

10th October 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

At Sandford St Martin's Primary School, we firmly believe that regular school attendance is essential for the educational progress and overall wellbeing of our pupils. We hope that this letter helps you to keep in mind the key aspects of our and the national approach to attendance.

Why regular attendance matters

Consistent school attendance allows your child to:

- Fully engage in learning and make academic progress
- Develop critical social skills by interacting with their friends and teachers
- Grow in confidence in a supportive and nurturing school environment
- Build a sense of routine and responsibility, essential for future success
- Data shows children who attend less than 95% do considerably less well than their peers

Attendance support

We understand that some pupils may face challenges that impact their attendance. We aim to provide support and guidance to pupils and families in such situations. If you encounter any difficulties related to attendance, please do reach out to myself or your child's class teacher.

Acceptable reasons for absence

We recognise that there are circumstances where a pupil's absence can't be avoided.

Acceptable reasons for being absent from school include:

- **Illness:** when your child is unwell, either physically or mentally, and unable to attend school
- **Medical appointments:** if your child has a medical appointment that cannot be scheduled outside school hours, please notify us in advance
- **Religious observance:** we respect the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of our pupils. If your child needs to be absent for religious observance, please submit a request and the Headteacher will review it
- **Exceptional circumstances:** in exceptional situations, such as family emergencies or unforeseen events, please contact the school immediately to discuss the absence.

How to report unplanned absences

In the event of an unplanned absence, we ask that you follow these steps:

Contact the school: on the day of the absence, please call the school office before 9am to inform us about your child's absence

Provide a reason for absence: please provide an explanation for the absence, such as illness or family emergency, to help us maintain accurate records

Term-time holidays

Term-time holidays are not permitted during the school year. Absences due to term-time holidays are disruptive to learning and lead to missed opportunities in the classroom. Absence from school can only be authorised for **exceptional circumstances** such as religious observance, traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes, bereavement of a family member, children of service personnel about to be deployed, wedding of an immediate family member and one-off sporting/performing arts competitions.

Sanctions for unauthorised absence

The headteacher may issue a fine, via Dorset Council, (known as a fixed-penalty notice) for unauthorised absence. If issued with one, you will need to pay this directly to the local authority – £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

The decision whether to issue a fine will take into account whether the national threshold has been met – namely 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks – as well as other factors.

Before a fine is issued, you may receive a notice to improve to give you a chance to engage with support.

My question hasn't been answered here

Please get in touch with me by telephone or email with any further questions, and we'll be happy to discuss them with you.

Thank you for your co-operation in making sure your child receives the best possible educational experience.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Pampin