

Dear Parents / Guardians,

We have received a number of enquiries about the expectations relating to attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department for Education's guidance states:

It is vital for all children to attend school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance has therefore been mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- *parents' duty to secure their child's attendance regularly at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)*
- *schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence*
- *the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct*

Some of the enquiries we have received have asked about whether a child should attend school if they, or a family member, were previously identified as 'clinically extremely vulnerable', due to existing health conditions.

The Department for Education's guidance states:

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from COVID-19, even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow this advice. Speak to your GP or specialist clinician, if you have not already done so, to understand whether your child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend school.

Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school.

The only circumstances related to COVID-19, where a child is not expected to attend school are:

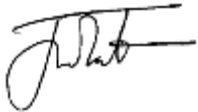
- if they are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19
- if they are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19
- if they are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine (i.e. following a trip overseas)

When students are absent from school due to COVID-19 related issues, which are not covered by the three circumstances above, we may be required to record this as 'unauthorised absence'. The details of how such absences should be managed are currently being discussed with Shropshire Council and we will update individual families, as required.

We are aware that this is a challenging time for all families, particularly those who have family members who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. However, there is a clear expectation that all children should attend school to minimise the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, well-being and wider development.

If you wish to discuss your child's attendance at school, please contact Mrs Sawyer, our Attendance Officer, so she can help you liaise with the relevant member of our pastoral team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J White', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Mr J White
Assistant Headteacher