



Waterbeach Community Primary School

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Dear parents/carers

ATTENDANCE LETTERS

I would like to remind everyone about the three-letter attendance monitoring system that we follow. The Government have made it clear to all school leaders that the number one priority for schools is to ensure that children attend school.

It is a statutory duty for parents to ensure that children attend school. In primary school, some children miss, on average, three weeks of school per year. That is half a year of school by the end of year 6. Consequently, the Government has put strict restrictions on schools with regards to the level of absence tolerated, and all attendance must be regularly monitored, and schools must answer for their data to the local authority and Ofsted.

Head Teachers cannot authorise holidays. **Please note that the Department of Education has now authorised the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices for single event absences of at least 3 consecutive school days or more where these absences are unauthorised because they are neither exceptional nor unavoidable. Previously there had to be evidence of historical absences but this is no longer the case and has been implemented nationally with effect from 1st September 2017.**

As a result of such monitoring requirements, we have developed an attendance monitoring system.

- **Letter A** – This is an individual reminder that your child's attendance is falling. We recognise that it may be because of illness but it lets you know the figure we have on our school system. It is usually sent out if periods of illness have resulted in attendance falling below 96% and it is **only for your information**.
- **Letter 1** – This letter is a clear reminder that, regardless of reason, your child's attendance is now below 96% and causing concern. **It is written formally and is part of the evidence trail to ensure that school has followed a process.** We know that most children may not need Letter 1 as absence is due to illness.
- **Letter 2** – This letter shows that your child's attendance has now fallen below 94% and absence is becoming/is persistent – there may be numerous reasons for this. It invites you to meet with me. This is an informal meeting so that we can go through your child's attendance record together. My experience of these meetings is that parents tell me about their child's illness or other reasons for their absence. Once I have had this face-to-face discussion, we talk about monitoring attendance in the immediate future and set attendance targets. This is individual for each case. Meeting together allows us to talk through the reasons for absence and for the school to offer support if required. It is easier and more pleasant to do this than continue to write letters.



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- **Letter 3** – This letter is sent after a scheduled meeting, laying out the attendance targets of 90%+ required over a set monitoring period. If attendance continues to fall over this monitoring period, is mainly unauthorised and goes below 90%, school will refer to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team which may lead to a penalty notice and/or prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. In these final instances, actions are out of the school's influence.

This process has developed over the years to give parents multiple chances to improve children's attendance. All early letters sent out by school are done so as information. Attendance at school is important and I know that some parents may feel offended by these letters, but the system exists to ensure that all children have a fair chance to get a decent education. A child who has 95% attendance at the end of the school year has missed 10 days of schooling. We also understand that if your child has been ill for a while this absence is not in your control. **Obviously, we do not want children to attend school if they are sick.** If you feel worried about this, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Mrs Rutherford. You will find NHS guidance called "Is my child too ill for school?" by following this link. [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

We know that every child's attendance can dip at certain times in their school career. It is our job to monitor this, talk to you and offer support or to enforce the statutory duty afforded us by the Government, if this is needed. The letters and meetings are meant as support and assurance for both sides.

We do hope that you understand that the system exists to support EVERY child and we know all cases are different. The letters are an important part of the system, as are the meetings and we ask for your support in ensuring fair provision for all our children. If you wish to find out more about attendance, please scan the QR code below.

Yours sincerely

J GREEN
Head Teacher

