



16 November 2018

To: All Parents/Carers

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to you regarding school attendance and to provide you with clear information about our absence procedures and the Local Authority's response to poor pupil attendance.

At George Pindar School we are determined to ensure that every child can reach, if not exceed their potential and having good attendance at school is extremely important for learning and for your child's future success. The Interim Executive Board have made it clear that they will support George Pindar School in promoting high levels of attendance and taking action where there are unsatisfactory reasons for absence.

However, there will be occasions when absence is unavoidable and acceptable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

If your child is absent from school the absence is classed as either authorised or unauthorised.

Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or *unacceptable reasons are given*.

The following reasons are **not** acceptable:

- Holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- Care for family members
- Parents' work commitments or business trips
- Parental illness
- Shopping visits
- Days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows

Unauthorised absences will be referred to the local authority.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 8.40am. Alternatively, you can call in in person at the Main Reception - it is useful to know the expected day of return if possible.

If you do not supply us with this information we have a duty to contact you so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as a safeguarding measure. Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments this will normally be counted as authorised - where possible present the school on your child's return with their appointment card/letter or prescription obtained on that day as proof visit to a medical appointment. Medical/dental appointments are generally better arranged outside school hours but we know this is not always possible - particularly where hospital or specialist medical help is involved.

Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness we will need to discuss this with parents/carers in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come first to the Main Reception before collecting children. Please bring your child to the office on returning from the appointment. Please indicate in advance whether s/he will be returning for lunch. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

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There are some occasions e.g. bereavements, family problems, etc where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; obviously we will be sympathetic to such needs.

Please ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration; students are required to be on site from 8.35am and registration begins at 8.40am. Students who arrive to registration after 8.40am will be marked as late and this is held on school records. George Pindar School recognises that meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for a children's social development, however lateness to registration causes problems – important information regarding the days arrangements is shared during this time, delivery of assemblies, checking of student planners, equipment and uniform is also conducted during this time.

Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, this will be an authorised absence but where explanations are inadequate or the lateness is after 8.40am then an absence (late) will be recorded.

Holidays

It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time. The only exemption to this is where parents serve in the armed forces (this does not extend to the emergency services i.e. Police, Fire, Ambulance etc). Where authorisation is not granted then subsequent term time holiday absence will be reported as a matter of course to the Local Authority; we are under a duty to do this. Where unauthorised leave is taken, the Governing Body has decided that it will support the imposition of a fixed penalty fine.

Approved Public Performance or Sporting Event

Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (eg orchestra, pantomime) or participate in a sporting event (in a recognized city, county or national sporting event), parents/carers are asked to consult with staff about how much time away from school is required. Where possible such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. Where parents wish to take their child(ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should complete the leave of absence form.

We are aiming for an average whole school attendance of 95.5% for the year, with outstanding attendance above 96%. Anything below 94% is weak, under 90% is poor and is regarded as persistent absence by the DfE. In this school we are aiming for every pupil to achieve attendance levels of at least 95.5%. We monitor attendance and provide weekly reports on each pupil's attendance. At the end of each half term we identify all those pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90% and issue a courtesy letter or make telephone call informing parents. We then continue to monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken attendance during the following weeks.

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by Local Authority, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (eg by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then parents render themselves liable to a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. This could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. *This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is unpaid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction.*

Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue. We hope that these notes will help you to have a clear understanding about George Pindar School's expectations regarding attendance. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we would be very pleased to answer any questions you may have about our approach to improving our attendance record.

Yours sincerely



Blake Murray
Acting Headteacher