



## Gascoigne Primary School

Gascoigne Road | The Shaftesburys  
Barking | Barking  
Essex | Essex  
IG11 7DR | IG11 7JA

020 8270 4291 | 020 8270 4292  
[office@gascoigne.bardaglea.org.uk](mailto:office@gascoigne.bardaglea.org.uk)

6<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

### Re: School attendance and changes to Penalty Notices for unauthorized absences

I hope this letter finds you well. As part of our commitment to maintaining high levels of school attendance, we would like to inform you about some important changes regarding holiday absences and unauthorised leave. The Department for Education (DFE) have updated guidance on improving school attendance, effective from 19th August 2024 in collaboration with the Local Authority, which all schools must adhere to.

At Gascoigne, we consistently emphasise the importance of good attendance. We recognise that absences have a drawback on pupil's academic performance and social well-being and therefore it is imperative that all pupils come to school daily. Our aim is to continue to work collaboratively with families, monitoring addressing concerns and issues regarding attendance; then, will provide support and explore solutions together to help support all pupils to be in school regularly and on time.

#### Reporting absence

If your child is going to be absent from school, please promptly call the school office providing detailed reason for the absence. Occasionally, the school may request proof for the absence.

#### Medical Appointments

We encourage scheduling medical appointments outside of school hours, although we understand that this is not always possible. If you are arranging an appointment during the school day, please take only the essential time away from school to minimise disruptions to your child's education. We advise that you rather make afternoon appointments. Additionally, we kindly request that you provide the school with a copy or screen shot of the appointment letter so that we can document it in your child's record.

#### Term time holidays.

The DFE emphasises that term-time holiday should be avoided. Absence during this time can significantly impact your child's education. We encourage that you plan holidays during breaks to minimise disruption in learning. Any such absences will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If you believe there are exceptional circumstances that require a term-time holiday, please visit any of the office and complete a 'Leave request form.' This will be reviewed and a decision would be made by the Co-Headteachers. If a leave of absence is agreed, the school will decide the number of days to be authorised. We kindly ask that such requests are made in advance.

Nevertheless, if we become aware that the circumstances do not qualify as exceptional, you will be notified and subject to a penalty of £80 per child, per parent, issued by the local authority, which could result in legal action.



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### **Unauthorised absence**

These could include situations where a pupil is absent without valid reason or permission; such as being absent without notifying the school of the reason, arriving late to school and taking term-time holiday. We may occasionally request evidence to validate an absence. For instance, providing a medical appointment letter can change an absence from unauthorised to authorised. However, only 2 days can be authorised without evidence if a pupil has been reported to be unwell. If your child has been prescribed with antibiotics, this can be administered in school. In this case, please visit the office and fill a medical consent form.

### **National Threshold for issuing Penalty Notices**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024, The Department for Education introduced a national threshold for all schools and local authorities to adhere to when considering, and issuing penalty notices in relation to irregular school attendance.

When a child does not attend school regularly and all (or the majority) of the absences are unauthorised, legal action can be instituted against the parents or carers. This can be in the form of a penalty notice or summons to court. Penalty notices can be issued if there have been 10 or more unauthorised absence sessions in the preceding 10 school weeks.

A first penalty notice issued to a parent/carer within a 3year rolling period is £80 if paid within 21 days rising to £160 if paid between days 22 to 28. If a second Penalty Notice is issued to the same parent/carer, regarding the same child, within the same 3 year rolling period it will be £160 with 28 days in which to pay.

Failure to pay a penalty notice will result in the parents or carers being prosecuted in court.

If there is a third requirement to take legal action for irregular school attendance in relation to the same parent/carer, for the same child, within the same 3 year rolling period then it is likely that the parent/carer will be summoned to court.

There is no right of appeal to a penalty notice issued for irregular school attendance. If a parent/carer is concerned about why they have received a penalty notice then they must raise their concern with their child's school.

Parents can also be directly summoned to attend court. If a parent pleads, or is found to be, guilty of the offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance, the court has a range of sanctions depending on the circumstances.

Parents may receive a:

- fine of up to £2,500 and/or a prison sentence of up to three months
- curfew with electronic tag fitted
- Community Order
- conditional discharge
- bill for court costs



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The court may also impose a Parenting Order. These orders usually last for six months. The parents are required to attend parenting classes. Failure to adhere to a parenting order will result in further legal proceedings.

### **Further information**

Please search the internet for:

The Department for Education – ‘Working together to improve school attendance. Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities’.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Best Wishes,

Mrs Buchner and Mr Fox  
Co-Headteachers



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