



St Ives First School,
Sandy Lane,
St Ives,
Ringwood,
Hants
BH24 2LE

Tel: 01425 475478
Fax: 01425 472641

Email: office@stives.dorset.sch.uk

Web: www.stives.dorset.sch.uk

Headteacher: Mrs L Crossley

23rd July 2010

Attendance

Dear Parents

With attendance targets in schools becoming an increasing issue, I write to let you know how falling attendance standards impact on your child. The government, local authority and school view individual attendance of 86% or less as having a very **negative impact upon learning**. This percentage also includes lateness (after 9.30am).

The Government and local Authority are taking a much stronger stand on poor levels of attendance (which does include holidays in term time!)

Good attendance is important because:

- Regular attendees make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attendees find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attendees find learning more satisfactory
- Regular attendees have an easier transfer to the next school

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ringing on the first morning of all absences with the reason
- Arranging dental appointments **out of school hours** or during school holidays
- Keeping us updated by telephone or letter if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a **minimum** of 96%,
- Maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance

We will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as soon as possible
- Remind parents via personal letters of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality with letters if low attendance affects your child's progress
- Publish your child's attendance rate in his/her annual school report
- Let you know if we are contacting the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school regularly to review and support attendance matters, if we continue to have concerns

Punctuality

- The whistle goes for the start of school at 8.50am so you need to ensure your child is coming through the school gate **by** 8.45am
- It is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise school work for the rest of the day.
- Arrivals after the close of the register may be marked as unauthorised absence in line with government guidance.



Authorised absences

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as ‘authorised absences’. It is important to understand that as a school we are **not** suggesting you send your child to school if they are ill, in fact we positively encourage you to keep your child at home until they are well again.

Unauthorised absences

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences.

Examples are:

- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because its your child’s birthday
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Waiting on a delivery
- Unauthorised holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation is considered unsatisfactory

Unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The Education Welfare Officer may contact you and consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

Legal note:

“Parents have a legal duty to ensure regular and full time attendance at school, of registered pupils (Section 7 Education Act 1996). Failure to do so is an offence. In some cases, parents are prosecuted or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.” Education Act 1996

Term Time Leave of Absence

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays. **Government guidance states that** “Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during term time” and “Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances that warrant it.”

Leave of absence is only allowed at the discretion of the Headteacher and we have been clearly told by the government that the fact that a holiday is cheaper during term time is **not** to be considered “special circumstances”.

Therefore following guidance from the local authority and falling in line with other schools in Dorset and neighbouring local authorities, **no holidays** will be authorised as of September 2010 unless it is for ‘special circumstances’. Parents may request leave of absence of up to 10 days due to ‘special circumstances’, however if this is not approved by the headteacher and the parent proceeds to take the pupil out of school, all the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

We value your support in helping us to maintain high standards. **“Every day counts...”**

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Crossley
Headteacher

