

17th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Attendance Matters

Students who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve better grades and build stronger friendships.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/link-between-attendance-and-attainment>

DfE statutory guidance is clear: holidays during term time will not be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Unavoidable leave of absence requests for school-aged children are generally related to one off events that are rare, significant, unavoidable, and short in duration. Family holidays are not considered unavoidable.

Taking your child out of school without permission may result in a **Penalty Notice** being issued.

What this means:

- A Penalty Notice may be issued if your child has **unauthorised absences**, including holidays.
- The fine is **£80 per child, per parent** if paid within 21 days, rising to **£160** if paid within 28 days.
- Failure to pay may result in prosecution.
- There is **no right of appeal**—if you believe a notice was **issued in error**, you must contact the school directly.

We understand that holidays are important for family time, but we are legally required to prioritise your child's education and wellbeing. Every school day counts.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days

If your child is further absent from school without authorisation within any 3-year period, you will be committing a further offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices for a second offence are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £160, payable within 28 days.

Importantly, fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may also result in legal action. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Absence not authorised by the school may also result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Again, Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Money raised from fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

If you consider that your request for absence is exceptional, you will need to complete the Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form which you can get from the school office; letters will not be accepted. This form should be returned to the School Office at least 15 school days before the start of the absence. A response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If leave is not authorised and you nevertheless withdraw your child from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

I hope you will support our efforts in raising attendance and attainment at Mullion Primary School. If you have any questions or need to discuss exceptional circumstances, please contact the school office.

Best wishes

Mrs Ellie Watkins
Headteacher