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Dear Parents and Carers

24th June 2022

ATTENDANCE

Myself and the Governing Body are increasingly concerned about the growing number of absence requests being made during term time, especially for family holidays and weekend breaks. As we are working our way out of the pandemic, which caused schools to close and much learning time lost, we all need to collectively prioritise attendance at school.

Every day is crucial.

In order for our children to receive the best educational opportunities with a truly balanced curriculum offer, every session is as important as each other. Friday afternoons are just as important as Monday morning.

I appreciate the dilemmas caused when wanting to take family holidays and short breaks, but leaving school early on a Friday to avoid traffic, or lower pricing outside of school holidays, are not acceptable reasons for children not attending school.

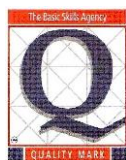
Routine medical and dental appointments during school hours must be avoided.

- Requests to take a child out of school for a holiday should be made in writing to the Headteacher and requested, not automatically assumed that you can take your child out of school for a period of time.
- Before booking a holiday during term time, parents and carers are asked to speak to school, to seriously consider the effect on their child's continuity of education and being aware of key times and dates throughout the year.
- Taking a child on holiday during term time interrupts teaching and learning and can have a detrimental effect on your child/ren's educational progress. We do not have the capacity to set work for children absent from school due to a holiday.
- The law states that head teachers are unable to grant a leave of absence for family holidays during term time. Therefore, if a child is absent because of a family holiday, **all** absences in this period must be recorded as unauthorised. There is currently a Government consultation process set to come into force from September 2022 to tackle attendance issues in schools.

The proposals are Fixed Penalty Notices being issued to parents whose children:

- **Are late five times in one term.**
- **Take 5 unauthorised absences.**
- **Go on holiday during term time.**

*Working with the Diocese of Leeds and the Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale
 May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed Psalm 20:4*



- There are exceptional circumstances when a head teacher has discretion to grant a leave of absence. Whilst these are at the discretion of the head teacher, our Sowerby Bridge cluster of schools has agreed the following guidelines in consultation with the Education Welfare Service with due regard to national guidance and judgements from local legal 'test' cases. Schools in our cluster may grant a leave of absence in the following circumstances:
 - **Critical** illness in the **immediate** family
 - When a parent is home on leave from the armed forces
 - Where a parent produces a bona fide letter from an employer which states that the parent can only take holiday leave between specific dates **throughout the year**.
 - Where siblings are in schools with different holiday times.
 - A maximum of 3 days for a family wedding abroad of a close family member (including a day to travel each way). Anything more would be looked upon as a holiday.
 - A maximum of 1 day for a family wedding or funeral of a **close** family member in the UK. Where a parent is getting married, recent test cases have suggested that either parent knows a child should legally be in school and therefore should make wedding arrangements within school holiday periods.

Going forward, when holiday leave of absences are submitted to school, having taken the usual steps of looking at each child's attendance to date as I always do, I will make no hesitation in triggering our attendance strategy and will make referrals to the Education Welfare Service to consider issuing fixed penalty notices for families who request a holiday absence during term time.

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION STRATEGY		
Above 97%	Less than 6 days absence in a year. Excellent attendance!	These children will almost certainly get the best results they can, leading to better prospects. Pupils will also get into the habit of attending school regularly which will help in the future.
95%	10 days absence a year. If a child's attendance falls below 95% a letter will be sent home to parents informing them of absence levels	These pupils are likely to achieve good grades though increased attendance would be more likely to enable them to do the very best they can.
90%	19 days absence a year. If a child's attendance falls below 90%, a letter will be sent home to parents requesting a meeting with the Head teacher or Deputy Head Teacher to discuss attendance. If a child's attendance is at this level it will almost certainly be referred to the Education Welfare Service who will rigorously monitor the situation. The Government class children with attendance below 90% as ' persistent absentees ' and it will be impossible for them to keep up with work. Parents of children in this group could face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.	These children are missing a month of school; it will be difficult for them to keep up with work so they are likely to fall behind their peers.
85%	29 days absence a year. If a child's attendance is at this level, it will certainly be referred to the Education Welfare Service which will take immediate action in order to secure improvement.	Young people in this group are missing 6 weeks of school per year; it will be impossible for them to keep up with work so they will fall behind their peers.

The pandemic hit our children particularly hard and we need to do all we can to keep them in school during term time. Children themselves hugely value being in school with their teachers and their friends. Your co-operation is crucial.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Schofield
Headteacher