

Otterham C P School

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Marshgate
Camelford
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PL32 9YW

25th March 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I have no doubt that you will have seen in the news recently an increased focus on school attendance as a national issue.

As a school, we have no doubt that every day a child is absent from the classroom, they fall further behind their peers and find it more difficult to keep pace with their learning.

Up to this point, although it has been part of our attendance policy, we have never issued a fixed penalty notice to a parent for unauthorised absence, however, it is clear from guidance issued to us, and from our own levels of attendance, that we will now need to move forward with this. This is a national government expectation and something that is being enforced within all NCLT schools.

The process is fairly straight forward. If a child has 6 days (12 sessions) or more of unauthorised absence (including unauthorised holiday), the school will refer to the local authority to issue a fixed penalty notice. Details of this can be found in the attached letter. This is then issued by, and paid to, the local authority.

Whilst we regret the need for this, we need to make it clear that attendance at school is the legal right of every child and that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that this is provided.

Where we are aware of family circumstances that may affect attendance we will always work with you rather than moving straight to fining.

We just wanted to give you warning that this process would now be enacted from today.

As always, any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Although in this case I may need to refer you to Mr Banks, CEO of NCLT.

Kind regards

Mrs Helen Ward
Headteacher

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Appendix 4

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Dear Parent/Carer

Here at Otterham School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a pupil is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances.

However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'. Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher using the school's request form.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. **All NCLT schools are** committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Helen Ward
Headteacher