

Requested absences during school time

Dear Parent/Carer

The Education Welfare Service, in conjunction with all schools, is working in partnership with parents to improve school attendance. **We would like to congratulate the many parents who make sure that their children attend school regularly.** Good attendance is essential for your child to achieve the very best now and in the future and sets up good habits for their future.

However, there are still pupils who are absent from school without good reason, which is clearly unacceptable. It may surprise you that failing to send your child to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence. We all have a legal responsibility to ensure our children receive appropriate education suitable for their age, ability and aptitude.

Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Research shows that children who do not attend regularly:

- Do not achieve well in school
- Find it difficult to maintain friendships
- Miss out on social events
- In extreme cases are more likely to become involved in crime.

Absence can only be authorised where there is good cause for example, if a child is too ill to attend school. **Parents cannot authorise absence.** Only the Headteacher can do so as authorisation must be within the boundaries set by The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1996.

Please remember that holidays during term time, parental illness, birthdays, going shopping, visiting family or not wanting to go to school are not acceptable reasons to be absent from school. You should also be aware that late arrival at school or arriving after the closure of registers are classified as unauthorised absences, which could also have serious consequences for parents.

Duncombe School regards children's school attendance for 190 days annually as a right and not in any way optional.

Duncombe along with all Islington Schools does not authorise holidays taken during term time. Many parents are under the impression that they have a right to a certain number of days holiday taken during the school term. This is not true. Previously court warnings were issued in the first instance with a fine if this happened again. This is no longer the case. **PLEASE BE AWARE THAT INSTANT PENALTY NOTICES ARE NOW BEING ISSUED FOR UNAUTHORISED HOLIDAYS BY THE EDUCATION WELFARE DEPARTMENT.**

The Headteacher will only seriously consider not agreeing with the local authorities policy of fining parents who make an application for absence during school time if:

1. **Their child/children have an average attendance of 98% or above over 3 years.**

And

2. **They have not made a previous request for absence during the last 3 years of more.**

The Education Welfare department have asked us to include the legal processes regarding lateness and attendance in this letter.

The legal action includes:

- **Issuing Penalty Notices:** Parent receives a fine for each child who has **unauthorised absence, lateness or arrives after registers have closed.** The penalty is £50 or £100 depending on how soon payment is made.
- **Prosecuting parents for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 s.444 (1) – magistrate can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, add costs, and impose Parenting Orders and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

The Local Education Authority now issues Penalty Notices in cases of persistent lateness. **If your child is late a minimum of 12 times over 6 weeks, you could receive a Penalty Notice.**

This letter is to be put on your child's file to confirm that you have received this notification. If you require a translation please speak to one of our community workers; Mustapha, Reba, or Ali. Sarah, our School Home Support worker, will also help any parent with regard to understanding this letter.

If your child's attendance is not satisfactory you need to take immediate action to give your child the best chance of success and avoid legal action. It is important that you work closely with the School and the Education Welfare Service. The Education Welfare Officer will be happy to discuss this letter with parents.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss this letter further, please contact the school on 0207 272 5620. Alternatively you can contact the Education Welfare Officer from Monday to Friday at the Municipal Office on 02075275979.

Yours faithfully,

Barrie O'Shea
Headteacher