



21/7/17

Dear Parents,

Firstly, I would like to wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer holiday. I look forward to hearing about all the adventures you've had, when we see the children again in September. Before we break for the summer, I would like to clarify a number of points with regard to term time absence and holidays from September 2017.

As I'm sure you are already aware, I cannot legally authorise holiday absence taken during term-time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. It is for school to decide what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance'. I have on many occasions, this academic year, authorised absences in such circumstances. A letter or telephone conversation, with as much detail as possible, is always very helpful and much appreciated. I am always happy to make time and arrange a meeting, if you would like to discuss a proposed absence in advance of your departure.

In line with new local authority guidance from Newcastle City Council, from September 2017, school can now refer unauthorised holiday absence of five days or more, in a three month period, to the local authority for consideration of a £60 fixed penalty notice under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (£60 per parent, per child). While this will always be a last resort, I think it is very important that school takes appropriate steps to safeguard the education of our children; the impact of poor attendance on a child's progress is very clear.

I would also like to remind you that any term time absence requires prior approval by submitting an absence request form. These are available from the school office. From September 2017, when a request for holiday is made, the form will be returned clearly stating whether I have approved the absence or not. A further letter will follow if school plans to make a referral to the local authority for a fixed penalty notice. At school's discretion, as an alternative, we can request a warning letter from the local authority.

In addition general school absence falling below 90% is now regarded as persistently absent. Obviously, I completely understand that there can be extenuating circumstances, such as long term illness, or a change in family circumstances, which may prevent your child from attending school regularly. However, where absence is unauthorised and outside of extenuating circumstances, school can now refer a family to the local authority to legally monitor attendance. Should attendance not improve, a £60 fixed penalty notice can be issued.

Thank you for your ongoing support as parents; 2016 has been yet another fantastic year for our school and your children.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic Martin

**Head of School**

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