

# St. Mark's Church of England Primary School



6<sup>th</sup> December 2018

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Headteacher: **Peter Barfoot**

Dear Parents

## Attendance

The Governing Body has a duty to ensure high levels of attendance by all pupils. It is important that attendance is monitored to ensure that pupils maintain good routines and do not develop gaps in their learning through persistent or unacceptable levels of absence.

### Some important facts about school attendance:

- Out of 365 / 366 days in each year, school is open for 190 days. These are counted in half day sessions. 100% attendance would be 380 sessions in a school year.
- A 2 week holiday each year in primary school would mean a total of 14 weeks teaching time missed. Over time this could have a real impact on a child's basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- The Government regard 95% as the minimum satisfactory attendance for a primary school pupil. Most children routinely have attendance rates of 97% or more. This is the equivalent of 6 days' absence a year.
- 100% is achieved by many pupils every year in both primary and secondary schools.
- The Department for Education report that pupils with no absence are 1.3 times more likely to achieve the 'expected standard' and 3.1 times more likely to achieve at 'greater depth' in End of Key Stage Assessments (SATs)
- If you have 90% attendance record, it means that you are absent from lessons for the equivalent of one half day every week.

### Good levels of attendance are important because:

- Children need to be present for an entire sequence of lessons in order to get the most from them
- Routines become unclear if children miss school regularly
- Friendships and relationships become harder to maintain with persistent absence
- Gaps in children's learning increase dramatically with increased absence

If attendance of a pupil continues to fall below 90% we may be required contact the Local Authority to support a family through the 'Early Help Assessment' process.

**Our target this year is to ensure we achieve 96% attendance (4% absence).** It is currently running at 96.3 % attendance, 3.7% absence.

The National rates in primary schools last year were 96% attendance, 4% absence. In the South Lakes area the figures were 96.4% attendance, 3.6% absence. **We need to take action to ensure our attendance figures stay above the national levels. We would be grateful for your support in this.**

*On the reverse is a letter from Cumbria County Council reminding parents of the Fixed Penalty Notices that can be issued to parents of children who are persistently absent from school.*

Yours sincerely

Tina Ward

Peter Barfoot

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Dear Parent/Carer

November 2018

**RE: LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME**

Absence from school due to family holidays taken in term time can be disruptive to children's education. It can also be disruptive to other pupils in the class. In addition, I am concerned that there could be some misunderstanding of the law in relation to absence from school because of holidays taken during term time

Any absence from school should be avoided unless for medical reasons, as it can have a serious effect on your child's educational progress, and can create difficulties for them on their return to school, particularly if they are joining a new school or class. It is important to note that only the Headteacher can authorise absence from school. Parents/Carers cannot authorise the absence themselves.

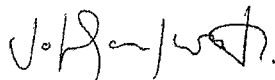
Changes to legislation have removed the discretionary 10 day period of absence which covered family holidays. Schools can only grant requests for holiday absence in term time in exceptional circumstances. If you believe that your circumstances are exceptional you can make a request to the school. In considering a request, the school will take into account the child's age, the time of year of the absence, and the nature of the visit. The Headteacher will also consider the child's stage of education and progress and the child's overall attendance record. It is highly unlikely that leave will be authorised if examinations or other important tests will be missed. Headteachers will not authorise absence unless they believe your circumstances are exceptional. In all cases it is best to have a discussion with the Headteacher in order to look at the issues as they affect your child.

All unauthorised absences, including holidays that have not been sanctioned by the Headteacher, are accumulated and parents who fail to ensure regular attendance of their children at school can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid between 21 and 28 days. It is therefore essential that parents take this into consideration if they are thinking of a family holiday in term-time.

The Department for Education define persistent absenteeism as below 90% attendance and schools may wish to use this figure to determine whether or not to pursue legal action such as the issuing of a fixed penalty.

Many people are working very hard to help your child to succeed. I trust you will support us in this matter, in partnership with your child's school.

Yours faithfully



**John Macilwraith**  
Executive Director – People (Deputy Chief Executive)