



Thursday 10th November 2016

Changes to our Attendance Policy

Dear Parents and Carers

We have recently updated our Attendance Policy, which can be accessed via our school website. I am writing to you to ensure you are fully aware of the importance of punctual attendance, as well as your requirements as a parent/carer and the serious consequences you may face if our policy is not followed.

At Fairway School we are committed to promoting and modelling good attendance and behaviour – which is essential for pupils to achieve their potential. Lack of attendance is directly correlated to a pupil's deteriorating success and development in their education.

Currently, in primary schools where the average absence per child is 15 days per year, only 65% achieve good grades in Maths and English. Whilst 15 days per year seems a vast amount, what may surprise you is how quickly and easily unauthorised absences can add up. We know that as parents and carers you want the best for your child, and this is why it is imperative that all families at Fairway adhere to our Attendance Policy.

In addition to this, Fairway School is due to have an Ofsted visit. Our attendance for the last academic year 2015-16 was 94.64%. This is below national expectations and could affect our Ofsted rating.

As a parent or carer, you have a legal requirement to ensure your child attends school on a regular basis. Therefore, you hold the responsibility to promote good attendance and punctuality.

We do understand there are times when children will need to be absent from school for a number of reasons. As a result, we will only consider authorising absences in the following instances:

- For sickness or ill health
- For medical appointments which fall during school hours
- For religious or cultural observances
- For a family emergency

As far as possible, we ask parents and carers to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card must be sent to the school office.

We ask all parents and carers to follow our absence procedure in order to grant authorised absence in the above cases. You are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, followed by a note providing a signed explanation upon the first day of your child's return. Any parent or carer who has not reported their child as absent will be contacted by the school by phone call, text message or email. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the child receiving an unauthorised

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absence and could lead to us informing the local attendance officer, should their attendance fall below 90 percent.

The DfE has made it clear that headteachers are not to authorise absence for any holidays during term time, except under exceptional circumstances. We will not, therefore, grant authorisation for absence in the following instances:

- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Leaving school unnecessarily during the school day
- Not attending school for an unnecessary reason such as shopping or birthdays
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained or have failed to follow the absence procedure

If there is a pattern of your child being absent from school before or after school holiday periods, we will ask for evidence, such as confirmation from your GP, to check that your child has been absent due to illness, not an extended family holiday, as this is becoming an increasing problem at Fairway.

I must also state the importance of punctuality with regards to the beginning of the school day. You will be aware that the school day starts at 8:50am and all pupils are expected to be on school premises at this time. Registers are marked by 9am and close at 9:15am. Should your child arrive after the register closes, they will receive a mark to show that they are on-site, though this will still be recorded as an absence. Continuous lateness will, therefore, result in several unauthorised absences, despite your child being on-site for the rest of the school day.

It is now possible for parents and carers to be issued penalty notices for unauthorised absences. Penalty notices begin with an initial fine of £60 per child, per parent, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Following failure of these payments, the local attendance officer may decide to prosecute a parent. If so, parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

I urge you to read our Attendance Policy which can be accessed via our school website. Similarly, a hard copy of our Attendance Policy is available in our school office. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Fiona O'Toole (Senior Administrator and Attendance Officer) via the school office.

Yours Sincerely



Ms Alison Edmonds