

Mengham Junior School

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25th April 2017

Dear Parents and Carers,

Attendance Update

Many parents have been enquiring about how the recent Supreme Court decision will affect requests for holidays in term time.

Following on from the court's decision, Hampshire Local Authority has reinstated its code of conduct for attendance which states that a Penalty Notice can be issued when there has been **10 sessions** or more of unauthorised absence in **a 100 day period**.

There are many reasons for an absence being classed as unauthorised but the main reason in our school is when a holiday is taken in term time.

Under the Hampshire code of conduct, Headteachers are only allowed to authorise an absence if it is "**unexpected, rare, sudden and short**". A planned holiday in term time cannot be classed as unexpected and therefore does not meet this criteria.

10 sessions of attendance equates to 5 days of unauthorised absence as a day is made up of a morning and an afternoon session. The 10 sessions do not necessarily need to be taken as a block of days. If you were to have 3 days of unauthorised absence followed by two separate days of unauthorised absence within a 100 day period you would still be liable for a penalty notice.

Currently, if paid immediately, a penalty notice comes with a fine of £60 **per parent** per child. Like a parking ticket this amount rises if not paid within a certain time scale and, if not paid at all, then proceeds to court proceedings. The money **does not** come to school, it is paid to the Local Authority.

If you have requested an upcoming holiday of 5 days or more, you will now be liable to receive a penalty notice on your return as mentioned in the final paragraph of the correspondence you were sent previously.

I would also like to take this opportunity to advise parents that if a child is reported sick and we subsequently find out that the family were on holiday we are required to change the coding of the register to unauthorised holiday and issue a penalty notice in the same way we would had the holiday been requested through the correct channels.

As a school, we understand and sympathise with parents' frustration with the rise of holidays costs in school holiday times. As school staff we are subject to the same frustration as we also have no choice but to take our holidays in these periods. However, as a Hampshire school we are obliged to follow the code of conduct set by the local authority and will therefore be reinstating the code with immediate effect.

If you have any further queries about any of the above then please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Best Wishes

Wendy Bolton
Headteacher