



12 April 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope you had a wonderful Easter holidays and are looking forward to the summer term and hopefully some warmer and drier weather! This year, we have had a shorter spring term yet still managed to pack in a huge amount of fun and learning! It was wonderful to welcome so many parents to each class' 'Showcase' to see and celebrate the brilliant work of our pupils. This week, we have seen the first of our Residential trips depart as Year 4 enjoy Beaumanor Hall, for some this is the first night away of their school career. Please read below for important reminders about the school.

Safe parking

An important reminder that for any car users, safe, considerate, manoeuvring and parking is *essential* anywhere near our school site for the safety of all pedestrians, particularly children. We are often contacted by community members where parking is not safe and liaise with our community police officers to bring about improvements. It is always better to give more time, park further away (such as the community car park by co-op) and walk rather than rush and park unsafely.

School Growth

We are delighted that in September, St Gabriel's will be able to offer 60 places in each year group right up to Year 6 for the first time! This means, six years after opening, St Gabriel's will be complete as a two-form of entry school. We are busy working on preparations for September, equipping classrooms, recruiting staff and adapting our spaces as we have done so this year so that we meet this change really well. If you have any questions about growth, please contact the school office.

Holidays during term time

Over the past year, nearly 500 pupil learning days have been lost due to holidays taken during term time so I wanted to take this opportunity to remind families of the obligations relating to this. As a school, we are bound by the law on our approach to school attendance and our Local Authority, Warwickshire County Council (WCC), has a statutory duty to enforce compliance with it. The following is an extract from WCC attendance service:

*The Supreme Court has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time (Platt v Isle of Wright 2017). The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school 'regularly' means that the children must attend school on **every day that they are required to do so**. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school **without authorisation** for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.*

The regulations regarding Leave of Absence (The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.) advice:

- *Head teachers **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.*

*It is for the Head teacher to decide what is 'exceptional' and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted. When making an application for Leave of Absence in advance, parents are advised to **give sufficient information and time** to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave.*

The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent i.e. the parent with whom the child normally resides.

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence and could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).

Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

Leave of Absences **which are not made in advance cannot be authorised** in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as 'unauthorised'. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice. All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, part of Warwickshire County Council.

It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

The key points to note are:

- Any leave of absence must be requested in advance and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Any unauthorised absences will be passed to Warwickshire attendance service which may result in legal action being taken by the authority.

We would not wish to see any parent subject to action by Warwickshire Attendance service, so please ensure leave of absence is only requested in *exceptional circumstances* and well in advance. Planned holidays that *could* be taken at other times of the year will commonly not be viewed as exceptional circumstances.

We can't thank you enough for all your help in maintaining high school attendance for your children. Overall, St Gabriel's is ranked 24th out of 188 schools in Warwickshire for attendance because of the high-priority you, our parents and carers, place on getting children to school each day, this has a huge contribution in helping our pupils make progress and thrive. Further reducing holidays in term-time will help us even more in this aim.

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School Uniform – Summer Term

A reminder that during the summer term, particularly when it is warm, children can wear our summer uniform. This replaces white shirts/blouses with the white **St. Gabriel's** polo shirt and can be worn with grey shorts, pinafore dresses or trousers. The other option is for a burgundy gingham summer dress which can be purchased inexpensively from local retailers. Ties do not need to be worn with either of the above but should continue to be worn with shirts and blouses. Children should also come to school each day with a school jumper or cardigan in case it gets cool. School polo shirts are available to buy through ParentPay and collect from the office. This is for the summer term only and in September, children will revert to ties and shirts as normal.

Sharing celebratory treats

In order to be inclusive to all members of our school community, including those with dietary requirements and severe allergies, we ask that if children wish to bring in confectionary to share to mark their birthday or special occasion, these do not contain any of the major allergens: milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soy beans, tree nuts and nuts. In addition, please also avoid confectionary containing sesame and gelatine. To ensure that traces of these ingredients are not present, any items must be prepacked with ingredients outlined. **There is absolutely no expectation for children to bring anything to school to mark their birthday.** Thank you for your support to ensure that celebrations are inclusive to all members of our school community.

Thank you for your fantastic support.

Kind regards



Mr. A. Taylor
Headteacher

