

## Attendance update 2019

As you are aware good attendance is a priority at St. Peter's and we appreciate the continuous support you are giving us in reaching our school target. Last year we were delighted to reach our Galileo Attendance target of 96% and would like to thank you for your support in helping us achieve this.

Following St. Peter's joining the Galileo Multi-Academy Trust, Galileo have appointed the Trust's own Education Welfare Officer, Mr. Hutchinson. His role will be working alongside schools and families to promote regular and punctual attendance of pupils in our primary schools. Galileo has adopted the Local Authority's Leave of Absence Policy along with other schools within the Borough of Redcar & Cleveland.

We offer the children various rewards for their attendance some you may already be familiar with, in particular the termly visit for the highest attending class and an end of year visit for those children who have achieved 100% attendance during the school year. We also award Year 6 children who have had persistently good attendance (97%+ each year they have attended St. Peter's) with the first ever pupil being recognised this year. After the October half term we will begin our attendance raffle where children will be entered into a prize draw to be drawn half-termly for every week that they have attended everyday and arrived on time.

### Pupil Absence

If your child is going to be absent from school, please contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence. You may either leave a message detailing your child's name and reason for absence or report this information to a member of staff in the school's office. The school's telephone number is 01287 676210 (option 1). Alternatively absences can be reported using the parentmail app. If your child comes to school on the taxi transport you will still need to notify the school yourself of any pupil absence as well as transport.

Notification may be given to school prior to the day of absence if, for example, a child has a medical appointment.

If a parent or carer does not call the school to report an absence, the school will telephone you to determine your child's whereabouts in compliance with the school's safeguarding procedures

Any request for leave of absence should be done by completing a leave of absence form, we also have a separate form for pre-school children in the Nursery and Ark. We cannot accept leave of absence requests via the parent mail app or through the answer machine.

### Attendance Monitoring and Procedures

Due to DfE statutory guidance which came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015, which raised the threshold for persistent absence to 90%, we have had to change the way in which we at St. Peter's monitor attendance to meet this new criteria, therefore attendance letters will be issued at the following points:

**Letter 1** will be issued for any child at 95% or below regardless of reason for absence, however this letter is just a reminder and an opportunity to work with each other if you feel we can be of assistance. Following the October half-term attendance will be checked on weekly basis and where letters are issued, will be reviewed following each school holiday.

**Letter 2** will be issued at 90% or below, medical evidence will be required to support your child's absence and parents will also be contacted to attend an attendance planning meeting which can be arranged to take place within school or at your home to see how we can work together to raise your child's attendance.

We are required to refer any child whose attendance drops below 85% or when all school's efforts to raise attendance have been unsuccessful to the Galileo Multi Academy Trust's Attendance Welfare Officer, however we hope that by working together with our families we will be able to help all of our pupils to achieve above the 95% mark.

### Leave of Absence

The Government, Local Authority, Galileo Trust and schools acknowledge the financial and work pressures some families are subject to however I am unable to authorise any leave of absence during term time unless the request is for exceptional personal family circumstances.

The school has a banding system for annual attendance, the main parts of which are as follows:

National average or above (currently 96%) – deemed as good attendance.

Below 95% - A level of attendance that causes concern

Below 90% - Persistently low level of attendance

When making the decision as to whether a fine has to be issued I have to consider the following:

1. Is your child's attendance for the past 12 months above the national average **at the time you travel**?
2. Is their annual attendance below 95% **upon their return**?
3. If so, is their annual attendance below **90% upon their return**?

All holiday absence is marked as unauthorised and will result in a referral to the Trusts Education Welfare Officer for either a warning letter or a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent, per pupil. If the answer to questions 2 or 3 is yes then you are putting yourself at risk of a fine, with the chance increasing the lower your child's attendance is upon your return.

It should also be noted that sitting in the 90-95% attendance bracket year after year also increases the chance of a fine even further, as does going on holiday at any time in September (a time seen as crucial to allow children to settle into a new class) or at any time during formal external examination periods, e.g. Year 1 phonic tests, Year 2/6 SATs. If a warning letter has already been issued in the previous 12 months, any unauthorised leave will automatically be referred for a fixed penalty notice.

Leave of Absence forms with full details of the legislation we follow are available from the main school office. They should be submitted at least 4 weeks before travel where possible and no sooner than 7 weeks for processing. You will receive a copy of the Leave of Absence form as well as letter with confirmation of my decision to authorise/unauthorise the leave.

We have also been instructed that we can no longer authorise non-school sporting competitions such as dance and football etc. as approved sporting activities and therefore a Leave of Absence Form will be required and attendance procedures applied. Where attendance is deemed good enough I may be able to authorise when the children are actually competing, however I cannot authorise time for travelling, this should be done outside of school hours.

I recognise that many families find this government policy extremely frustrating but it is legislation that I legally have to enforce. My advice would be to check with Mrs Wilson the school's attendance officer or myself before you book anything – particularly if you know your child has had a year of increased absence related to illness.

### Punctuality

To try and alleviate the number of children receiving a late mark we follow the procedure below:

- Children should not be on the yard before 8:40am when staff will begin to supervise on the yard. Parents are welcome to leave once staff have arrived on the yard. Children will line up and be ready to walk into school at 8:55am.
- If you need to speak to a member of staff you may take this opportunity whilst they are on the yard, alternatively come to the main school office
- The school gates will be locked at 9:00am following a second bell each morning.
- Any child arriving from 9:00am, once the gates are locked, will need to visit the main office and will enter school through the main reception doors. If a child arrives after 9:00am they will be recorded as a late code in the register and applies to any late arrivals (except those attending medical appointments) until 9:30am. This mark has no implication on a child's attendance it is purely for monitoring purposes. However, if your child appears to be receiving an increasing number of late marks we will inform you and may result in a referral to Mr. Hutchinson the Galileo Multi Academy Trust's Attendance Welfare Officer.
- Please note that registration closes at 9:30am. Any child arriving after this time is recorded as an unauthorised late with the exception of children attending appointments or unforeseen exceptional circumstances. Unauthorised late marks do affect attendance and the majority of the time could probably be avoided.

I would appreciate it, wherever possible, if you could book medical appointments for your child at the end of the school day or during holidays so their absence does not affect their learning. However, when appointments have to be during the day children should attend school where possible either side of their appointment, siblings should remain in school unless prior agreement is made with a member of staff.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that your child reaches their full potential and enjoys their time at St. Peter's.

Thanks for your continued support,

Richard Unthank  
Headteacher