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## **Headteacher**

The law regarding children taking time off school for holidays has been updated from 1st September 2024.

There have been lots of headlines in this about termtime holidays are now against the law. This is explained more below.

I have also included a roadmap, as I am aware that holidays aren't the only reasons for children not attending school – and this highlights the support we will be offering for other reasons.

This communication for our parents is in three sections:

Section 1: Why it is important that your child does not miss school – my book is missing a chapter!

Section 2: A summary of the new legislation.

Section 3: The new legislation (the more-wordy version) that has been issued by the Local Authority.

### **Section 1: Why it is important that your child does not take holidays during term-time – “My book is missing a chapter”.**

- Children who miss lessons are disadvantaged because they cannot catch up on the learning missed or the experience of sharing discussion with their class to secure understanding. This can be compared to reading a book where there is a chapter missing: the reader is not able to follow the story because there is a gap in the story.
- Coming back into school having missed lessons causes embarrassment for children and insecurity because their peers know what happened and the absent child does not.
- It causes disruption to the education of other children in the class because adults have to support the child who missed the lessons rather than supporting the learning of other children. This applies to every single lesson including art, design and technology, PE as well as phonics, maths and English.
- It can cause social difficulties for children who did not experience the same conversations, experiences or games that other children have engaged with. This can cause a lack of confidence and in some cases isolation.
- From time-to-time, all children are unwell, which of course cannot be avoided. So missing more school with holidays, further impacts on a child's learning.

### **Section 2: Summary of the new Legislation**

- Starts on 1st September 2024.
- School may grant authorised leave for exception circumstances only.
- The need or desire to have a holiday is not an exceptional circumstance.
- The leave must be authorised before the absence is taken.
- All decisions are made on individual merits. Exceptional circumstances are in the realm of weddings, funerals, difficult family situations, observing religious ceremonies and the like.
- Applications can only made by the parent with whom the child usually resides.
- All unauthorised absences will be referred to West Northamptonshire Attendance Service.

- The first leave of absence offence will result in a fine issued to each parent of each absent child at £160 (reduced to £80 per child if payment is made promptly).
- The second leave of absence offence within a period of three years will be £160. No reduced amount or payment plans.
- The third leave of absence offence within a 3-year period will be referred for criminal prosecution proceedings.

### **Section 3: The New Legislation – Updated Information for Parents**

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS** The Supreme Court clarified has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time (Platt v Isle of Wright 2017). The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school ‘regularly’ means that the children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996. The law states a leave of absence may only be granted by a school if an application is made in advance and if it considers there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Schools must judge each application individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school’s discretion. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. When making an application for Leave of Absence parents are advised to give sufficient information and time to allow the Head teacher the opportunity to consider all the exceptional circumstances and to notify parents of their decision. The school may also request further information on the application and supporting documentation where appropriate. It is advised that if the resident parent has not received notification or a response regarding the leave of absence application, it is their responsibility to ascertain if the leave is authorised prior to the start of the leave. The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the ‘resident’ parent ie the parent with whom the child normally resides. Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child is expected to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Where a leave of absence is requested, but additional days taken either prior to or after the request may be considered as part of the leave of absence. Leave of Absences which are not made in advance cannot be authorised in line with legislation. This will result in the absence being recorded as ‘unauthorised’. All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the West Northamptonshire Attendance Service, part of West Northamptonshire County Council. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with West Northamptonshire County Council’s Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices and in the first instance, as an alternative to prosecution proceedings. Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2023-24 It is important to note, Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days). Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to West Northamptonshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996. Leave of Absence taken in the academic year 2024-25 The law relating to Penalty Notices is due to change with effect from 1 September 2024. Therefore Penalty Notices issued for Leave of Absences taken after this date will be issued in accordance with the updated legislation.

- Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices – 4 in total).
  - o First Leave of Absence offence: The Penalty Notice amount of £160 to be paid within 28 days, this is reduced to £80 each child if paid within 21 days.
  - o Second Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice): The amount of £160 paid within 28 days. No reduced amount,
- Payment plans will not be offered and/or payments received outside of the 28 day period will not be accepted. Where a penalty notice expires unpaid the matter will be referred to West Northamptonshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider criminal prosecution.

- Third Leave of Absence offence within a 3 year period (from the date of issue of the first penalty notice) A penalty notices will be not be issued and the matter will be referred to West Northamptonshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996. Your child's progress academically as well as socially is our shared priority.

