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**'Growing & Learning Together'**

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Our ref RM<sup>c</sup>G/HMH

6 November 2014

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may know there has been a lot of coverage in the news about absence from school and what is deemed an "exceptional circumstance".

The current school and cluster policy is that absences may be authorised for up to 5 days in exceptional circumstances only. Guidance has just recently been issued to Headteacher's which hopes to clarify this situation and I thought I would share some of the details with families so that you are aware of what constitutes an exceptional circumstance.

Extracts from the NAHT guidance on authorised absence in schools;

- Term times are for education. This is a priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may, however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Absence for bereavement is usually considered an exceptional circumstance. Absences for religious observances are often taken into account, only for the ceremony and the travelling time, but not extended leave. This is for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled time.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.



As you can see, Headteacher's are limited in what they are able to authorise and therefore any absence which does not come under "exceptional circumstance" is unauthorised. If the unauthorised absence is longer than 5 days or 85% in a 6 week period, it then automatically triggers a referral for a Fixed Penalty Notice.

I hope that this clarifies any questions parents have.

Yours sincerely

Mrs R M'Glone  
Headteacher

