

MENGHAM INFANT SCHOOL

St Mary's Road Hayling Island Hampshire PO11 9DD

Headteacher

Lindsay Rebbitt

Telephone 023 9246 2470

Deputy Headteacher

Andy Young

Fax 023 9246 3794

21st September 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you are probably aware, one of our OFSTED actions is to continue to improve levels of attendance across school. Several parents have asked for clarification on some attendance issues so I have put the following information together in the hope that it gives all the information required.

Daily Attendance

The National Average for a primary age child's attendance is 96%. This equates to around 5 days of missed school a year.

Where a child's attendance drops below 90% they are classed as a **persistent absentee** and their data is collected separately by OFSTED and the local authority, who will both want to know why their absence level is so low.

In our school we analyse attendance data every two weeks. Any child whose attendance has dropped below 95% is highlighted and tracked and any child whose attendance has dropped below 90% is discussed at our attendance meeting and next steps action decided on, considering the reasons for the low attendance.

Next steps include;

- An initial letter to parents informing them that attendance has dropped and offering the opportunity to come and talk to staff, the school nurse or support staff regarding strategies for improving future attendance.
- A further letter to parents informing them that further illness will not be authorised by school without medical proof and offering the opportunity to come and talk to staff, the school nurse or support staff regarding strategies for improving future attendance. Absence that is not authorised is classed as unauthorised and therefore may leave parents liable to a fine via a penalty notice.
- Referral of a child to the Attendance Legal Panel, where the case is discussed by Children's Services and the Legal Intervention Officer, who decide whether to issue an official warning to parents and hold a legal meeting with them.

If absence was to continue at this stage then the local authority would launch legal proceedings leading to court involvement.

Unreported Absence

We ask all our parents to report reasons for a child's absence **on the day** via text, phone or app. Where this is not done we will initially send a text reminder asking for a reason for the non attendance. If this continues we will follow up with a phone call. On the third day of an absence without any notification we are legally required to start investigations to ensure the child is safe. This will involve ringing known friends and relatives of the family, visiting the home or asking the local police to visit the home. On day 5 of the absence we are required to report the child "**Missing in Education**" to the Local Authority which triggers off safeguarding searches by Children's Services and is a very serious matter.

We would therefore like to emphasise the importance of reporting **all absence** promptly.

Penalty Notices

A Penalty Notice will be issued when there has been **10 sessions** of unauthorised absence in a **100 session period**. (50 school days)

There are many reasons for an absence being classed as unauthorised but the main reason in schools is when a holiday is taken in term time.

Under the Hampshire code of conduct Headteachers are only allowed to authorise an absence if it is “**unexpected, rare, unavoidable and short**”. A planned holiday in term time cannot be classed as unexpected and therefore does not meet this criteria. Unavoidable means, cannot be arranged at another time, ie within school holidays.

Please be advised that school will **not** authorise a child’s birthday as holiday.

If a child is reported sick and we subsequently find out that the family were on holiday/a day out we are required to change the coding of the register to unauthorised holiday in the same way we would had the leave been requested through the correct channels. Please be aware that the children always tell us the truth!

10 sessions of absence equates to 5 days of school missed, as a day is made up of a morning and an afternoon session. The 10 sessions do not necessarily need to be taken as a block of days. If you were to have 3 days of unauthorised absence followed by two separate days of unauthorised absence within a 50 day period you would still be liable for a penalty notice.

Currently, if paid immediately, a penalty notice comes with a fine of £60 **per parent** per child. Like a parking ticket this amount rises if not paid within a certain time scale and, if not paid at all, then proceeds to court proceedings.

The money **does not** come to school. It is paid to the Local Authority.

Persistent Lateness

School follows the same criteria when looking at lateness as we do with attendance. Where a child is consistently late they are discussed in the attendance meetings and next steps action decided upon.

Next Steps can be ;

- An initial letter to parents informing them that lateness has become an issue and offering the opportunity to come and talk to staff, the school nurse or support staff regarding strategies for improving future punctuality .
- A further letter to parents informing them that further lateness will be classed as unauthorised absence. Ten sessions of unauthorised absence would leave parents liable to a fine via a penalty notice.

Why is all this important ?

We appreciate that so many of our parents are working hard with us to improve our attendance and we can see a real difference.

Research shows that of children with persistent absence in their first years of school life;

- only 35% manage to go on and achieve five A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics, compared to 73% of pupils with over 95% attendance
- only 66% of pupils gained Age Related expectation in English or mathematics in Year 6, compared to 87% of pupils with over 95% attendance.

We want the absolute best for your children and good attendance and punctuality help ensure we can deliver the education they deserve so we thank you in advance for your support.

Best Wishes

Lindsay Rebbitt
Headteacher