



September 2014

Dear Parents / Guardians

## HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME

There is continuing concern, both locally and nationally, about the number of school absences linked to term time holiday. Although our school achieves excellent results and enjoys a very positive reputation, we still suffer from term time holiday absences; last year despite a high overall attendance rate, 349 pupil days were lost this way.

It is easy to underestimate the impact of a few days away from school. A 90% attendance rate over a child's time at school (about 4 weeks' absence each year) would mean that by the end of Year 11 the equivalent of over half a school year will have been missed. There is also much statistical evidence showing the detrimental effect absences can have on test and examination results. On average 17 absences during a school year results in one less grade for a GCSE. Data shows that about 70% of pupils with an average of over 12 days absence per year, fail to achieve 5 A\* - C or better.

**Attendance:** there has been a change of law that now means that it is illegal for any student to be absent for a holiday in term time. There is no longer any entitlement to absence for this purpose except in extreme circumstances and I ask all parents to be aware of this and to work with us to ensure high attendance at school. Penalty notices may have to be enforced if absence has been taken without appropriate authorisation from a senior member of staff at school. Any possible absences other than illness must always be discussed with us as early as possible and **before** any bookings are made.

The Schools' Minister has recently said that parents need to understand that even a couple of days off during term can have a negative impact on their child's progress, "schools should not tolerate instances where parents wilfully take their child out of school without authorisation".

Education Welfare Officers monitor the attendance of all pupils and will initiate formal procedure where necessary. Parents and guardians are reminded that Penalty Notices will be considered in cases where pupils are either absent from school without authorisation, or when an absence is linked to a holiday application that has been refused.

Penalty notice information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance> and scroll down to penalty notice. Information on taking holidays in term time can be found at <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/learning-and-teaching/welfare/holidaysduringterm/>

Yours sincerely

Mr D Gray Head Teacher

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