

Coastal Learning Partnership
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Thursday, 5th September, 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

Working together so every child's attendance is the best it can be

Welcome back to everyone following the summer break. A special welcome to families who are joining a Coastal Learning Partnership school for the first time (Coastal Learning Partnership is the group to which your child's school belongs).

Each September, we remind our families about the importance of regular school attendance. The Department for Education (DfE) requires schools to do all they can to support every child and family to attend school regularly. This includes following up quickly on any concerns. We work in partnership with parents and also services such as the Local Authority.

Quite simply, children do better at school if they attend regularly. It is surprising how quickly a few absences add up: a child with 96% attendance has actually missed nearly 10 days of school. The full attendance policy is on the school's website (although it is under review following recent DfE changes). Here is a summary of the most important bits.

Telling the school if your child is absent

Parents/carers must contact school by 9am on the first day of their child's absence and then each day afterwards. This is important safeguarding: if your child is not at school in the morning and you haven't told them to expect this, then they must check that your child is safe. You can tell school that your child is absent by phoning 01202 673966 leaving a message or email oldtown.absence@coastalpartnership.co.uk with a reason for your child's absence. School office staff will contact parents on the first day that a pupil is absent without explanation. This contact will usually be a text message at first, asking the parent to call. If there is no response within about 15 minutes, the school must try to phone. This is time consuming for busy office staff – please help us by remembering to contact us in the first place.

Requests for absence during term time

Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances (defined as rare, significant, unavoidable and short). Requests should be made using the Request for Leave of Absence form (available from the school website or office) and must be submitted *before* any absence is taken.

As a general guide, the following might be considered as 'exceptional':

- Immediate¹ family weddings, christenings or funerals;
- Immediate family member returning home from Service Duty;
- Occasions of religious observance;

¹ 'Immediate' defined as parents and siblings

- Other situations where a ‘compassionate’ element is applicable.

Generally, the following *cannot* be considered ‘exceptional’:

- Family holidays and breaks;
- Parents’ profession or place of work making it difficult to align school and work holidays;
- Educational visits arranged by family members during school time;
- Family birthdays or other events;
- Birthdays.

After applying for term time absence, parents/carers will be notified of the Headteacher’s decision as quickly as possible. **If the absence is not agreed, then it should not be taken.** For unauthorised absences such as these, the school will consider requesting that the relevant Local Authority issues a fixed penalty notice (FPN). Fines are requested in line with the latest DfE requirements and thresholds. Fines may be issued on a ‘per parent, per child’ basis: this means that schools may request a FPN based on the household which requested and/or took the holiday and for both parents².

We respectfully remind parents that they should only tell the school that their child is unwell when this is actually the case.

Lateness

Punctuality is also important: lateness disrupts learning. If your child arrives at school after 09.00am they will be registered as ‘late’. Lateness beyond 9.15am will be counted as an absence for the morning session, unauthorised unless the school receives an acceptable reason. If your child is often late, the school will contact you to discuss this.

Monitoring attendance and punctuality

Children’s attendance is regularly monitored. Parents will usually be contacted if a child’s attendance drops below 96%. Schools work closely with the Local Authority and advice is taken where there are concerns about a child’s attendance.

Medical evidence

Occasionally, a child’s attendance becomes so low that the school cannot authorise any absences without seeing medical evidence, such as a prescription or a GP appointment. If this was in place for your child during last summer term, please note that this continues during autumn term until the school has seen regular attendance.

We are delighted to get this new school year under way and we thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards



Mr Paul Howieson

² ‘Parents’ defined as any adult in the household who has care of the child including ensuring regular attendance

CEO, Coastal Learning Partnership



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