



Attendance Matters



26th January 2022

Attendance and Leave of Absence during Term Time

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we are hopefully no longer in the position of managing long periods of school closure due to the coronavirus pandemic, I wanted to write with some reminders about attendance expectations and leave of absence during term time. The Department for Education has made it clear that young people need to be back in school after months of missed on-site education and regulations have therefore returned to the pre-pandemic rules.

Under the Education Act 1996, it is your duty as the parent or carer to ensure your child's regular attendance at school. This means that your child must be in attendance every time the school is open, unless he/she is prevented from doing so by reason of illness or any unavoidable cause.

We are currently seeing an increase in requests for term time holidays and it is important to remind you that Headteachers **cannot** authorise any holiday in term time unless there are truly EXCEPTIONAL circumstances.

In a letter from Gary Lewis (CEO of Lighthouse Schools) to parents in 2018 regarding attendance and term holidays in particular, he stated:

'The law on this is now very clear and has been tested in the courts: such absences should only be granted in very exceptional circumstances and a family holiday does not constitute such an exception. Our Trust policy is in line with the September 2018 statutory guidance to schools and we have reduced the Headteachers' discretion so that in almost all cases a request for a holiday in term time will have to be refused and if the unauthorised holiday is for 10 or more sessions (i.e. 5 or more full days) it will incur a Penalty Notice. Our Headteachers will use their discretion to consider non-holiday requests for leave where exceptional circumstances exist.'

Exceptional circumstances could include a family member being seriously or terminally ill, a death or significant trauma in the family where it is deemed that a holiday may help the child cope with the situation. Holidays which are taken for the following reasons, for example, **cannot be authorised**:

- parental work commitments;
- family gatherings;
- relatives visiting;
- cheaper holidays in England and abroad;
- family day trips;
- visiting friends/family that have different half terms or holidays;
- because a child has good attendance;
- employment restrictions during the summer holiday.

Penalty Notices

For a period of time, we have been able to be more sympathetic towards term-time absences due to holidays being re-arranged because of Covid restrictions. This has meant there have been some instances when a penalty notice has not been applied for when it normally would have been. We need to let you know that this has now ended and expectations are back to normal. So, from this date onwards, requests we receive for term

time holidays, for 5 days or more, will result in penalty notices being applied for, as stated on the LSP Attendance Policy:

*Where there are 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence, this will result in the request for a Penalty Notice – **a week of absence [5 days] is 10 sessions.***

Other unauthorised absence amounting to 10 or more sessions within a 6 month period will also result in the request for a Penalty Notice, as outlined in the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

If a student has been absent and the reason has been reported as illness but the school has reason to believe this not to be the case and the student is actually attending a family holiday, evidence of illness may be required. If illness cannot be proved, the school will take action by way of a Penalty Notice.

Your support in not taking children on holiday in term time is greatly appreciated. Of course, we understand the challenging times all families have experienced through the pandemic; however, never has it been more crucial that children are at school as possible to benefit from the education their teachers and the curriculum provide every day.

I hope this helps to explain our practice in this area. You will find a link to the LSP Attendance Policy on our website if you require further information. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Heywood
Deputy Head Teacher / Attendance Lead