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Empowering Children through Creative Learning

Deputy Head
Mr A Currie
B.A.; NPQH

24th September 2015

Dear Parents and Carers,

EVERY LESSON COUNTS!!

Here at Park Grove School we are committed to ensuring that every child reaches their full learning and development potential. One of the most important aspects of gaining a good education and learning how to succeed in life is to ensure that your child has a good record of attendance and punctuality. We monitor attendance closely as part of our commitment to the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding responsibilities.

In a perfect world, every school would like every child to have 100% attendance. However, Park Grove recognises the fact that sometimes children become ill and cannot come into school or there may be a family emergency that requires children to be out of school.

Holidays in Term-Time – Important reminder about the Law

This is to remind you of the changes made by the Department of Education (DfE), which affect the way in which Park Grove can respond to requests for children to be taken out of school during Term-Time. These changes came into effect last September and apply nationally and are aimed at preventing children from falling behind in their education. 15% of all absences in primary schools are due to children being removed for holidays in Term-Time. The recent changes mean that unless there are exceptional circumstances, Miss Sawyer will not be able to authorise any requests for leave.

Should you choose to take the leave of absence in term time it will be regarded as unauthorised and I may consult with the Local Authority and ask that they consider what action they can take. I am aware that they could consider issuing you with a fixed penalty notice under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act. Any parents/carers issued with such a notice will be subject to a prompt fine of either £60 per child (if paid within 21 days) or £120 (if paid after the 21st day but within 28 days). Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice could lead to prosecution.

Park Grove School celebrates a higher than national level of attendance and we all need to work together to ensure this continues. An important element is being present at school to keep up with new subjects and to learn and practise new skills. '**Poor attendance at school can have a hugely damaging effect, and children who attend school regularly are nearly four times more likely to achieve five or more good GCSE grades than those who are regularly absent'** (Department for Education).

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION

If a child is absent, **parents / carers** should inform school of their absence and the reasons for it by:

- making a phone call prior to 9am on the day of a child's absence explaining the child is ill and on each consecutive day thereafter;

We encourage families to book medical appointments outside of school hours but we understand this is not always the case. We understand appointments issued by hospitals usually have to be adhered to but doctors or dentist appointments can be made at a family's request.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEES

The Department for Education (DfE) are changing the criteria that they use to define a child as a Persistent Absentee (PA). From September 2015, a PA will be any child who has missed 10% or more of possible sessions (one session = $\frac{1}{2}$ day in school), so therefore, where a student's attendance is 90% or lower. The table below illustrates how this relates to the academic year 2015-2016;

| School Term | Proposed 10% absence threshold (Cumulative) |
|--------------------|---|
| Autumn Half-Term 1 | 7 sessions (3.5days) |
| Autumn Half-Term 2 | 17 sessions (7 days) |
| Spring Half-Term 1 | 20 sessions (10 days) |
| Spring Half-Term 2 | 27 sessions (13.5 days) |
| Summer Half-Term 1 | 34 sessions (17 days) |
| Summer Half-Term 2 | 41 sessions (20.5 days) |

(Please be assured that children with serious medical needs will be excluded from our PA data and we will continue to work with parents/carers and other relevant parties to support the needs of these children). As a school we are proactive in monitoring children's attendance and supporting those who require additional assistance in this area; our initial interventions begin once a child's attendance drops below 95% and this will continue to be the case. This threshold is chosen to reflect the direct link between attendance and achievement which is evidenced in the DfE's recently published data highlighting that 73% of students with over 95% attendance achieved five or more A*- C GCSE grades.

PUNCTUALITY

Children should arrive at school by **8:45am**. Registration takes place between 8:50am and 9:00am. If children arrive after **9am**, they are marked as late in the register. Each class teacher sets children 'early bird work' which we consider an important part of the school day as it provides them with additional learning opportunities.

Persistent lateness causes disruption for the child, the class and the teacher. Parents should therefore try to ensure that their child arrives in time for the start of school. We understand that school mornings can be hectic but when your child is late for school they are missing out on vital parts of their education.

If your child arrives **20 minutes** after the register has been taken, they will have an "unauthorised" late mark – this is the same as an "unauthorised absence" and will count as if they are absent for the whole morning session.

If late arrivals become an issue, parents/carers will then be contacted by phone or letter or even invited into school for a meeting with Miss Sawyer and myself to see what support can be offered in order to improve the situation.

Attendance Awards

Park Grove enjoys celebrating success in all areas of school life and to encourage and celebrate good attendance and punctuality, we introduced an attendance reward system at the beginning of **January 2015**. The children were really keen to achieve an award and at the end of the year **132** children received their well-earned gift voucher and certificates! This was a fantastic result and in light of this success, we have decided to raise the stakes this year!

The rewards system will be based the following:

For each term – children with attendance of 98%+ will receive a gold certificate

For the whole year – children with attendance of 98%+ will receive a platinum certificate

For the whole year – children with 100% will receive a platinum certificate and a £5 gift voucher.

For children whose attendance or punctuality has proven a struggle and where we have seen a significant improvement, the family will receive a postcard home in recognition for the efforts made to rectify this.

This reward system takes into account ALL absences but it is important that parents/carers know the difference between authorised or unauthorised absences.

An absence is authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent / carer. E.g. If a child has been unwell and school receives a phone call. An absence is unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of Miss Sawyer or if no reason is provided. E.g. If a child is away on holiday during term-time or absent for a reason which is not considered an exceptional circumstance. Miss Sawyer may decide to consult with the Local Authority regarding the action to take over unauthorised absences if the situation arises.

If you have any questions or queries relating to attendance, punctuality or the new reward scheme, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We hope that our rewards system will help to improve punctuality and attendance at Park Grove. On the whole, we do well in this area but we are constantly striving to raise our standards in all areas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support in this important matter.

Best wishes



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