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6 October 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Attendance at school and legal intervention

Research commissioned by the Department for Education shows that there are clear links between absence rates and levels of pupil attainment. The research has shown that children often do not catch up on work missed. This can have serious consequences for their learning and progress. The Government is very clear that all schools must aim to have the highest attendance levels possible if their pupils are to achieve their maximum potential. At Acle Primary our aim is to work closely with parents in all matters, including attendance, to enable this to happen.

This letter is to remind all parents/carers regarding the law that requires them to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

In the DfE policy document entitled, 'School Attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' it states, '**Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion**'.

If the school does not receive a request for leave, the head teacher will be unable to consider your individual circumstances and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. There will be no obligation on the head teacher to reconsider authorising the leave if an application has not been made in advance.

Other absences, due to illness (where the school has received timely notification) are unavoidable and therefore classed as authorised in practically all cases.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

- 1 9 consecutive sessions (4.5 days) of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term time (for absences from 1 September 2020); or

- 2 15% unauthorised absence over a period of 6 school weeks for reasons other than unauthorised term time holiday

This legal intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Any pupil at Acle Primary, who meets either of the criteria, will be referred to the Local Authority for action to be considered.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued by the Local Authority there will be a fine of £60 per child which must be paid in one payment within 21 days. If unpaid, a further invoice for £60 per child is issued; both individual invoices would then have to be paid, making a total payment of £120, in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in further legal action being taken.

Our Attendance Policy and Absence of Leave request form both reflect the Local Authority's current position on term time holidays.

I hope we can count on your support in this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. .

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Clarke
Headteacher