



Monday 9th September 2024

Dear Parents / Carers,

We hope you and your family had a restful summer break and are ready for the new academic year. It has been fantastic to see the smiling faces returning at the school gates as the children begin a new year and, in many cases, a new school too.

As we look forward to another successful term, we want to keep you informed about some key changes to the processes regarding both Leave of Absence and Attendance that have come into effect from the Department for Education. **These statutory guidelines came into effect as of 19th August 2024 and our schools will be following these with immediate effect.** In regard to referrals for Leave of Absence we will apply the below from Monday 16th September.

Key Changes to Leave of Absence Procedures

1. **Permission for Leave of Absence:** Starting this September, any request for a Leave of Absence must be submitted **in writing to the Head of School at least two weeks in advance**. Requests will only be authorised for exceptional circumstances. Please note that family holidays during term time will not be considered exceptional and will be unauthorised.
2. **Submission Process:** You can access the Leave of Absence request form from the school office. Once completed, the form should be submitted either in person or via email.
3. **Review and Decision:** The Head of School will carefully consider each request based on its reason and the impact on your child's education. You will receive a decision within 5 working days of submitting the form.
4. **Unauthorised Absences:** Please be aware that **any unauthorised absences will be referred to Warwickshire County Council Attendance Services and could result in a fixed penalty notice**, in line with Warwickshire County Council's policies. It's important that all absences are properly communicated to and authorised by the school.
5. **Emergency Absences:** If an emergency arises that requires immediate leave, please notify the school as soon as possible. We will do our best to support families in these circumstances.

Important Changes to Attendance Procedures

From the outset let us be clear, we are here to help and support you and your child. We know it sometimes is not that simple. But in order for us to help, communication and engagement by all parties is vital. If we don't know and understand the situation fully, it is much harder for us to support you and your child.

1. **Support:** We are very aware there can be real challenges getting some children into school for a whole variety of reasons – we are here to support you and your child, but as stated above communication and engagement is vital.
2. **Monitoring and Intervention:** The schools will be monitoring attendance more closely than before. Where a child is absent for any reason you can expect the school to contact you and offer support should the absence not have been communicated beforehand.
3. **Attendance Concerns:** The school policy on attendance is geared around supporting families, however where necessary the school may need to engage other parties in this support. Where there is a lack of engagement with school support or improvement in attendance the school may make a referral to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, which could in turn lead to more formalised support and potential legal intervention.
4. **Punctuality:** Arriving on time is also crucial. Please ensure you know the start of the school day, which is clearly communicated to you via the school websites. Children are expected to be in class ready to learn at this time. Repeated lateness will be addressed, and in some cases, it could count towards overall attendance records.
5. **Communication:** If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or other reasons, **you must inform the school office on the first day of absence by 9.30am and update the office each day** with regards to on-going absence. Absences that are not reported promptly may be recorded as unauthorised.

We understand that attendance and leave of absence are important issues for families, and we are here to support you. If you have any questions about the new procedures, or if you need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the school offices.

Thank you for your cooperation and ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr E Newton, Executive Headteacher, Bilton Community Federation