



6 November 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am really pleased with the overall school attendance for the last half term, which stands at 97%, and for the last academic year, which was 96.5%. However, I am concerned about the amount of unauthorised absence as a result of families taking holiday in term time and the negative impact this is having on children's education.

Despite the overall very good attendance figure for the last half term, we currently have 25 children with attendance below 90%. If this is maintained over time, it results in the following amount of education being lost and will impact significantly on the children's achievement and futures:

Attendance %	By the end of Year 2	By the end of year 6	By the end of year 11
100%	NA	NA	NA
95%	Nearly half a term missed	Nearly a whole term missed	Two whole terms missed
90%	Nearly a whole term missed	Nearly two whole terms missed	Over 1 ½ years missed
85%	1 ½ terms missed	Nearly a whole year missed	Nearly 2 years missed
80%	2 terms missed	One year and a term missed	2 years and 2 terms missed

When a child is away from school they miss out on whole units of learning. When they return to school, they are then in a difficult position because of the gaps in their learning. This also means that their future learning will be built on insecure foundations. Again, the impact of this over time is demonstrated in the table below:

How attendance affects GCSE achievement	
Percentage Attendance	Percentage achieving 5 A* - C GCSEs
100 – 93.5%	74.3%
93.4% - 92.5%	60.4%
92.4% - 91.5%	53.1%
91.4% - 90%	44.6%
89.9% - 88%	34.7%
Less than 88%	26.7%

Having spoken to a member of the Hampshire Legal Panel, I would like to emphasise information that many parents are not aware of, as follows:

During the course of a child's education, from the term after their 5th birthday until they leave full time education, if parents and carers have been issued with repeated penalty notices but it is felt these are not having the esired impact, resulting in repeated absence, any further leave of absence requests may be referred to the Hampshire Legal Panel for breach of the Education Act 1996, Section 444A, and may therefore result in court proceedings.

Hampshire guidance states in relation to the question, 'What If my child has further unauthorised absence from school?

If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

In the summer term, I also had a number of conversations with parents of year 6 children who thought that once SATs week was complete then being away from school would not impact on learning and preparation for year 7. This helped me realise that, as a school, we were not explaining clearly to parents that the writing portfolios, which are assessed by County moderators and result in writing being assessed as not meeting, meeting or exceeding expectations are not completed until much later in the summer term. Any absence after SATs week will normally result in a child not having a strong enough portfolio and therefore being assessed as not meeting expectations for writing. This will typically result in children working in lower sets at the start of year 7 then we would expect them to, as this data is used as a starting point for setting children in key stage 3.

As I said at the start of this letter, I am very proud of the attendance of children at Mill Rythe Junior School and I think this reflects well on children's experiences and achievements during their time at our school. I am delighted with the resilience so many of our children demonstrate during the year and their determination to come to school and learn – laugh – achieve when they are not always 100%. I would like to thank parents and carers for their determination to ensure this happens too.

I am not writing this letter to worry parents and carers but to clarify information for you which I hope will leave you better informed about the impact that absence from school has on children over time. There are clearly occasions when children are unwell or family situations rightly dictate that it is not possible for children to be in school and we will always work closely with families to support them at these times. I am, however, concerned that the attraction of cheaper holidays during term time is leading to some children missing out on the education that they are entitled to and the long-term effect this is having on their learning and potential.

If you would like to look at our attendance policy in more detail it is available on the school website and paper copies can be request from the office.

If you would like to discuss any of this in more detail, please come and see me or contact the school office so we can arrange a time to do so.



David Bessant
Headteacher