



Hightown Road
Ringwood
Hampshire
BH24 1NH

Telephone: 01425 473554

E-mail: admin.office@ringwood-junior.hants.sch.uk

Website: www.ringwood-junior.hants.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs S-A Evans
BSc Hons, PGCE, NPQH

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Dear Parent/Carer

Important Update: Changes to Education-related Penalty Notices Information for Parents

It seems an appropriate time at the start of a new school year, to clarify the position with regard to absences from school that have not been authorised.

Children only get one chance of primary schooling and this is the time when most of the fundamentals of education are covered in learning to read, write and calculate, as well as entry into a wide range of subjects that will be studied at secondary school.

It is a crucial time and it is essential that every child attends every day, as often, missed learning cannot be made up. There are times, of course, when illness or medical appointments, interrupt this. Whilst every attempt is made to help a child catch up on this missed learning, we ask that appointments, where possible, be taken outside of school hours and where this is not possible, children attend school before an appointment and are returned to school afterwards.

What is of concern is when a child is absent for a period of time outside of these reasons. Very occasionally, authorisation can be given, but this is rare. The concern is when children are taken out of school for family holidays, birthdays and other 'special occasions' and this constitutes unauthorised absence.

I am sure that you will have been aware that the government are clamping down on this and have announced changes including an increase in Penalty Notices, which came into effect at the start of term. There are rules we have to follow on behalf of the Local Authority. All of the money collected from the Penalty Notice goes straight to Hampshire County Council.

In the light of these changes, I want to make you aware of the increases and also the reasons often given as a request for a period of absence which are not accepted by the Local Authority.



The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice **must** be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Local Authority DO NOT accept the following as exceptional circumstances:

- My work does not allow me to take holidays during the school summer holiday period, even if they provide a letter.
- My child needs a holiday at quieter times due to their needs.
- Our holiday has been gifted and paid for and did not have a choice of dates.
- My child has good or 100% attendance.
- I will report my child being sick - schools are expected to carry out home visits, if a holiday is suspected, school will report to the local authority for a penalty notice fine.

I understand many of the reasons given to accompany requests but I must reiterate that any absences not agreed with myself for exceptional circumstances, will be declined and your child's absence will be marked as 'unauthorised' and a Penalty Notice will be issued if threshold is met (5 days of unauthorised absence).

I would urge you to support the school, and your child's learning by ensuring they attend every day.

Yours sincerely



Mrs SA Evans
Headteacher

