LONG MEADOW SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mr Philip Gray Bed (Hons) CANTAB, NPQH

Dear Parents / Carers

**Attendance and Authorised ‘Leave of Absence’ in Exceptional Circumstance**

Parents should be aware of new legal procedures which came into force on 19 August, 2024 in regard to Working Together to Improve School Attendance and the new National Framework for Penalty Notices

Schools are no longer allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school during term time unless there are “exceptional circumstances”. The DfE state that anything to do with **“relaxation and leisure”** will not be seen as **“exceptional circumstance”.** This will include visiting relatives, or a holiday due to mental or physical illness issues unless supported by medical evidence that makes it clear that the child must go on holiday at that particular time – but this will be very rare.

When leave for “exceptional circumstances” is granted it will be time limited with the school being clear on the date that the child is expected to return to school. Under new rules for the removal from roll, if a family fail to give a return date or this keeps changing and the child cannot access school after 20 school days, they can be removed from roll even though they still live at the same abode.

For unauthorised term time leave, as well as for general absence, fines can now be issued if there are 10 unauthorised sessions in 10 school weeks (as above) the time taken doesn’t need to be consecutive as was previously the case. If leave is taken which is not authorised by the school, then the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. The DfE is trying to ensure consistency across England and Wales with the National Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices, and they expect all schools to follow it.

**Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents/carers will be prosecuted in the magistrates’ court and could receive a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and a criminal record.**

If a second period of leave is taken in 3 years (same parent/child) then the fine will start at £160 payable in 28 days. If there is a third offence in 3 years (same parent/child) then the matter will be prosecuted in the magistrate’s court.

When looking to request absence from school, parents will need to fully complete a ‘Leave of Absence’ form at least 2 weeks prior to the request.

Please ensure that these are completed accurately as sadly, we have been made aware of families providing the school with inaccurate information in order for a visit to be authorised. Sometimes this information has been passed to us by other parents and at other times the children have indicated to us the true nature of visits. We have also been provided with inaccurate information on the dates for returning to school. As I am sure you can imagine, this puts the school in a very difficult situation. Giving false information will result in a FPN being issued

It is essential to point out that children have 13 weeks each year for holidays, including 6 weeks in the summer holidays. Whilst we appreciate that travelling in the summer is more expensive, it is vital that we value the importance of regular attendance at school. Government data clearly shows the link between attendance and achievement and dispels the myth that a holiday won’t have an impact on their learning. (DfE-‘The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4’ – February 2015)

Family holidays will never be authorised during term time and this includes ‘surprise’ holidays and events. When booking holidays, we strongly advise parents to check term dates which are available on the school website. Please note – All requests for ‘Leave of Absence’ will automatically be recorded as unauthorised, regardless of circumstances, unless copies of flight tickets are attached.

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**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL -APPLICATION FOR PUPIL’S LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

From 1st September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 mean that parents have no entitlement to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in exceptional circumstances only and the Headteacher may only authorise an absence if they are satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional and warrant the granting of leave. In the event of a parent/carer requesting leave in exceptional circumstances, they may be asked provide additional supporting information. Please note that holidays will not be considered an exceptional circumstance.

These amendments mean that, from 1st September 2013, penalty fines for parents and carers taking children out of school in unauthorised circumstances will be imposed strictly by the Local Authority. Parents and/or carers may receive a ‘Fixed Penalty Notice’ (FPN) from the Local Authority if they take their child out of school during term time without consent from the school. From September 2024 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents/carers will be prosecuted in the magistrates’ court and could receive a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and a criminal record. If a second period of leave is taken in 3 years (same parent/child) then the fine will start at £160 payable in 28 days. If there is a third offence in 3 years (same parent/child) then the matter will be prosecuted in the magistrate’s court. Further information on changes to the legislation can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

This form should be completed by the Parent/Guardian and forwarded to the Headteacher **a minimum of two weeks before** the absence is required, except in emergency situations. We strongly advise that travel arrangements are not made until you have received notification of the headteacher’s decision. The second part of the form will be returned to you when a decision on authorisation has been made. In the event of no form being submitted, it is likely that an unauthorised absence will be recorded.

Our definition of ‘parent’ generally means those who have day to day responsibility for a child, including:

* All natural parents, whether married or not
* Any person who has parental responsibility for a child
* Any person who has care of a child, (i.e. - lives with and looks after the child)

I request leave of absence for my child / children

NAME: CLASS:…………………………………………..

NAME: CLASS:……………………………………………

**FROM: TO……………………………….(inclusive dates please)**

They will be travelling with (Names of Adults)

**Exceptional Circumstance:**

**PLEASE INCLUDE COPIES OF YOUR CHILD’S FLIGHT TICKETS FOR OVERSEAS TRAVEL**

Signature of Parent/Guardian: …………………………………….………………… Date: …….………………………

# **FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

% Attendance to date: Leave of absence is authorised for days

Number of days requested: Leave of absence is not authorised days

Number of days already taken to date: which = sessions

(TO BE COMPLETED BY LONG MEADOW SCHOOL)

TO: Parent/Guardian of pupil

NAME: ……………………………………………………..………………….. CLASS: …………………….……………

Leave of absence requested from …………………………………………… to ……………………………..………….

REASON: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Leave of absence is authorised for days

Leave of absence is not authorised for days

which = unauthorised sessions

Signature of Headteacher: …………………………………………………..… Date: …………………….……..

Reason(s) leave is not authorised:

1st September 2013, penalty fines for parents and carers taking children out of school in unauthorised circumstances will be imposed strictly by the Local Authority. Parents and/or carers may receive a ‘Fixed Penalty Notice’ (FPN) from the Local Authority if they take their child out of school during term time without consent from the school. From September 2024 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £80 if paid within 21 days, and £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents/carers will be prosecuted in the magistrates’ court and could receive a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and a criminal record. If a second period of leave is taken in 3 years (same parent/child) then the fine will start at £160 payable in 28 days. If there is a third offence in 3 years (same parent/child) then the matter will be prosecuted in the magistrate’s court. Further information on changes to the legislation can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence

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Dear Parents / Carers

**School Absence and Attainment**

The Government’s Department for Education has recently released data which demonstrates very clearly the link between absence and underachievement in schools.

The data shows that the more days a child misses, the less likely they are to reach expected levels and beyond.

For example, children who have 100% attendance, have a 92% chance of achieving the expected level at the end of year 6 and a 51% chance of gaining a level beyond.

However, when attendance reaches 90%, the figures fall significantly to 68% achieving an expected level and only 16% going beyond this.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Attendance | Expected Standard | Above Expected Standard |
| 100% | 92% | 51% |
| 96-99% | 86% | 37% |
| 91-95% | 77% | 26% |
| 86-90% | 68% | 16% |
| 81-85% | 59% | 11% |

As you will be aware, holidays in term time are no longer being authorised and are subject to fixed penalty notices being issued. A child who has ten days off school for a holiday will achieve less than 95% attendance for the year, almost halving their chances of gaining a level beyond expectations.

I very much hope you find the information useful and helpful in making decisions about your child’s future.

Yours faithfully

Philip Gray

Headteacher