

Attendance & Punctuality Addendum: COVID-19

September 2020

This addendum should be read in conjunction with the Attendance and Punctuality policy.

From September 2020 the Government will be reinstating the legislation relating to school attendance which means that attendance at school will be mandatory.

This means that all children of compulsory school age will be expected to attend school, unless they are unable to do so due to exceptional reasons. The local authority's powers to fine parents will also be reinstated for unauthorised absence from school where:

- There is persistent absence from school
- Holidays are taken during term time
- Children are unable to attend school due to quarantines on return from holidays abroad

The reinstated law and regulations state parents must ensure their child attends school regularly and they are committing an offence if they fail to do so.

Whilst we understand that there may be some nervousness around children returning to school, we hope that parents, carers and students are reassured by the plans that have been shared regarding the full reopening in September. These are based on a thorough risk assessment and follow relevant guidance from the Department for Education and Public Health England. As new guidance is published, these plans may well evolve to ensure the health and safety of the whole school community: students, staff and families.

Support

Our aim is to support all students to attend every day. Where there are concerns with attendance, usual support mechanisms will be offered by the pastoral team. It is important that parents/carers discuss any concerns fully with staff at the school so that plans can be made to improve attendance for the child.

Absence due to COVID-19

Under current guidance, shielding for even the most vulnerable members of society has been paused meaning that all students should attend. Parental worries or fears are *not* a valid reason for children to not attend school.

Absence due to COVID-19 will only be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Up to two days if a student develops symptoms and waits for the result of a test
- Up to eight days if a student contracts COVID-19, evidenced by a positive test result (guidance states that someone with a positive result should self-isolate for ten days from the initial onset of symptoms meaning a maximum of eight schools days should be missed)
- Up to twelve days if a student lives with someone who contracts COVID-19, evidenced by a positive test result (guidance states that those living with someone with a positive result should self-isolate)

for fourteen days from the initial onset of symptoms meaning a maximum of twelve schools days should be missed). If the student subsequently contracts COVID-19 and they then must start a ten day self-isolation period and we will require evidence of the positive test to authorise extended absence

- Where a consultant provides written evidence in advance that outlines why a student cannot attend school

All other absences will be unauthorised and may lead to escalation of the attendance challenge process as outlined in the Attendance and Punctuality Policy.