



Merrydale Junior School

Be the Best you can Be!



Headteacher: Antony Corbett

Deputy Head: Louise Saunders

November 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you have all well.

I am writing to you regarding attendance and Merrydale's expectations.

Our school day **starts at 8.30am** and **finishes at 3.20pm**. We politely request that parents and carers ensure children arrive at 8.30am promptly and are collected on time at 3.20pm.

We have had a number of times when we have not had any contact from parents/carers about a child's absence. Parents/carers must contact the school every morning that a child is absent. Failure to do so could mean a fine from the local authority. The local authority have stated that if there are 5 days of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period a fine will be issued. Please see the attached sheet for clarification

If your child's attendance drops below 95% we shall send you a letter with our concerns. If your child's attendance drops below 90% we will request that you attend a meeting in school. In this meeting we will look at how their attendance can be improved by working jointly with parents removing any barriers to your child achieving excellent attendance. We shall then have a written contract between school and the family with the focus on supporting you as a family to improve attendance. Studies show that children who attend school regularly and on time achieve greater attainment than those who have poor attendance.

Please be aware there have been significant changes to how the local authority deal with unauthorised absences.

The following changes came into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absence that occurred after 19th August 2024.

- Any absence during term time is highly likely to receive a fixed penalty notice. The penalty notice will be issued at the cost of **£160 per parent per child (discounted to £80 per**



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parent per child if paid within 21 days for the first offence) or your case will be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court.

- The second time a penalty notice is issued for term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be **£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days with no discount.**
- The third time an offence is committed for term time leave or irregular attendance a penalty notice will not be issued. **The case will proceed to the Magistrates' Court.**
- If your child has an absence of 20 days or more, the Local Authority has advised that a Penalty Notice is unlikely to be issued and **the matter is likely to proceed to the Magistrates' Court for prosecution action instead.**
- The Local Authority has advised that where a parent is found guilty, or where the case is proven against the parent, that this is likely to result in a fine (up to £2500 per parent, per child) and the parent receiving a criminal record.
- Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days and for fewer days where this has happened before.

If you have any queries around attendance, please contact Kate Hodgkinson.

Kind regards,

K Hodgkinson

Kate Hodgkinson
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