in the classroom.

As a parent/carers, you are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school on time. The Education Welfare Service can take legal action against you if you fail to make sure that your child goes to school regularly; this includes being on time and there is no legitimate reason for this lateness. This action may take one of two forms:

- The issuing of a penalty notice
- Prosecution in the Magistrates Court

As we are a Staffordshire County Council School, the Education Welfare Service are able to access our attendance records at any time, looking at attendance concerns including late marks. As a consequence of this, you may receive a phone call from them to discuss your child's attendance and to offer support on how it can be improved.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact the school office in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Pilmore
Head Teacher



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Appendix 5: An example letter if school have a concern regarding the legitimacy of an absence

CHRIST CHURCH CE (c) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Christ Church Lane, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8AY

Head Teacher: Mrs. Julie Pilmore

Telephone: 01543 227210

Email: office@christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Website: www.christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Date

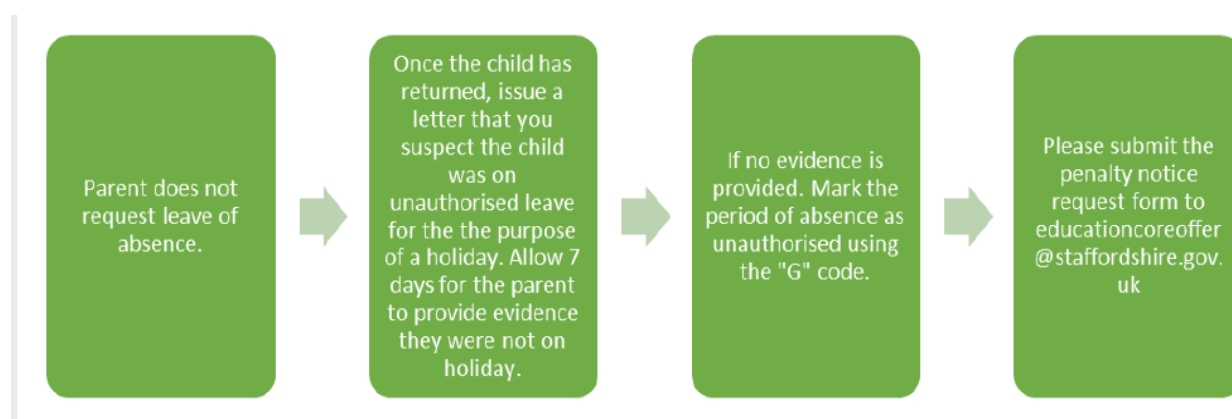
Dear

I am writing to you regarding the absence of [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

You informed school that [REDACTED] absence was due to illness. However, as a part of our routine well-being checks when children are absent from school for more than a day, we were unable to speak to you directly. Our attendance policy states that we must have direct, verbal communication after 1 day of absence with parents/carers, to ensure that we safeguard all children.

Having sought advice from the Local Authority, they have asked us to send you the following letter.

Following the Staffordshire guidance below, unless you can provide school evidence e.g. a medical note confirming your child's illness, we will have no choice but to submit a penalty notice form to Staffordshire County Council.





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Please understand that we require this information to ensure that our attendance records are kept up to date.

As you are aware, the Department of Education (DfE) made important changes to the law in 2013 for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless they are exceptional circumstances.

Staffordshire County Council are issuing fines for families taking holidays during term time. This can be as little as one day of absence if it is not seen as an exceptional circumstance or illness.

As a Staffordshire school, we are legally required to send Staffordshire County Council any applications of unauthorised absence that we receive into school. We ask that you understand that it is not a school decision whether or not to fine parents. This is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.

The penalty notice fine would be:

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
 - £160 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days
 - If the fine is not paid within 28 days, you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £2500 per parent, per child.
- This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Two penalty notice limit and escalation in cases of repeat offences

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Thank you in advance for your co-operation in keeping our attendance records up to date.

Yours sincerely,
Julie Pilmore (Head Teacher)



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Appendix 6: An example letter posted to the home address when school is unable to make verbal contact with parents/carers after more than 1 day of absence.

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Head Teacher: Mrs. Julie Pilmore

Telephone: 01543 227210

Email: office@christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Website: www.christchurch-lichfield.staffs.sch.uk

Date

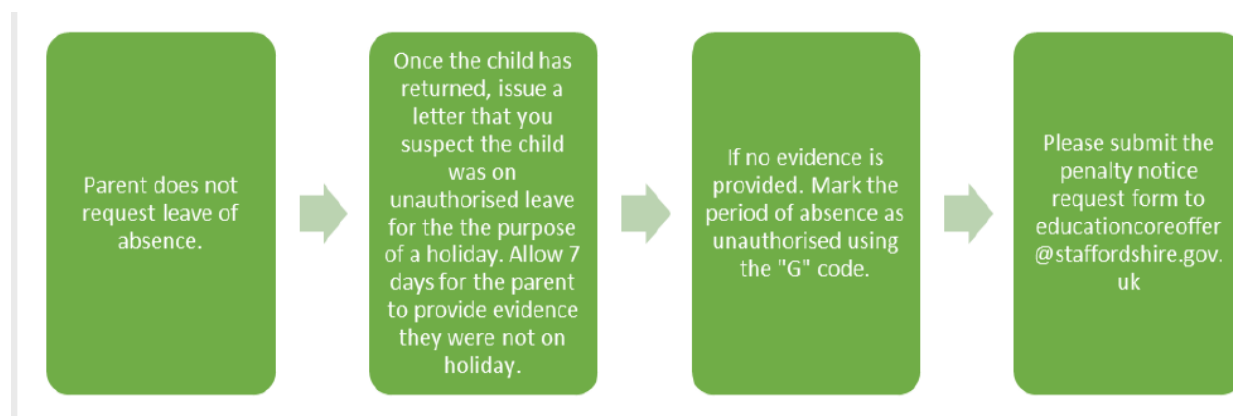
Dear

I am writing to you regarding the absence of [REDACTED]

You informed school that [REDACTED] absence was due to illness via email/voice message (delete as appropriate). However, as a part of our routine well-being checks when children are absent from school for more than a day, we were unable to speak to you directly. Our attendance policy states that we must have direct, verbal communication after 1 day of absence with parents/carers to ensure that we safeguard all children.

Therefore, we are sending you this letter to ask you to contact school, via a phone call, by [REDACTED] to provide more information about your child's absence and to see whether school can offer any support.

If we do not hear back from you within this time period, we would have to assume that there are alternative reasons for your child's absence and therefore we are required, by the Local Authority, to advise you about the guidance below.



Please understand that we require this information to ensure that our attendance records are kept up to date.

As you are aware, the Department of Education (DfE) made important changes to the law in 2013 for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it



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clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless they are exceptional circumstances.

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As a Staffordshire school, we are legally required to send Staffordshire County Council any applications of unauthorised absence that we receive into school. We ask that you understand that it is not a school decision whether or not to fine parents. This is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council.

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If the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation in keeping our attendance records up to date.

Yours sincerely,
Julie Pilmore
(Head Teacher)