



HOLY TRINITY C.E. SCHOOL

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HEADTEACHER: MISS S. CHALONER

Wednesday 7th February 2018.

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you with a reminder about the school policy for attendance and lateness. At Holy Trinity CE School we take our responsibility to our pupils extremely seriously. We are in the process of writing your children's reports with their attendance level. If your child's attendance falls below 95% it will be closely monitored and likely to have an impact upon your child's learning. If your child's attendance falls below 90% this is serious and classed as Persistent Absence which is monitored through the Attendance Improvement Officer as well as by the school. Please support us to ensure your child's learning is not disrupted by absence. I have attached information from the policy for your information.

The primary aim of the school is to help each pupil reach his or her full potential so that they may develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to take full advantage of the opportunities available in their future lives.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure their children come to school on time and everyday. There may be rare occasions when a child does have to miss school, for example if they are unwell. Other absences should be kept to a minimum. 100% is what all parents should be aiming for.

Understanding school attendance levels.

98 – 100%	Attendance is excellent.
96 – 97%	Attendance is good.
94 – 95%	Requires improvement. Pupils are at risk of underachievement.
90 - 93%	Poor. Pupils are at significant risk of underachievement.
Below 90%	This is a serious cause for concern and underachievement.

To put this in context:

90% attendance means that

- Half school day of every week is missed;
- Four weeks (20 days) missed over the year;
- Half a year missed over the time a child is in primary school.

Impact of absence upon pupils and the life of the school.

It is often thought that children taking time off has little impact upon their learning and development. This is not the case. The research into the longer term impact of poor attendance shows that it can affect your child's GCSE levels and level of average wages in later life. It suggests that 17 school days missed a year can equal one GCSE grade drop in achievement.

- No qualifications: £7.44 per hour (£13,500 per annum)
- GCSEs: £9.02 per hour (£16,400 per annum)
- A-Levels: £10.25 per hour (£18,650 per annum)
- Graduate degree: £15.01 per hour (£27,300 per annum)

The impact upon learning is significant but also socially they miss out on being with their friends and children do change their friendships quickly if others have a lot of time off school. Therefore not only do children find it more difficult to catch up with their learning but they may also find that other children have changed friendship groups around and they feel they have no one to play with. As a school we always try and make sure this does not cause significant problems for our pupils but there is often an effect. When children have genuinely been absent for illness or other acceptable reason this is unavoidable but when there are not legitimate reasons then this is completely unacceptable.

That is why as a school we actively promote the need for parents to ensure their children are at school regularly and on time for the best possible chances for the child to grow and learn socially and academically.

Procedures.

Authorising any absence is the school's responsibility taking guidance from Hertfordshire County Council. Absences are not automatically authorised even with a letter from parents/carers. If a reason for absence is of concern or where the attendance level is of concern (see below), parents may be asked to provide evidence such as appointment cards or copies of letters from hospital or doctors appointments. The Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) checks the school's records of absences and lateness during their regular register check.

Parents are required to phone the school on the first day of absence to report any illness or the reason for the absence. If there are a number of absences which are unauthorised the school will write to parents and ask them to provide a letter and/or evidence of the reason/s for this from medical professionals. In cases where there is a concern about the absence or the explanation, the Attendance Improvement Officer AIO may become involved and in serious cases the case is referred. The AIO contacts parents directly and may also arrange a meeting to speak to parents in person regarding the concerns.

Lateness.

The school day starts at 8.50am. Children who arrive later than this must go to the school office. Any child who is not in school when the register is taken will be marked as late. The registers officially close at 9.05am and therefore any child who arrives after this time is marked as having an unauthorised absence unless information in writing has been provided prior to this and has been authorised (see Absences section below).

A member of staff monitors the children who arrive late and write down the reasons for this. Where there are persistent problems the school may contact parents to arrange a meeting for them to explain the cause/s. This may then be referred to the AIO.

Absences.

From 1st December 2013 if a child's attendance drops below 95%, you will receive a letter warning you that the school will no longer authorise absence. This means that you will be asked to provide evidence of illness from a medical professional or invited into school to discuss this absence and any exceptional circumstances. In exceptional circumstances authorised absence may be granted by the Headteacher, Sarah Chaloner, or the Deputy Head, Sheron Phillips, in her absence. This will be considered on a case by case basis and is not automatically approved. If you take your child out of school during term time without exceptional circumstances, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. **From January 2014 unauthorised absences over 20 sessions (10 days) will trigger a Fixed Penalty Notice.**

Please note: where evidence comes to light later that an absence was holiday it can be unauthorised afterwards.

Holidays/Leave of Absence during term-time

Amendments to Education regulations 2103 which came into force from 1st September 2013 state that Head Teachers **may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** Exceptional circumstances **do not include** family holidays, visiting relatives or friends, spectating at sporting or other events, looking after unwell family members, baby sitting younger family members, birthdays or shopping etc.

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time without leave of absence being granted then it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence on the school register.

If you consider that a request for leave of absence during term time is for 'exceptional circumstances' then a written request should be made to the Head Teacher. This should be done by the following:

1. Requesting a Leave of absence form from the office.
2. Completing the form fully, clearly explaining why you consider that the request is exceptional
3. It is also the responsibility of parents to provide the school with proof of why the leave is requested. Proof of the circumstances must be provided when the written request is made.
4. Wherever possible, the completed form should be handed to the office no later than 4 weeks before the date that the leave of absence is requested.
5. The request will be processed in school within 5 working days and parents will be notified in writing of the decision. Any request made later than the timescales specified will be denied and the absence unauthorised unless the request could not have been made earlier due to a bereavement.

Where a request has been granted, parents/carers will need to agree a 'contract' for the leave of absence. This will include a return date and consequences for not returning on that date.

Exceptional leave will be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.

Where parents continue with a leave of absence which has not been authorised or a child does not return to school on the date agreed, Local Authority procedures will be adhered to.

Fixed Penalty Notices.

From 1st January 2014, if your child reaches over 5 school days' unauthorised absence (10 sessions), you will receive a letter warning you that you are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Penalty Notice requires you to pay a fine of £60 within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit, the penalty rises to £120 which must be paid within 28 days.

If you do not pay the fine you will be liable for prosecution for this offence. The maximum fine for conviction of this offence under section 444(1) Education Act 1996 is £1000 per parent or £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment under Section 444 (1A) Education Act 1996. This is a criminal offence and carries a criminal record.

Persistent Absence.

Pupils with persistent absence are often those unlikely to attain at school. They are also significantly more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and are more at risk of other negative outcomes. It follows that we as a school and LA focus on this high-risk group so that these pupils are in a strong position to make progress. If a child's attendance drops to 90% or below, the Attendance Improvement Officer will become involved and your child's learning will be at risk.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Chaloner
HEADTEACHER