



Lower Halstow School

Part of the Lower Halstow & Newington CEP
Schools Federation

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Executive Headteacher

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Dear Parents/Carers of Children at Lower Halstow School

Information regarding Attendance and Penalty Notice for Unauthorised Absence

Lower Halstow School prides itself on good attendance and the overall attendance for 2014 – 15 was 95.48%, which is slightly above the government requirement of 95%. I am writing to inform you of the guidelines that have been issued and changes to the school's Attendance Policy and procedures.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Penalty Notices can be issued for unauthorised absence from school for the following, unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice in these circumstances would conflict with other intervention strategies in place:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (5 days) after the register has been closed
- Unauthorised absence for any public examination of which dates are published in advance
- Unauthorised absence for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance.

The following circumstances will be considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Parents taking their children out of school for holidays in term time without the school's authorisation. (From 1st September 2013, Headteacher's are unable to agree leave of absence during term-time unless they are satisfied that there are "exceptional circumstances".
- Overt truancy (including pupils caught on truancy sweeps)
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the school register has closed)
- Where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours during the first five days of exclusion.

The classroom doors are open from 8.30 am so children can arrive from this time. The school day starts at 8.50 am when the register is taken. Children have their first lesson at 9.00 am, so if a child arrives after this time this is unauthorised.

It is the parent/carers responsibility to contact the school each day their child is absent, by 9.30 am, to explain the reason for absence and inform the school that the child is in safe keeping. If no reason for absence has been provided, parent/carers are contacted by text. If no reply to the text is received the absence will be marked unauthorised.

Please also inform the School Office if your child is likely to be late and to order a school lunch if this is required. Children who are late should be accompanied to the School Office, by a parent/carer, who can sign the children in.

All other absences should be applied for in advance, i.e. with a letter or appointment card via the School Office.

It is the Executive Headteacher's decision as to whether absences are authorised and is not obliged to accept a parent/carers explanation; a letter or a telephone message from parent/carer does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised parent/carers will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Where there is persistent absence or lateness resulting in low attendance the Head of School and Family Liaison Officer will invite parent/carers to a meeting to discuss support which is available. Where a Penalty Notice is issued the cost is £60 per parent or person with respective parental responsibility, per child, if paid within 21 days, or £120 per parent with respective parental responsibility, per child, if paid within 28 days.

I would like to thank all parents, carers and children for their support and commitment to ensuring good attendance at Lower Halstow School.

Yours sincerely



Mrs C M Walker
Executive Headteacher

