



**Richard Bonington Primary and Nursery School**  
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**Head Teacher: Mrs Barbuti**

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Parents/Carers.

You may have noticed in the news lately that attendance is still very high on the Government's agenda, as attendance levels in schools across the country have not returned to pre Covid levels.

In July 2022 we updated our attendance policy in the light of the new Department for Education guidance, which will be made statutory at some point soon. This can be seen on our website [Click here](#).

During this year we have been sending letters home to children whose attendance is **below 90%**. Attendance below 90% puts the child in the 'persistent absentee' category. This means that attendance is at an unacceptable level, with 20 or more days missed across the year. This could be more than 80 lessons. From September we will also be sending out letters where attendance is **below 93%** as children are at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

The new guidance places certain expectations on school leaders:

- to **monitor** attendance data and **inform** parents if a child is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee.
- to **expect** high standards of attendance from all pupils.
- to **listen and understand** when attendance is a concern and meet to work together to resolve issues.
- to **facilitate** support, helping parents access support to overcome barriers.
- to **formalise** support where absence persists, which may include a parenting contract.
- to **enforce** either through a fine or prosecution.

As we say in our policy, we do accept that genuine illness occurs and are mindful of this. However, we also have a duty to inform you of your child's attendance percentage.

## **Holidays**

There is a clear expectation from Local Authorities and the Government that children are only absent from school in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances are defined as **rare, significant, or unavoidable**. Examples of circumstances **not** considered as exceptional are:

- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitments.
- Birthday celebrations.

We do understand the reasons for families to go on holiday in term time. However, it has now reached a point where it affects our whole school attendance and children are missing more and more lessons. This year we have had **1030 days missed** due to children being on holiday. We also have a growing amount of holidays that are over 10 days of term time (which is a substantial amount of missed time), as well as children having several holidays a year during term time.

Fining parents for taking children on holiday was introduced by the Government in 2013. We have not previously issued fines and have been reluctant to do this. However it is the Local Authority and Government expectation that we will and with the number of requests we are getting, it is unavoidable.

If a child is removed from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is in excess of **3.5 days (7 sessions)** in total over a 6-week rolling period, then the school can request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies. The Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 (if paid in 21 days) or £120 (if paid between 21 and 28 days). Each parent/carer can be issued with a penalty notice, one per parent, issued separately. i.e. one fine per parent/carer per family, regardless of the number of children in the family.

From September when deciding whether to issue a fine each case will be looked at individually - looking at the reasons, the child's overall attendance, and the amount of days requested.

Hopefully we can all work together - school, parents and children to make sure that the children can achieve their potential - socially and academically - with regular attendance.

If you have any questions or queries about this they can be directed to either Mrs Barbuti or Mrs Burr (Chair of Governors) via the school admin email address.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Barbuti                  Mrs V Burr  
(Head Teacher)              (Chair of Governors)