



**"Together we give children the roots to grow and the wings to fly"**

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Happy new academic year to you all – It has started very well and all the teachers are smiling even the new ones! Our newsletter will follow over the next few weeks, but I am writing in regards to attendance. I am attaching our attendance leaflet which has been updated and am writing to explain our new attendance procedures.

**Please take time to read this letter (albeit a long one!) as it is very important.**

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. It's simple, good attendance at school helps children learn more and achieve more. Our school attendance in 2016-17 has declined since the previous year and much of this is due to many parents choosing to take holidays in term time.

Whereas we understand your reasons for doing so, we urge you not to take holidays in term time this year as it really affects your child's attendance and our school attendance data which is closely monitored by the DFE and OFSTED. We don't make the rules, it is the powers that be!

As a school we are one of the few schools across Nottinghamshire who, at present, have chosen not to fine for unauthorised absences in excess of 3 days. We have agreed this because we don't want to inflict further hardship on families when money is sometimes tight and we all deserve a holiday once in a while. We know tour operators increase the prices in school holidays which can make holidays expensive. But the government has made the rule that no unauthorised holidays should happen in school time and have given us tight guidelines on what we are allowed to authorise and what we cannot.

If holiday requests continue at the same level as last year then we will have to reconsider this decision as we will be judged by OFSTED as not following all guidelines available to us to deter holidays in term time. Regardless of the quality of teaching and the provision at the school, the attendance data we submit can significantly affect the judgement made by OFSTED on us as a school.

The penalty notices issued, if we have to adopt this approach, would be issued by the local authority at a cost of £60 per child, per parent (so if both parents have parental responsibility both could be fined) for each unauthorised absence over 3 school days. Please, as far as reasonably possible (there are always extreme cases we know), work with us on this issue so that we are not forced towards this approach which we do not want to take.

**Please note the following extract from Nottinghamshire's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices:**

"If the school has evidence that a parent has removed a child from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) in total over a 6 week rolling period, then the school can issue or request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies."

I have been considering ideas of dealing with the holiday problem and perhaps will seek your views at a later date if I have any ideas. In the meantime please ensure your child is in school as much as possible.

## Attendance Rewards

I have put a lot of thought into attendance and do have issue with rewarding or penalising classes/children for attendance that is often through no fault of their own. It is unfair if someone has chicken pox so cannot attend school but has been in school every day apart from the chicken pox for a year, to be excluded from certain treats. With the issue of fairness in mind and the fact that we are an infant school and I feel it is unfair to judge our attendance against primaries as research shows that younger children often catch colds etc. more than older children, I have changed the rewards for attendance as follows:

1 child from each class who has 100% attendance that week will be drawn at random and will receive a special attendance sticker and pencil prize.

Each week your child comes into school every day that week they will get a golden ticket (Wonka ticket!) which can be entered into a half termly class prize draw. Therefore if your child is in school every day 5 weeks out of a 7 week half term then they will have 5 tickets to enter in the prize drawer. If they are in school every day for 7 weeks then they will get 7 tickets! The more they are in school the greater chance of winning the class prize, but it doesn't penalise the children who have had a sick bug or chicken pox for example so haven't got 100% attendance over the half term. The winner in each class in the half termly prize draw will receive a £10 Amazon voucher for you to buy your child a treat.

Each week we will also look at class attendance and we will reward the best class with a certificate and give them the school attendance trophy and 'It's cool to be in school' emoji cushions (when I buy them!) to display/use in their classroom.

Every week for each half term we will record the attendance in each class and give the gold award for 100% attendance (3 points), the silver award for 98%-99% (2 points) and the bronze award for 96-97% (1 point). The points will be added up near the end of the half term and the winning class can choose a class treat. This could be a box of chocolates to share in class, an extra playtime, cake, a play afternoon, a non-uniform day . . . the class decides.

It was brought to my attention by a parent this year that we had not rewarded 100% attendance for the whole academic year 2016-17. I explained how I struggle with this concept as it is unfair on the child who may have missed one day with a cold! But I feel with all the rewards and incentives offered above, everyone gets a chance of reward in some way so am happy to reward this 100% attendance for 2017-18, at the end of the full academic year with a £10 Amazon voucher to buy themselves a treat or a special prize.

Attached is our 'It's cool to be in school' booklet. Please could you read it with your child to help them see how important it is to attend school every day. Coming to school every day will ensure that your child will achieve the best they can. Plus we have stacks of fun!

I hope your child has a great year this year at school. You know where I am if I can help them or you in any way.

Kind regards

Rachel Otter  
Head Teacher