### **PTA Update**

Following the first meeting of the year, I am excited to let you all know about some of the events we have coming up this term:

KS2 Adventure Night – Friday 11th October, 6-8pm, £10 per child

Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 can come and try out lots of outdoor activities including axe throwing, archery and campfire lighting.

Halloween Disco – Friday 25th October, 5.30-7pm, £3 per child

Tuck shop, glow sticks and more available.

Parents are required to stay with nursery children who attend.

Christmas Market - Sunday 24th November, 1-4pm, Byfield Village Hall.

£1 per adult/kids free - stalls, refreshments, tombola, raffle and children's games!

Christmas Jumper Day – Friday 6th December

Non-Uniform Day - Donations of hamper goodies please such as alcohol, biscuits, chocolates, toiletries, candles, savoury food items etc.

Carols in the Playground – Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> December, 6pm, Free entry

Join us for a sing along of your favourite carols accompanied by mulled wine, hot drinks and mince pies. Don't forget to invite your friends, family and neighbours to this festive village event!

Cashpot for Schools

The PTA have signed up for the Cashpot for Schools initiative with Asda. All you have to do is opt in on the Asda Rewards App and select Byfield School. Every time you shop in store or online with Asda.com before November 30th we will earn cash whilst it costs you nothing. We earn £1 every time someone opts in and then 0.5% of the value of every shop. So even if you don't think you will do a shop please download the app and opt in anyway to gain us that extra £1!

Please also remember to join the 'Byfield School – Parents' Facebook group for regular updates about school and PTA events.

### **Studybugs** – report absence securely and help improve children’s health

Byfield has an efficient and secure system for reporting your child’s absence due to illness, called Studybugs.

Studybugs is a website and app, which will allow you to see your child's attendance, and inform the school if your child is not coming ill and the reason why.

When you report a child ill using Studybugs, the system informs the school straight away and will link you to UK Health Security Agency (formally public Health England) advice about medical conditions based on the symptoms or illnesses you enter (Please note, it does not provide medical advice or diagnosis, please consult your GP for this.)

If you haven’t already, please get the free Studybugs app, or register on the Studybugs website, and use it to tell us whenever your child’s ill and unable to attend school. A link will also be appearing on the school website for this.

Get the app or register now (<https://studybugs.com/about/parents>)

### **Dance Till Dawn** – Dance group starting on Tuesdays (after School)

Please find attached details of a new Dance Group (Club) which has started at Byfield School.

Contact/sign up details are on the attachments.

### **School Lunches – Kingswood Catering**

Please can I remind you to order meals by Wednesday (midnight) for meals the following week. I attach the menus up to half term. This Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, is National Census Day. Kingswood are putting on a special “Space themed” Menu. If you wish to change the option you have ordered for your child for this day, please could you send Mrs Thorburn a message in the office and this will be amended.

### **Census Day**

National Census Day is Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. It is important that we have all the correct information in our school records. Recently, a letter was sent home regarding Pupil Premium. If you think your child might be entitled to this, please could you speak to Mrs Thorburn in the office, who will arrange to apply for this. There is a letter attached here with the details.

### **Music lessons – Guitar Tuesday morning Strings Wednesday morning Keyboard Thursday morning**

*Please ask at the Office if your child is interested in taking up music lessons*

PE EYFS Monday and Forest School Tuesday

PE Horse Chestnut Fri Forest School Wednesday

PE Redwood Tues/Fri

PE Kauri Wed/Fri

**Breakfast Club** – every day from 8am. This will be held in the Library. **Please note Breakfast Club opens at 8am**

**After School Club** – every day up to 5.30pm. Please note that on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday the After School Club will be in the Hall up to 4.30pm and then in the Library. On Fridays it is Film Night so After School Club will be in Redwood Class, next to the office.

**Hotshots Tuesday (before school) – starting Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October at 8am**

**Dance Till Dawn – Tuesday (after school)**

## **Dates for the Diary**

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September** – Tempest Photography (catch up session in school) 2pm

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October** – Toy Day at Byfield – Year 1/2 (along with Temple Herdewyke)

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October** – Harvest Festival (afternoon) at the Church in Byfield

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October** – Redwood trip to church

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October** – Adventure Night at School

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October** – Bags2School collection by 9am

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October** – Halloween Disco 5.30-7.30pm

**Half Term** Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October – Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November** – Christmas Market in Byfield Village Hall

**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December** – Christmas Jumper Day

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December** - Carols in The Playground 6pm

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December** – break up for Christmas break

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025** – school opens, Breakfast Club from 8am