

LEARNING TOGETHER TRUST

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Tuesday 15th October 2024

Re: Attendance and Leave of Absence Requests

Dear Parents and Carers,

As Learning Together Trust Attendance Champion, I am delighted with the start we have made this academic year. The attendance across our Trust Family is well above the national average and the number of children who are persistently absent (below 90% attendance) is well below the national figure. The more our children attend school, the more they will achieve and we will continue to strive to have our children in school as often as possible.

I wrote to you earlier in the term to explain the new thresholds around Education Penalty Notices (EPNs). The main change is that an EPN can be issued if, *'a child has 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period'*. This now means that if a child has a 5-day Term-Time Holiday then an EPN may be issued.

Due to the reduced thresholds, our schools are not always receiving Term-Time Leave of Absence requests when children are being taken out of school for a holiday, and parents and carers are stating their child is unwell/ill instead. In most cases where this happens, school will become aware that the child is on holiday and will unauthorise the absence.

We fully sympathise that currently hard-working parents and carers are being exploited by travel companies who raise their prices significantly during school holidays periods. Unfortunately, we cannot accept a cheaper holiday as a justifiable reason to authorise a request and requests for Term-Time holidays will rarely be authorised.

We would like to urge all parents and carers to be honest with schools about leave requests. The home-school relationship is based on trust and the difficult conversations that arise as a result of misinformation can damage this relationship. From a Trust perspective, we greatly appreciate honesty in reasons given for a leave of absence request. If Headteachers are unable to authorise your request but you still go ahead with it, then at least you have made an informed choice to do so and you understand the risks around a potential Penalty Notice. More importantly, the trust between school and home has been maintained.

Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. M. Rigby
Head of System Leadership & Attendance Champion