

June 2023

Dear Parents

Holy Family Governing Body statement on attendance

It is a well-researched and rather obvious fact that there is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement in schools. Holy Family therefore prides itself on having very high rates of attendance and attainment, both areas being consistently significantly above Runnymede, Surrey and National averages. Our excellent record in this regard results from the hard work and determination of staff and parents working together to ensure that children make coming to school every day, and on time, a top priority.

There are only 190 school days in the year and our aim as a school is for every child to be present for every one of those days. We fully appreciate that there will be certain occasions when children will miss school for some reason, but we strive to reduce these to an absolute minimum. The school obviously authorises absence for significant illness, medical appointments that absolutely cannot be made out of school hours and for the unforeseen unhappy events that we are all unfortunately susceptible to. Having said that, we often find that we are better placed to support a child in need if they are actually in school but this obviously depends on the individual situation. On a more positive note, we also authorise absence for certain events where we believe that the children will benefit from engaging in a certain activity that we deem to be beneficial to their general education.

What we do not authorise absence for are: holidays and/or extended family events. Our view is that there are 13 weeks in the year when the children do not need to be in school and this is the time to book a holiday even if this doesn't tie in with other family celebrations or opportunities to travel. We appreciate that for some there are serious cost implications however our sole responsibility, as educational professionals, is to provide high quality education which we prioritise over everything else.

The vast majority of parents are pleased that their children attend Holy Family and children are proud to be part of our school family. They are proud of their achievements and proud to represent the school in the many varied opportunities we provide for them. One of the things people like about the school is that we are rigorous on maintaining the highest of standards and this means that we apply the expectations consistently without favour. Although those who have requests for permission for absence turned down are often disappointed, we feel that they would be far more disappointed overall if the school was not consistent in its approach or acted without integrity, professionalism or a constant rigorous drive for the highest educational standards.

The reason why we believe we need to enforce a rigorous policy is because we believe this is what is in the best interests of the student body as a whole. We believe that striving for 100% attendance is a crucial element in our on-going success as one of the top 10% of primary schools in the country. We also make this clear to parents when they are looking to obtain a place for their child(ren) at our school.



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Where parents choose to take unauthorised absence, then governors have a number of sanctions at our disposal, **including the use of Local Authority enforced fines**. Parents should therefore be aware that Surrey LA is now actively pursuing fines for parents who withdraw children from school without authorisation during term time. We obviously prefer not to pursue this course of action unless attendance or punctuality is blatantly or consistently unauthorised, but we are strongly encouraged by the Department for Education to deal with these matters rigorously **and therefore will pursue fines if necessary**.

The great success of our school is in no small part due to the fantastic support we get from parents and our highly valued partnership with you. Attendance for some is the “thin end of the wedge” i.e. they feel that they can afford to take their children out of school because they generally have good attendance and support us in many other ways. Unfortunately it doesn’t work like that, the bottom line is, you either support the school wholeheartedly or you don’t. If you choose not to, then it sends a very clear message to the children because they know exactly what the expectations are. If you choose not to support the school, the message is: “it’s important to do as you are asked at school but in certain situations, if it suits you better, you don’t have to”. I’m sure you’ll agree that this isn’t the message any parent would want to send to their son or daughter.

In short, we are urging you to continue to make the children’s education your number one priority and therefore asking you to please not take them out of school during term time. As always, we are willing to discuss difficult or complex situations on an individual basis – please don’t hesitate to contact the school if necessary.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Hounsell (Chair of Governors)

Mr S Tindall (Head teacher)



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