

## **Absence from school**

Please report all absences either by telephone or letter. Please notify us about planned absences for medical appointments as all absences must be recorded in our registers.

Please note that we cannot accept a verbal message from a child about any absence.

If the reason for absence is not reported it must be entered in our register as an unauthorised absence. We must report our numbers of unauthorised absence to the local authority and Department of Education.

If your child is suffering from sickness or diarrhoea, please keep them at home for 48 hours from the last symptoms as this helps reduce 'epidemics' of sickness and follows Public Health England advice. Please also be aware of the latest Covid19 guidance and ensure that you follow this.

## **Attendance**

It is vital that children attend school on time so that they can take advantage of all the learning opportunities and experiences available to them in school. Research shows a direct relationship to the amount school days missed and the achievement of children.

We ask parents to make sure that their child is in school on time and to keep absences to a minimum and only for valid reasons such as illness. If possible, we ask parents to make appointments to visit the dentist, doctor or optician after school or in the holidays, rather than take their child out of school. If this is not possible, we would recommend appointments to be at the beginning or preferably the end of the school day, to keep disruption to an absolute minimum.

Please phone or email school on the first morning of a child's absence giving the reason for the absence and when they expect the child to be back in school. There is an answer phone to leave messages if you ring before anyone is in the office.

In cases where the school has not received a message by 9:30am the office staff will phone parents (or other contact numbers on the child's records) to make sure of the child's safety. We cannot assume that if the child is not in school that he/she is safe at home with parents, we need to be sure of this.

The school doors are opened at 8:45am and we expect all children to be in class by 8:55am. Children will receive a 'late' mark in the register if they arrive after 9:10am. Our register closes at 9:30am so therefore if a child arrives after this time they do receive an 'absence' mark for the morning.

## **Holidays and Exceptional Leave**

We ask parents to arrange their annual holidays during the school holidays. From September 2013 parents no longer have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.

## **Term Time Absences**

From 1st September 2017 guidance came into force which confirmed that a Headteacher can only authorise term time absences in exceptional circumstances. These new regulations were based on those issued by the Education Department in 2013 and all schools throughout the country are required to follow the same procedures. Future Ofsted inspections will check that schools are following these new regulations and that parents who take a child out of school for an unauthorised absence are referred for a penalty notice and fine. Following the much publicised 'Isle of Wight' court case, Derbyshire revised their guidance to take into account the pupil's percentage attendance over the 12 months leading up to and including the proposed holiday.

However, new guidance issued by Derbyshire County Council in June 2017 now states that a pupil's attendance over the year will not be taken into account when issuing a penalty notice and fine.

We are required to include the following wording in school documents:

*In September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.*

Any requests should be on an official Exceptional Leave request form and handed into the school office for consideration prior to any holiday/leave arrangements being made.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Each application for an exceptional leave absence will be considered on its own merits, there is no hard and fast rule to determine what is an exceptional circumstance. In exceptional circumstances a term time absence may be authorised, but this does not include factors that apply every year such as price or climate. Absence for a family wedding, graduation, funeral or other family event could be an exceptional circumstance. However, though we could authorise term time absence to attend the actual ceremony, we cannot authorise a longer holiday to attend a wedding of a relative. If the wedding is of the child's own parents then a longer absence may be authorised.

- Applications for term time absence must be on the official school form.
- Completed forms must be submitted before the holiday is booked, but where this is not possible, no later than two weeks before the start of the holiday.
- Where applicable, parents may be asked to provide documents to support their application, such as a letter from their employer if the parent claims they cannot take holiday during the school holiday period or documents from the travel company if dates/flights have been altered after the initial booking.

- Where a term time absence can be authorised this will be for a maximum of ten school days.
- If a child is off school ill or without explanation school will ask parents to explain why they are absent. Where the school suspects that a child is on holiday action will be taken to verify the situation. If the child is found to be on holiday then this will be treated as an unauthorised absence.
- Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- Where a child is absent during term time for an unauthorised absence, parents of the child will be referred to the Education Welfare Section to request the issuing of a penalty notice and fine.
- The fine is £120 per child per parent which will be reduced to £60 per child per parent if paid within 21 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days then the penalty notice will result in prosecution.
- There will be no reminder to pay and no opportunity to pay in instalments.
- There is no right to appeal unless the notice should not have been issued because your child was actually in school or the penalty notice has been issued to the wrong person.
- Parents who repeatedly incur a Penalty Notice will risk prosecution for their child's non-attendance at school.

We appreciate that it is much cheaper to holiday in term time, but this is not an exceptional circumstances.

The school records absences following statutory procedures and will contact parents where there are concerns about attendance. We are encouraged by the Local Authority to try and reduce the levels of absence. Any pupils causing concern will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who will visit parents to find out why the child is not in school.