

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for working with us to ensure children attend school at all times, on time. **The government have issued new rules on attendance and how the penalty notice system will work from September 2024.**

As reported regularly in the press, poor attendance levels have severe consequences on educational outcomes. Regular school attendance is crucial for acquiring knowledge and developing skills. Children with high absence rates are at a significant disadvantage, as they miss out on valuable learning opportunities.

Academically, poor attendance hampers children’s progress and leads to gaps in their knowledge. When children are absent, they miss vital explanations and as a result, their learning suffers, leading to lower academic achievement and reduced confidence in their abilities. Key Stage 2 data from 2019 shows that 84% of Key Stage 2 pupils who had 100% attendance achieved the expected standard, compared to only 40% of pupils who had attendance of 90% or less across the key stage.

See more detail here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/09/28/what-are-ghost-children-and-why-is-school-attendance-important/>

Achieving 90% in a test is normally considered a great achievement. However, a child with an attendance of 90% misses a huge amount of educational input. In fact in a year at Calmore Infant School they would missed nearly four weeks of education over a school year. Attendance of 85% or less would equate to a child missing an entire year of schooling by the end of Year 6.

What it is often overlooked is detrimental effects on children’s social and emotional development of poor attendance. School is a place for interaction with peers, fostering social skills, teamwork, and an environment that provides emotional wellbeing support. Regular attendance allows children to form friendships, engage in extracurricular activities, and develop a sense of belonging within their school community.

However, frequent absences isolates children from these important interactions, potentially leading to feelings of loneliness, detachment, and low self-esteem. They may struggle to build supportive relationships with peers and miss out on the emotional support that school environments can provide. As a result, children who are frequently absent may experience difficulties in their social development, impacting their overall well-being.

We are working as a local cluster of schools, to encourage and support attendance through:

- Aiming for 100% attendance for all schools, although we know that, due to some exceptional circumstances, this is not always possible.
- Sharing best practice within the local cluster as to how we can support good attendance.
- **Sharing with you all that Headteachers are not able to authorise holidays in term time.**
- Discussing decisions on absence between schools where siblings are in more than one local school.
- Working with families to improve attendance, particularly persistent absence (misses 10% or more of schooling, equivalent to nearly three weeks or more schooling across the year).



- Issuing Penalty Notices for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:
 - absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions (i.e. a rolling 10-school week period) – these do not need to be consecutive and may span different terms or even school years
 - persistently late for up to 10 sessions after the register has closed
 - persistently late before the close of the register, but the school has met with the Parent and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness if, and when, the threshold of 10 sessions has been met

Attendance Penalty Notices (NEW FROM SEPTEMBER 2024) – FOR ABSENCES AFTER 19 AUGUST 2024

- Penalty notices will be issued if a child’s attendance crosses any of the above thresholds. If a fine is raised, then each responsible parent will be fined £160 per child. (or £80 if paid within 21 days).
- A second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three year period will be issued at the rate of £160 per parent to be paid within 28 days (there is no option for a discounted rate).
- A maximum of two penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling three year period, so at the third spell of unauthorised absence, another course of action will need to be considered (which can include prosecution).

Headteachers have the authority to grant leave of absence only in exceptional cases. They are not able to authorise holidays during term time. Hampshire County Council reminds us that exceptional reasons are ‘rare’. The DfE is clear that there is no parental/carer right for a family holiday; cost, experiences for the child, weather and overlapping with the school holidays are not factors on which the decision should be made.

The Hampshire Code of Conduct states that if a Penalty Notice has previously been issued and this has been ineffective in addressing the absenteeism, the case must be referred to the Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) who will then decide whether to issue a subsequent Penalty Notice or recommend alternative intervention, which may include parental prosecution.

We will contact you if we have any concerns regarding your child’s attendance. This link <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> is helpful for guiding parents on minor illnesses and school. If you have any other questions or concerns, please contact us on: adminoffice@calmore-inf.hants.sch.uk or call us on 023 8086 5994.

Yours faithfully



Headteacher

