

# High Firs Primary School

Headteacher

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18<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Dear Parents

## Unauthorised Absence

The governing body and staff at High Firs all want our pupils to get the most out of their education and we know that you will appreciate the role that your child's attendance plays in this. Pupils' absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning; not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, but they are also less prepared for lessons after their return. There can be a significantly negative impact on your child's progress and the absence can create the risk of poor results for your child. There is considerable evidence to demonstrate a clear link between attendance and results and the subsequent impact on children's future life chances. We are proud of the very good attendance of most of our pupils and we want to continue to promote this.

The school already uses the Kent County Council (KCC) Attendance Service for reporting absent children. This service helps the school to support families where children have a problem attending school, whatever the reason may be; this may include liaison with the School Inclusion Officer.

The KCC Attendance Service is able to action Penalty Notices to be served on parents **where a child has at least 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence (for whatever reason) during any 100 sessions (50 days)**. The penalty notice incurs a fine of £120 per parent for each child; this is reduced to £60 if paid within **21** days. If the penalty is not paid within the time scale the Attendance Service may instigate legal proceedings under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 for failing to ensure your child attends school regularly. **Parents are unable to rely on their children's general good or excellent attendance as a defence for unauthorised absence and may still be fined.** The matter will also be recorded in your child's school record. Please note that any money secured via the serving of penalty notices does NOT go to the school; this is retained by Kent County Council.

**Penalty notices will therefore now be actioned for unauthorised absence, within these guidelines and where appropriate, from 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017.** The main impact for this is likely to be on parents who take their children on holiday in term-time. As you know, all requests for **leave of absence** are considered individually by the Headteacher but will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances; the Swanley cluster of schools has established a protocol on attendance issues, which provides for such absences only to be authorised in very exceptional circumstances or involving compassionate family situations. If a **leave of absence** is taken without the school's permission, or the child fails to return on the agreed date, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a penalty notice can be issued. Please, therefore, do consider very carefully before booking or requesting holiday absence in term-time.

We do appreciate that the large majority of our parents fully and actively adhere to our attendance policy and would like to thank you for your support with this. We hope that with this further measure to facilitate good attendance that our children's attendance rate, and consequently their learning, will continue to flourish.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Marshall

Chair of Governors



Achieving more together

