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"A good school at the heart of the community"

ATTENDANCE theme newsletter – 26.2.16

Dear parents, carers, families and friends,

This is an extra newsletter to remind you about some issues around absence and attendance. As you know, we have an Education Welfare Officer who works with us and with parents around improving children's attendance. Her name is Naina Zavery and we've found her very supportive for a number of our families since she started working with us.

Naina and I had one of our regular meetings this week and reviewed different aspects of the attendance/absence data for the school. With regard to holiday requests, for example, we both felt that it would help to remind everyone that **the school can only authorise absences during term time under exceptional circumstances**. I've added a list of examples of exceptional circumstances to the end of this letter as a reminder. We are legally required to follow government policy on this, and it does ensure that families can see the policy being applied fairly in all cases.

We will sometimes request further information from families about a holiday request if it isn't clear whether the circumstances allow us to authorise the absence. Following this, some of Naina's work involves reviewing unauthorised absences and making contact with families to discuss next steps.

Attendance and Impact

- a child who is absent for a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life
- 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all
- poor examination results limit young people's options and poor attendance suggests to colleges and employers that these students are unreliable
- poor school attendance is also closely associated with crime - a quarter of school age offenders have truanted repeatedly
- at least 1 million children take at least one half day off a year without permission
- 7.5 million School days are missed each year through unauthorized absence.

All absence at any stage leads to gaps in your child's learning. This in turn can:

- mean that they fall behind in work
- affect their motivation
- affect their enjoyment of learning
- lead to poor behavior
- affect their desire to attend school regularly
- affect their confidence in school
- mean they miss out on the social life of school and extracurricular opportunities and experiences
- affect their ability to have or keep friendships.



Naina also works with families where there has been 'persistent absence', and will sometimes arrange to meet with parents when a child has been absent from school on a number of occasions. I thought you might find it interesting to see some information from Naina about this in the text box on the previous page. It is important to remember that the whole purpose of all of this work is to ensure that children get the fullest benefit of their education and don't experience any of the very negative consequences of missing school.

If you would like to contact Naina directly, her contact details are below:

Parents can seek further clarification from EWSM on 07947994289 or email naina.zavery@ews-m.com

'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria for authorised absences in term time at Heather Primary School

It is not possible to define all 'exceptional circumstances', therefore the circumstances of each holiday application will be taken into account on an individual basis. However, examples of what might be considered 'exceptional circumstances', as agreed by the Governors at Heather Primary School are:

- Service personnel returning from or scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays i.e. in some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time period. **This must be supported by documentary evidence from the employer.**
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. **Evidence must be provided by qualified professionals such as a Doctor.**
- Holiday due to factory shut down **(with proof shown to the school to verify from employer).**
- Accredited Exam – ballet/music (extra-curricular).
- Gifted & Talented opportunity (acting part in a pantomime, Wimbledon ball person etc.)
- Bereavement.
- Serious family crisis.
- Wedding – close family relative.
- Religious Day.
- Other exceptional circumstances to be considered on an individual basis, which are "unusual" or "rare".