

17 November 2017

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Dear Parent/Guardian

Penalty Notices for leave of absence during term time

We would like to take this opportunity to remind parents of the procedures and legal position with regards to requesting leave of absence for your son/daughter during term time.

Due to a highly publicised legal case between a parent and a Local Authority in regards to the issuing of a penalty notice for an unauthorised absence, the High Court originally found in favour of the parent. The Department for Education took the ruling to the Supreme Court to challenge this decision. Whilst waiting for the judgement from the Supreme Court, Surrey County Council (SCC) took the decision not to issue penalty notices for unauthorised leave of absence. The Supreme Court recently found in favour of the Department for Education and stated that students should attend school 100% of the time, unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher. In light of this decision SCC will now revert back to issuing Penalty Notices for 5 or more days unauthorised leave of absence.

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their son/daughter out of school during term time. Any absence from school will disrupt their learning. You may consider that a holiday is educational, but your son/daughter will miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive during your holiday. Attendance is vital to academic success and lost education poses a potential risk of under achievement. Data shows that students with an attendance rate of 90% achieve a one grade drop in every GCSE subject compared with students with 100% attendance. This is something that we all have a responsibility to avoid. If you consider your request to be an exceptional circumstance then please complete a Leave of Absence Form which your son/daughter can obtain from their Head of Achievement.

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the leave of absence is without the authority of the Headteacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is **£60 if paid within 21 days** of receipt of the notice, rising to **£120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days**. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

We will continue to work on improving the attendance of all our students. If we become concerned with your son/daughter's attendance we will arrange for a meeting to discuss our concerns with them and yourselves. We are confident that you will be keen to work with us to ensure that your child has the best attendance possible. Last year we awarded 40 certificates to students who had 100% attendance and have recognised students who have achieved 100% attendance each term in assemblies this year.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely



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