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Head teacher: Ms Jo Phillips
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Dear Parents and Carers,

The facts about school attendance and the law

Regular attendance at school is important. Failing to attend school regularly can have a major impact on children's education, their future and their life chances. Regular attendance means attending school every day, arriving at school on time and attending every lesson. Government research indicates that 17 missed school days a year can result in a drop in achievement of an entire grade.

Parents may remember that we sent home a letter last term from our local cluster of primary schools regarding requests for term time leave of absence. The letter reminded parents that all schools expect attendance to be 100%, unless there are exceptional or unavoidable reasons for absence, which would then be authorised.

This letter outlines the school's position on 'persistent absence'. We hope parents find it informative.

From September 2015, the Department for Education has set the threshold for persistent absence at 10% (ie an attendance percentage of 90% or below).

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring their child (from age 5 to age 16) receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

Parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly without good reason could:

- Receive a Penalty Notice Fine of £60 per parent per pupil
- Be prosecuted in the magistrate's court and be fined up to £1,000
- In more serious offences, where parents have been previously prosecuted they could be fined up to £2,500 or face imprisonment

At Wyton on the Hill, we operate the Local Authority's 'Three-Letter System', which is designed to help parents avoid legal action by alerting them to the fact that their child's attendance is concerning **before** it reaches the 'persistent absence' threshold.

Please see the table over the page, which outlines the 'Three-Letter System' for parents and also has some surprising facts about the impact of absence on learning in term of hours lost. In order to ensure that parents are kept informed, our school system for recording attendance will generate the three letters whether or not the absences are authorised or unauthorised.

	Threshold Attendance	Actual Attendance	Whole Days Absent	Learning Hours Lost	Action parents can expect from the school
Excellent	100%	190	0	0	Pupils achieving 100% attendance receive a Head teacher's award in an end of the year assembly.
	99%	188 days	2	10	Good attendance appears as 'Green light' on pupils' end of year reports.
Good	98%	186 days	4	20	
	97%	184 days	6	30	
	96%	182.5 days	7.5	37.5	
Requires Improvement	95%	180.5 days	9.5	47.5	The school's system for recording attendance will send out Local Authority Letter One: This is sent to parents as an early alert that a significant number of learning hours have been lost and offers support.
	94%	177 days	13	65	The school's system for recording attendance will send out Local Authority Letter Two: This letter is sent to request a meeting and to alert parents that medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect. Support will be offered.
'Persistent Absence'	92%	175 days	15	75	The school's system for recording attendance will send out Local Authority Letter Three: This letter informs parents that their child's attendance is nearing the 'persistent absence' threshold and that if attendance fails to improve during the next 6 weeks, the case may be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council for possible legal intervention. Support will be offered.
	90%	171 days	19	95	The school's system for recording attendance will refer the case to Cambridgeshire County Council's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
	89%	169 days`	21	105	
	89% and below	167 days and below	23	115	

If your child is absent and the school either does not receive an explanation from you, or considers the explanation unsatisfactory, it will record your child's absence as 'unauthorised'. Most absences for acceptable reasons will be authorised. Acceptable reasons include:

- Sickness (see above for reasonable guideline percentages);
- Unavoidable medical or dental appointments (if possible, arrange these for after school or during school holidays);
- Days of religious observance;
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement (within reason);
- An interview / visit with a prospective school

If you would like to request leave of absence in term time for one of these exceptional reasons, please contact the School Office for a form.

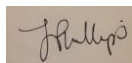
However, we are not permitted to authorise absence for the following reasons:

- Shopping during school hours;
- Day trips;
- Holidays which have not been agreed;
- Birthdays;
- Looking after brothers or sisters or ill relatives.

If you know or think that your child is having difficulties attending school you should contact the class teacher. It is better to do this sooner rather than later, as most problems can be dealt with very quickly and we want our children to have the best possible experience in school.

If you would like any help or support, or would like to discuss any of the points raised in this letter, please make us your first port of call – our door is always open.

Yours sincerely,



Jo Phillips (Head teacher)