

Dear Parents/Carers,

New Statutory Attendance Guidance Information

At the Heath Academy Trust, we are committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim.

You may already be aware that the Department for Education (DfE) released new statutory guidance in February 2024, 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' that applies from 19th August 2024. All schools/academies in England will be required to follow the guidance, therefore I wanted to ensure that you are aware of what this means.

Once a child is enrolled at a school, parents/carers are by law responsible for ensuring they attend school regularly. The new statutory guidance has created a legal obligation for all schools/academies to promote attendance positively, take early action to prevent absence occurring and offer support to families when exploring absence from school to secure the child's legal right to an education. It also emphasises the importance of good attendance being a key driver for learning, achievement, and personal success but whilst recognising that often, support is required to achieve good attendance.

The guidance expects us to form positive, strong relationships with families and work together along with other people who might help you and your family. As a school, we wholeheartedly believe in this ethos, and we aim to ensure we offer a welcoming, nurturing, and supportive environment to enable all students to want to come to school to learn and enjoy success.

There are always many positives to celebrate with you, but we are also aware that sometimes things can be less easy, and by working with you, we want to ensure supportive, early action can be taken if either of us are worried, as this prevents unnecessary legal actions later. As stated in the guidance, we have robust monitoring/analysis of data to identify trends and patterns of absence to enable us to have conversations with you as early as possible. For safeguarding reasons, it is also important that you are aware of the guidance. It states that you must request all absence in advance, or in the case of illness/emergency, you notify of the absence at the earliest opportunity. After 5 days, we are unable to retrospectively authorise absence that has occurred so it would be recorded as unauthorised absence and must remain so.

We have a duty to inform you that the statutory guidance means that there is a national framework for penalty notices related to unauthorised school absence. All schools and academies have to follow this. Under the new national framework, all schools will be required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days. In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160. Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. More information can be found about this on the

DfE's website: [Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

We follow the Dorset Council Attendance Strategy and Plan.

I hope this information is helpful and would lastly reiterate, we welcome you to take the lead on starting conversations at any point to work with us on supporting your child so we can both achieve what is best for them.