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25th September 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, TERM TIME HOLIDAYS AND LEGAL SANCTIONS**

To deal with the reality of pupil absenteeism in schools and its impact on learning, the Department for Education defines the “persistent absence” threshold as 10 percent absence from school.

You may or may not be aware that as a parent/carers, you have a legal responsibility to ensure that your child attends school regularly, and as a school, we recognise that we have a role in assisting you as necessary, in achieving this. The Local Authority (LA) has a duty to ensure that you fulfil your statutory responsibilities in relation to school attendance and Newcastle City Council has therefore issued updated guidance to schools on how to tackle this.

With immediate effect schools may now refer all persistent absentees to the LA where there have been 10 or more **unauthorised** absences in a ten week period. If the LA deems it necessary they will monitor the child's attendance for a four week period. Where attendance continues to be unsatisfactory, the LA may decide to take legal action against you. This could mean applying for an Education Supervision Order, issuing you with a penalty notice or prosecuting you under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If you were prosecuted by the LA and found guilty, the maximum fine for the offence is £2,500 or up to three month's imprisonment.

In addition, from September 2017 school can now refer **unauthorised holiday absence of five days** or more in a three month period, to the local authority for consideration of a £60 fixed penalty notice under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 (£60 per parent per child).

I would like to remind you that any term time absence requires prior approval by submitting an absence request form. These are available from the school office. The form will be returned clearly stating whether I have approved the absence or not. A further letter will follow if school plan to make a referral to the local authority for a fixed penalty notice. At schools discretion, as an alternative, we can request a warning letter from the local authority.

A referral to the LA will of course be a last resort and as a school we aim to resolve any attendance issues before this stage. We may contact you by telephone, letter or ask our School Attendance Officer to call to your home. The opportunity to discuss and sign a Parenting Contract will also be offered prior to any LA involvement.

If you are experiencing difficulties which may affect school attendance please do not hesitate to contact school and ask to speak to our Attendance Officer or your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

S D Hall

Head Teacher