

	 Mill Rythe JUNIOR SCHOOL	 THE HAYLING COLLEGE <small>Learning, Growing, Achieving and Celebrating Together</small>	 MENGHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL	 MENGHAM INFANT SCHOOL
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5th September 2019

Hayling Schools - Attendance Update

Dear Parents and Carers,

Due to recent updates in the guidance given to schools around attendance we are writing to advise you of the current position regarding leave taken in term time and the subsequent issuing of penalty notices. This will take effect in Hayling Schools from 1st September 2019.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices were introduced by the government as a way of hopefully deterring parents from taking repeated annual holidays in term time.

A Penalty Notice will be issued when there has been **10 sessions (5 days)** of unauthorised absence in a **100 session period**. (50 school days)

There are many reasons for an absence being classed as unauthorised but the main reason in schools 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, unavoidable and short"***. A planned holiday in term time cannot be classed as unexpected or unavoidable and therefore does not meet this criteria. Unavoidable means, cannot be arranged at another time, ie within school holidays.

10 sessions of absence equates to 5 days of school missed, 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 50 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 into school's budget. It is paid directly to the Local Authority and goes towards legal and administration costs involved in dealing with persistent absence in Hampshire.

Previously, there has been a grey area around how many penalty notices could be issued to a family before it was deemed no longer appropriate and a case instead needing to be heard at Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel with a view to starting court proceedings.

However, schools are now advised that, where a family has already received one penalty notice for a holiday in term time, any further leave of absence requests which meet Penalty Notice criteria should go directly to Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel who will decide whether to proceed to court action.

Possible penalties for non attendance cases heard in a magistrates court include a community order, a fine of up to £2,500 per parent/carer or a custodial sentence.

Schools are also expected to **pass on information** about any Penalty Notices previously issued or court proceedings previously instigated when a child moves schools, ie between infant and junior or junior and college, as these will be taken into account when looking at each set of circumstances.

Further information around Hampshire's approach to attendance is available at;

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/behaviour-attendance-parents#step-1>

Please be advised that schools are **not** able to authorise a child's birthday as holiday as, again, this would not be classed as exceptional.

If a child is reported sick and we subsequently find out that the family were on holiday/a day out we are required to change the coding of the register to unauthorised absence in the same way we would had the leave been requested through the correct channels. Please be aware that via the children, social media and other parents school will often find out!

Persistent Lateness

School follows the same criteria when looking at lateness as we do with attendance. Where a child is consistently late they are discussed in the attendance meetings and next steps action decided upon.

Next Steps can be ;

- An initial letter to parents informing them that lateness has become an issue and offering the opportunity to come and talk to staff, the school nurse or support staff regarding strategies for improving future punctuality.
- A further letter to parents informing them that further lateness will be classed as unauthorised absence. Ten sessions of unauthorised absence would leave parents liable to a fine via a penalty notice.
- A referral to attendance Legal Panel which may result in court proceedings.

We know that so many of our families work very hard, alongside schools, to ensure the best possible attendance and education for their children and would hate for any of you to be caught out by this change. Therefore, if you have any further queries please, as always, get in touch with your child's school to discuss them further.

Thank you for your continued support.

Best Wishes

Mrs L Ford

Mr D Bessant

Mr C Rainford

Mr E Harrison

Mrs L Rebbitt

Mill Rythe Inf.

Mill Rythe Jun.

Hayling College

Mrs O Davies

Mengham Jun.

Mengham Inf.