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2 November 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

We maintain high standards and expectations of punctuality and attendance for academic, social and safeguarding reasons. I felt it would be helpful to write to you to explain these expectations now we are halfway through the first term of this academic year.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

We expect 100% punctuality

Fairlands requires every child to **attend school, on time, every day.**

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their child is organised for school in good time the night before. It is recommended that children have at least eight hours sleep as this is important to their health and wellbeing. Limiting access to electronic and mobile devices for around an hour before bedtime, is important for healthy sleep routines.

We expect 100% attendance

Children of compulsory school age who are registered at a school **MUST**, by law, attend school regularly. This means that if parents or carers allow their children to stay away from school without good reason they may be prosecuted.

If a child is absent, parents or carers **MUST** contact the school by 9.00am on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence. On the third day of absence the parent or carer should contact the school again to discuss the absence further.

- Term dates are clearly published on our website, well in advance. **Holidays in term time are NOT allowed.** The school is closed for 13 weeks each year and holidays must only be taken during this time. Any absence in term time for holidays will be rigorously followed up by the attendance officers. It is the obligation on parents/carers with children to ensure that they check the school dates and times for all their children before making commitments and booking holidays.
- **Absence due to illness can be authorised unless we have genuine cause for concern about whether a child is genuinely ill.** If we are in doubt, we are directed to request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. A medical letter or certificate will normally be required for all absences longer than three days.

- **Only emergency or serious medical appointments will be authorised during school hours.** Wherever possible, all routine medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours, on INSET days, at weekends or in school holidays. The child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- **There are no longer any special COVID related exemptions.** Children with mild covid symptoms (e.g. sore throat, runny nose, etc) can attend school as normal. Children with mild covid symptoms do not need to isolate at home.
- We must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. **However, the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong.** Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

We use this resource to help us <https://www.diversityresources.com/diversity-calendar/>

Otherwise, the headteacher has only very limited discretion to authorise absence in truly exceptional circumstances so it would be very rare for any other absence reason to be able to be authorised. Full evidence will be required before authorisation will be considered.

The headteacher's decision, on whether a reason for absence is accepted and authorised or not, is final.

Please note that we are careful not to become complicit in unauthorised absence and will always refuse the possibility of providing remote learning when a child should be in school. We will not normally offer remote learning to children who are too unwell to attend school unless a child is receiving support from the Education Support for Medical Absence (ESMA) team.

Mrs Kerry Baker is our Attendance Manager. She oversees the monitoring of children's attendance and ensures appropriate follow-up for children who do not attend school regularly and punctually.

Monitoring attendance and punctuality is a statutory safeguarding responsibility placed upon the school. Parents and carers are asked therefore to be understanding when we or the local authority ask questions about non-attendance.

Sometimes we have to ask for evidence related to absence and this can be difficult, especially if it relates to emotionally sensitive issues like a bereavement. Please show understanding and avoid being defensive to our staff who are looking out for those children who may need help.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to aggression towards our staff.

Thank you for working with us positively to keep your child safe and ensuring they make the best progress possible whilst they are attending school.

Robert Staples
Headteacher