



Ashley Junior School

Ready • Respectful • Responsible

Wednesday, 18th September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

Important: National changes to issuing penalty notices for leave in term time

You may be aware that there is a great deal of focus, at a national level, on improving school attendance; at our school, we recognise the impact of absence on pupil progress and personal development.

Our target for all pupils is a minimum of 97% attendance across the school year; if a pupil was to fall below this to 90% attendance, for example, this would equate to 100 missed lessons. This would then leave significant gaps in learning and missed opportunities.

The Department for Education has recently published a number of changes to issuing penalty notices from the 19th August 2024. You can refer to headlines about these changes on page 3 of last week's school newsletter, dated Friday 13th September.

The changes to the law have been introduced through The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024. As these changes are significant, we would urge all parents/carers to take notice of them and the implications of pupils taking unauthorised absence for holidays. Please find attached important information from Hampshire County Council, for parents/carers, regarding increased penalty fines. **Please be aware, our school does not benefit from the penalty notice fine; the money stays with Hampshire County Council.**

Please note that fixed penalty notices can be issued to AJS parents in these circumstances:

- 1. Holiday taken during term time;** please note, we cannot make any allowances for the comparative high cost of travel during school holiday weeks themselves and cannot make exceptions for those pupils with high attendance rates.

Regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on

this, as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, **no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday** and in the majority of cases holiday will **not** be authorised. Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form available from the school office or can be downloaded from the AJS website in advance, before making any travel arrangements:

www.ashleyjuniorschool.co.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=132&type=pdf

Please note that a penalty notice issued for any offence that begins on or after 19th August will be issued under the new rules. Therefore, it will be (a) charged at £80/£160, (b) count towards the escalation, and (c) be issued in line with the new national threshold of 10 sessions in 10 weeks. Any unauthorised holiday taken up to and including the 18th August will be processed within the former guidance.

2. Children who are persistently late for school or after registration closes;

Registers are taken at 9:00am and again at 1:15pm. If your child is late, you must bring them to the School Office. Arriving late often leaves children feeling flustered and uncomfortable.

Informing the school about an absence:

If your child is going to be absent from school, please notify us of the reason either in writing via email to adminoffice@ajs.hants.sch.uk or by leaving a voicemail message on our school office absence telephone line, 01425 616510, before 8:30am on every day of absence. If your child misses school due to medical or dental appointments, please provide evidence of the appointment to the school office team for our records.

Kind regards,



Mrs Charlie Bartolomeo

Headteacher