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Dear parents and carers,

I asked for your opinions on attendance last term and have spent a while looking at them and talking with governors and leaders. It coincided with the Government also updating their attendance strategy for schools.

Main changes are:

No holidays are to be authorised at all unless there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances will be decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, a funeral or wedding may be authorised for 1 day. If more is taken, then they will be unauthorised. No exceptional circumstances will be granted retrospectively.

Penalty notices have changed from 6 sessions unauthorised absence in a 6-week period which would be eligible for a fine. It has changed to 10 sessions (2 sessions per day) over 10 weeks. It is very important that you recognise that unauthorised absence doesn't have to just be holidays. It can be where you have been late (later than 9.15) or poorly and failed to let us know. Or on the odd occasion when parents do not tell us at all where their child is.

Penalty notices have changed from £120 (or £60 if paid within 28 days) per parent per child. It is now changing to £160 (or £80 if paid within 28 days) per parent per child. Only 2 penalty notices can be issued in a 3-year period. If a parent has already had 2 penalty notices they are escalated for legal action by the county.

1st penalty notice can be reduced rate if paid

2nd penalty is £160 without the option to reduce

3rd penalty is referred for legal.

This is within a 3-year period.

I know this is not the news some of you were hoping for with regards to holidays.

All I can do is ask that you bring your children in every day and get them in on time. This is the best start for them and also gets them into good habits for the future. If you are struggling in any way you need to talk to us. We can refer to early help or the family service if you need help with routines. If you have problems with getting your child to school because of a school-based issue please come and talk to us, we will try our hardest to get it resolved.

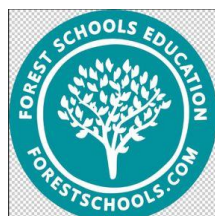
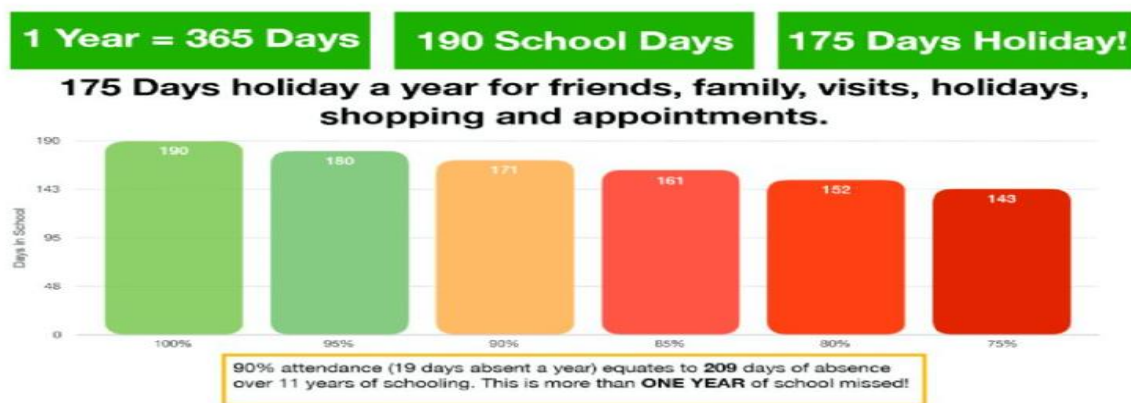
With illness remember you can send them in and if they are truly too ill to be here, we will send them home again and they will then get one mark for the day and the other will be an ill mark.

If your attendance drops below 90% you will be invited in for a meeting to discuss the issues around attendance. This will be to see if we can help. This will be with a member of the senior leadership team.

If attendance drops further (85%) you will be asked to provide medical evidence for each absence otherwise it will be unauthorised. Medical evidence could be tricky with sickness bugs because the Dr will not see the children - you could end up with more unauthorised than you think and ultimately a penalty notice. We should also refer you to attendance enforcement.

If your child is statutory school age and is on a part time timetable, there will be no unauthorised for the sessions missed as long as they were there when they were supposed to be.

We as a school are very sympathetic to the cost in the holidays. A safer option would be to book your holiday a weekday before we break up for the school holidays or a weekday after. Or try looking at when we have booked our inset days. Holidays in September are the worst time to take them as the children are settling with a new teacher and learning the class expectations. Sometimes it takes children longer to settle if they miss the start of the year. Not all local authorities have 2 weeks at October half term so one of the weeks is generally cheaper. And please consider this diagram- they are only at school for a very short amount of time. Everyday counts!



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