

10th September 2024

Re: Attendance Expectations and Support for the 2024/2025 Academic Year

I hope this letter finds you and your family well as we prepare for another exciting and productive academic year at Great Academy Ashton. Our collective goal is to ensure that every student thrives, both academically and personally. With this in mind, I would like to share some important information regarding academy attendance for the 2024/2025 academic year with the academy community, in line with the latest guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). For more details, you can refer to the full guidance attached.

We know that regular and punctual attendance is key to helping students reach their academic potential. Every day in the academy counts, as even small gaps in attendance can affect learning and progress. Our commitment is to support each student in maintaining consistent attendance, and we are here to assist families in navigating any challenges that may arise.

As outlined in the new statutory guidance, parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends the school where they are registered regularly. This not only supports their learning but also contributes to their overall well-being and future opportunities. If a student accumulates 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks, we are required to consider further steps to address the issue.

To help ensure that all students receive the full benefit of their education, the latest guidelines include a structured approach to Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for unauthorised absences:

Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the local authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a pupil has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in a 10-week period (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if their child persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration, their parents may receive a Penalty Notice. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 states that:

For the first offence committed, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

For the second offence committed the, the rate of a Penalty Notice is £160 with no option for the second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80.

There is a limit of 2 Penalty Notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period. If there is a third offence committed within this timeframe, another tool will be considered such as prosecution to answer an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996: failure to ensure regular attendance. Conviction of an offence under section 444(1) may result in a fine of £1000. Under section 444(1A), convictions may result in a fine of £2,500, a community order, electronic tagging or a custodial sentence and a criminal conviction recorded.

The Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the Notice being served. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution as detailed above. Please note the issuing of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to issuing proceedings at court.

Parents may also receive a Penalty Notice for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Their child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- Where the absence is recorded as an unauthorised leave of absence for a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) in a 10-week period

We understand that each family's situation is unique, and sometimes circumstances can make regular attendance challenging. Please know that our primary goal is to work with you in a supportive and understanding manner to overcome any barriers. Our pastoral team, along with other academy resources, is available to offer assistance tailored to your child's needs.

If you foresee any difficulties with your child's attendance, or if there are ongoing challenges, please reach out to us at your earliest convenience. We believe that by working together, we can find the best possible solutions for your child's continued success.

Your child's education and well-being are at the heart of everything we do at Great Academy Ashton. We are fully committed to supporting both you and your child in meeting these attendance expectations, and we are here to listen and help in any way we can. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact the academy attendance office, we are here to support you.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and dedication to your child's education.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Hartley

Assistant Principal

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS CHANGING

FIRST OFFENCE

1

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

2

SECOND OFFENCE (WITHIN 3 YEARS)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

3

THIRD OFFENCE 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 in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10-WEEK PERIOD

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.