



# ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS C. E. (FOUNDATION) PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL

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Dear Parents / Carers

23rd May 2017

## Unauthorised Absence and Penalty Notices

As a school community we have worked tirelessly over the last few years to improve our attendance levels after they fell in 2013. This was an important feature in our recent OFSTED report (January 2017) and our efforts were recognised, *'The rate of attendance is continuing to improve and is above average. The school has stringent procedures for encouraging good attendance and governors monitor any absences rigorously. Consequently, rates of persistent absence have reduced significantly and the rate of pupil exclusion is now zero.'*

As I know you are well aware, the Education Pupil Registration England Amendment Regulations 2013 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 stating that Headteachers cannot grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. At this school this means completing a Leave From Learning Form prior to a potential absence. This form is then discussed during our weekly attendance meetings and with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), and takes into account considerations such as the exceptional circumstance, the age of the child, the timing of the proposed absence, and the attendance pattern in the present and previous academic years, the child's progress and previous absence requests. Absence will not be authorised where attendance is lower than 96% or where the absence would take attendance below 96%.

After the recent Isle of Wight appeal in respect of what constitutes regular attendance, there followed a flurry of parents taking their children out of school in term time. As a school we have also seen a rapid increase in the number of term time holidays following the Supreme Court Ruling in favour of the Isle of Wight case, therefore having a detrimental effect on our whole school attendance. This is saddening after such hard work and recognition.

I feel it is important to clarify the position on attendance and Penalty Notices. The schools attendance target is 96% and if a child has attendance below 90% the Department for Education classifies that child as a 'persistent absentee'. The Supreme Court Ruling on 6 April 2017 has now removed any doubt cast and clearly states that it is for schools and the local authority to decide what constitutes regular attendance. Therefore, we will continue to work with our Education Welfare Officer and may issue penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence during term time as we have done in the past.

Above all, we have worked hard to improve our attendance and it would be a shame to see this slip to unacceptable levels once again. I know that attendance levels are something that are taken into account during inspections, but we see the emotional, as well as the academic effect poor attendance has on pupils, especially when they return to school. I am aware that some parents request homework to take with them; however I personally feel that holidays should be about quality family time.

Thank you so much for working together with us and I look forward to continuing this to improve our school.

Yours faithfully

*Mrs C Berry*

Head Teacher



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