



FIRS FARM PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Headteacher: Mrs. Nuala Husband

23rd September 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

We know most children come to school every day but we are becoming extremely concerned about low attendance and the impact this is having on children's learning.

For example, our whole school attendance has dropped from 96.4% in 2019 to 92.4% now.

We had 168 children with attendance lower than 90% last year – more than 25% of the school.

As you can see, there has been a significant drop in attendance since the beginning of Covid with more than a quarter of the school being absent for at least 10% of last year. **This is equal to missing at least 1 day of school every 2 weeks or 4 weeks in a year. Over two years, this would be the same as missing more than a half-term of learning.**

There has also been a significant increase in the number of families deciding to take their children out of school during term time or taking extended absences to attend to family matters abroad.

Our attendance was only 79% during the last week in July and only 91% on the first day back in September. This is not acceptable and is having a negative impact on children's learning.

This letter details our policy and procedures to support families in ensuring children are in every day on time. It also details our policy on leave of absence during term-time.

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

9. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

10. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.



As a result of the number of families taking children out of school in term time we will be introducing Penalty Notices

Penalty notices will be issued to all families whose children were on holiday at the end of the Summer Term or the beginning of the Autumn Term. This means that you could be issued with a fine if you take your child out of school again during the next three months. These fines are at the discretion of the Head Teacher, with previous levels of attendance being taken into account.

Penalty fines are £60 per parent/guardian if paid within 21 days; £120 if paid after 21 days.

Authorising absences is at the discretion of the school. We will only be authorising absence for children's illnesses and will limit the number of days that can be authorised e.g. for an upset stomach, we would only expect absence of two to three days. It is expected that you contact the school before 9.00am to let us know that your child is too ill to attend. If evidence is requested (e.g. of antibiotics) we would need this within 5 days of the first day of absence, otherwise the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Equally we will not authorise absences because a parent/carer is unwell or cannot bring their child into school for example due to waiting for a repair or due to a sibling being unwell. Parents/carers are expected to make arrangements to ensure their children are in school and on time.

Requesting a leave of absence must be done in advance, so if you would like to take your child out of school for an important occasion e.g. a family wedding or funeral, you must request permission from the Head Teacher before you go. Please bear in mind that, if permission is given, you are likely to be given leave for the day of the event and one day either side if needed for travel. We will only consider children with excellent attendance for permission. Failure to return in the time agreed with the Head Teacher may result in a fine being issued. If permission is not given and your child does not attend school, you may receive a fine.

Taking your child out of school without permission may also result in action from the Education Welfare Officer.

Low attendance – is monitored regularly with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.

If your child's attendance drops:

1. The class teacher may discuss concerns with you and discuss ways to help your child improve attendance. This is particularly essential if a child is worried about school or anxious about friendships etc.
2. You may receive a phone call or email expressing concern. You may be told that further absences will not be authorised unless evidence of illness is received.
3. You may be invited to a meeting with Mrs BurrIDGE as Attendance Lead. If repeated illness is a cause for concern, a referral to the School Nurse Service will be discussed as a way of supporting you and your child.
4. You may be invited to an Attendance Clinic with Mrs BurrIDGE and the Education Welfare Officer.

If attendance does not improve and evidence of genuine ill-health has not been forthcoming, your child may be **referred to the Education Welfare Service**. This is a supportive process but can result in a Court Case if families do not take the support offered and if a significant improvement in attendance is not seen.



Please be reassured that we recognise that some children find it harder than others to attend school and that we are committed to working with children and families to remove barriers to attendance.

We are also aware that a small number of children do have medical reasons why their attendance is low. Where this is the case, and following meetings where we receive evidence to show it is unavoidable, we would authorise absence and keep the situation under close review.

If you would like to discuss any issues or concerns surrounding the content of this letter, please contact me via the office email.

Please speak to the class teacher if you feel that your child needs support in removing barriers to attendance.

Kind regards,

Jill BurrIDGE

Deputy Head

