

10<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Attendance at School**

You may be aware that Plymouth City Council passed a motion on 11<sup>th</sup> July to the effect that the Council would no longer issue penalty notices (which include a fine) to parents/carers who take their children on holiday during term time. I think it is appropriate however that we should make clear to parents and carers how this decision has affected how absence from school will be addressed in future.

- Government legislation and local policy have not changed as a result of the council motion. Parents still need to seek permission from the head teacher to take their children out of school in term time for any reason. Head teachers are still not able to authorise absence for holidays.
- If your child is absent due to holiday without the permission of the head teacher it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. If your child is absent for 8 sessions (4 days) or more the local authority will be notified and a request made to intervene.
- However, as a result of the council motion the local authority will no longer issue any new penalty notices where the only unauthorised absence is a holiday during term time. Penalty notices issued to parents prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> July motion will not be refunded or withdrawn. All cases waiting to be heard by the courts will be reviewed.
- Exceptional cases (for authorising absence from school) can apply, so always check with the school for advice well before withdrawing your child by completing an Absence Request Form.
- As stated, head teachers will continue to report any unauthorised absence due to term time holiday of 8 sessions or more to the local authority and although a fixed penalty notice or fine will not be issued, the local authority will issue a penalty notice warning which will remain in force for a period of six months. If your child has further unauthorised absences of 8 sessions or more the local authority will consider issuing a penalty notice/fine without further notice.
- If your child has further absence from school following a holiday or any other absence, which is not exceptional, during term time, we will not be able to authorise it unless you can prove your child is unfit to attend school.
- In cases where a child's attendance falls significantly below the expected level of attendance we have a statutory safeguarding responsibility and will address persistent absence. In cases where a parent has not ensured regular attendance for their child the local authority will consider prosecution in each case.
- Ofsted consider attendance of more than 96% at primary school as being the expected level of attendance. Stuart Road's expected level of attendance is above 96%.

In future we will ask parents/carers to complete an Absence Request Form for every case of absence during term time other than illness and medical appointments for which printed appointment cards will suffice to authorise the absence in most cases.

We will continue to support parents and carers in ensuring that their children attend school regularly and will write to you should your child's attendance level begin to cause concern. We will further invite you to a meeting in school to support you and address barriers to improving attendance and punctuality and should these measures fail to improve attendance will make a referral to the local authority.

Yours sincerely

Mr M Frame  
Head Teacher

