

8 September 2020



Dear Parents and Carers

‘COVID Recovery’: Promoting strong school attendance

Our children have missed many months of learning, structure and routine and we have planned carefully for their safe return. After early anxieties have settled, we hope that all children will quickly enjoy being back at school: seeing their friends and teachers, settling into a more ‘normal’ routine and catching up on their learning. It is because of these benefits that the Government has made school attendance mandatory from 1 September. **We will therefore be positively encouraging the strongest possible attendance from our children, just as we always do.**

We understand that some children and parents may be especially anxious about coming to school this September. If you have particular concerns about your circumstances, please talk to us as soon as you can. It really is important that we find a way to enable every child to enjoy being at school, despite the difficult circumstances.

The full attendance policy is on the website but here are some important bits. This letter is to remind parents how we support regular school attendance, especially as we seek to recover from the long closure period.

Telling the school if your child is absent

Parents/carers must contact school on the first day of their child’s absence and then each day afterwards. This is important safeguarding: if your child is not at school in the morning and you haven’t told us to expect this, then we must check that your child is safe. You can tell us that your child is absent by phoning the school by 9.15am at the very latest, leaving a message on the absence line giving a reason for your child’s absence. Administrative staff will contact parents on the first day that a pupil is absent without explanation. This contact will usually be a telephone call to the first emergency contact in the first instance. If no response is obtained, the school will endeavour to reach the parent via telephone, working down the list of emergency contacts. This is difficult and time consuming – please help us by remembering to contact us in the first place.

Monitoring attendance

Children’s attendance is regularly monitored. Parents will usually be contacted if a child’s attendance drops below 96%. Our school works closely with the Local Authority as well as our own Education Social Worker: advice is taken where there are concerns about a child’s attendance.



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Requests for absence during term time

In line with current legislation, Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances (defined as rare, significant, unavoidable and short).

Requests should be made using the Request for Leave of Absence form (available from the school website or office) and must be submitted *before* any absence is taken.

As a general guide, the following might be considered as 'exceptional':

- Immediate¹ family weddings, christenings or funerals;
- Immediate family member returning home from Service Duty;
- Occasions of religious observance;
- Other situations where a 'compassionate' element is applicable.

Generally, the following *cannot* be considered 'exceptional':

- Family holidays and breaks;
- Parents' profession or place of work making it difficult to align school and work holidays;
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time;
- Family birthdays or other events;
- Birthdays.

After applying for term time absence, parents/carers will be notified of the Headteacher's decision as quickly as possible. **If the absence is not agreed, then it should not be taken.** For such unauthorised absences, the school will request that the Local Authority issues a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). Fines are requested in line with the current guidance from the Local Authority and are usually issued on a 'per parent, per child' basis: this means that schools will request a FPN based on the household which requested and/or took the holiday and for both parents².

We respectfully remind parents that they should only tell the school that their child is unwell when this is actually the case.

Lateness

Punctuality is also important: lateness disrupts learning. If your child arrives at school after the start of the school day (8.50am), they will be registered as 'late'. Lateness beyond 9.15am will be counted as an absence for the morning session, unauthorised unless the school is offered an acceptable reason. If your child is persistently late, we will contact you to discuss this.

We are delighted to welcome families back and we are looking forward to helping every child enjoy being part of their school community again. We thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

E S BISSELL (MRS)
Headteacher

¹ 'Immediate' defined as parents and siblings

² 'Parents' defined as any adult in the household who has care of the child including ensuring regular attendance