

6 October 2025

RE: Rise in Illness at School

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well.

Over the past two weeks, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of students experiencing illness—particularly flu-type symptoms, sore throats, and stomach upsets. While some absences are expected at this time of year, the recent rise compels us to take extra measures to protect the health and safety of our school community.

What we are doing:

- We are reminding all students and staff about good hygiene practices, including frequent hand washing, using tissues, and covering coughs or sneezes
- We are closely monitoring absence patterns to detect outbreaks or clusters early and to provide support where needed
- We are following the Department for Education's (DfE) expectations around attendance and absence management, particularly for secondary schools

DfE Guidance & Attendance Expectations for Secondary Schools

To provide clarity on how we work within national policy, here are key points from the DfE's "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" guidance (now statutory for schools) as it applies to secondary settings:

- **Compulsory school attendance.** All students of compulsory school age are required by law to attend school regularly, unless prevented by illness or another valid reason
- **Authorised vs. unauthorised absence.** Absences due to illness or medical reasons can be authorised if evidence is provided. However, any absence that is not approved by the school (e.g. unexplained absence or persistent lateness without good reason) may be marked as unauthorised. The distinction matters because unauthorised absence can trigger follow-up interventions or, in some cases, penalty notices
- **Penalty Notice Fines.** Fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in a 10 week period

- **Persistent absence threshold.** The DfE defines a pupil as persistently absent when they miss 10% or more of possible school sessions (i.e days or half-days) in an academic year

By referencing these national guidelines, we aim to maintain fairness and transparency in how we manage attendance and absences.

What we ask of our parents and carers:

To support the school and your child, we ask that you:

- Notify the school promptly. As soon as your child is unwell and unable to attend, please inform us (via phone, email or through the usual absence reporting line). This helps us detect trends and act effectively
- Return to school when well enough. There is no blanket requirement for students to stay away for 48 hours after sickness. Please use your judgment, but do contact the attendance team (on 01302 722237) if you are unsure whether they are ready to return
- Support good hygiene at home. Remind your child about handwashing, using tissues appropriately, and maintaining personal cleanliness—especially during illness
- Minimise avoidable absences. Please avoid booking family holidays, non-urgent appointments, or other non-essential time off during term time. If you believe there is an exceptional reason for absence, please apply in advance via the school, so it can be considered

We remain committed to your child's health, learning and academic progress. Thank you for your cooperation, understanding, and ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,



Abby Johnson

Attendance Manager