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Please ask for: Judith Harwood

Date 13 July 2016

My Ref JAH/KB

Your Ref

Dear Parent

You may be aware from media reports that Plymouth City Council passed a motion at the meeting of full Council on Monday 11 July that this Council will no longer issue penalty notices (which include a fine) to parents who take their children on holiday during term time. This came into immediate effect and so when head teachers instruct us to take action we will not be issuing a fine. I think it is important to clarify what this means.

- Government legislation and local policy have not changed as a result of the motion passed by full Council. Parents still need to seek permission from the head teacher to take their children out of school in term time. Head teachers are still not able to authorise absence for holidays.
- If your child is absent for a holiday without the permission of the head teacher it will be marked as unauthorised absence. If your child is absent for more than 8 sessions (4 days) the local authority will be notified and a request made to intervene.
- However, as a result of the motion passed at full Council we will no longer issue any new penalty notices where the only unauthorised absence is a holiday during term time. Penalty notices issued to parents prior to the motion being passed will not be refunded or withdrawn. All cases waiting to be heard by the court will be reviewed.
- Exceptional circumstances can apply so always check with your child's school for advice on your case.
- As stated, head teachers will continue to report any unauthorised absence for term time holidays over 8 sessions to the City Council (the local authority) and although a fixed penalty notice or fine will not be issued, we will be writing to parents to remind them of the need for their children to be in school and warn that any high levels of absence may result in prosecution.
- In cases where a child's attendance falls below 90 per cent we have a statutory safeguarding responsibility and will address persistent absence. In cases where a parent has not ensured regular attendance for their child (with less than 90% as the indicator) the City Council will consider prosecution in each case.

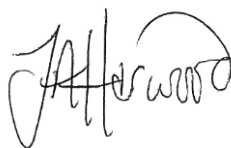
- Ofsted consider attendance of more than 95% at secondary school and 96% at primary school as being the right standard and so you will find that your school expects your child's attendance to be at these levels.

Council Leader Ian Bowyer said: "We had not planned to make any changes to policy at this stage as we wanted to wait until the outcome of the Isle of Wight appeal through the Supreme Court was heard, and we received clear guidance from the Department for Education about any proposed changes to the current legislation. We will seek to review local policy following any changes in legislation when they are known. I would urge parents to think very carefully before they take their child out of school as there is a clear link between educational achievement and pupils not attending school. There is a link too between educational attainment, earning and health benefits later in life: we remain committed to promoting education for all children and therefore believe attendance is important. I am absolutely clear that that we will continue to work with parents, head teachers, schools and governing bodies to reduce persistent absence by building on the success that schools and our education colleagues have already achieved in supporting attainment and ensuring all our young people fulfil their full potential."

Yours sincerely



Councillor Ian Bowyer
Leader, Plymouth City Council



Judith Harwood
Assistant Director (Learning and Communities)