St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Blackpool Road, Preston, PR1 6HQ

Tel: 01772 795415
Website: www.stgregorysps.co.uk

13/9/24

RE: EXCESSIVE LEAVE IN TERM TIME - S444 EDUCATION ACT 1996

Dear Parents and Carers,

Lancashire County Council are currently reviewing the arrangements for pupils who are absent from school due to unauthorised leave/holidays.

Attendance at school is vital to help children thrive and achieve their best. Children who are absent from school can fail to meet their academic potential and those who fall below 90% attendance are at significant risk of underachieving.

Absence during term time must be avoided. If you are considering taking your child out of school for any reason, it is essential that you request permission for the absence.

When penalty notices are issued, parents have the opportunity to discharge liability for an offence under S444 of the Education Act instead of being prosecuted by the Local Authority. The penalty notice regulations determine the amount of the penalty notice fine. Unfortunately, some parents are choosing to remove their children from school for longer periods, as the fine amount is the same regardless of the number of school days missed.

From 01/01/2025, the following rules will apply:

1. **Unauthorised leave less than 15 school days**: penalty notice issued

2. **Unauthorised leave of 15 school days or more:** the Local Authority will review any requests for penalty notices and may **prosecute** parents and not offer the opportunity to pay a penalty notice fine instead.

Where enough notice is given for a warning to be issued, and a request made is for 3 weeks (15 school days) or more out of school, the Local Authority may issue you with a warning explaining that you will not have the opportunity to pay a fine and that you will be prosecuted if the leave is still taken. Even if the authority doesn't send you a warning letter, you can still be prosecuted for the offence as there is no legal entitlement to a warning or a penalty notice.

Failure to ensure your child's regular attendance at school is a criminal offence, and this means that if you are convicted, this could result in **a fine of up to £2,500 and you will have a criminal record.**

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We have been asked by Lancashire County Council to issue this letter to parents to inform you that this procedure will now be applied to all excessive leave requests made to this school.

Yours faithfully,

Mr M. Quigley

Headteacher