

# Raynsford VC Lower School

September '09

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

We believe that promoting regular attendance is part of creating an effective school, which is committed to raising the levels of achievement for all its pupils.

The Governors of Raynsford wish to move from an existing ethos of 'it's ok to take time out of school for holidays so long as it isn't more than 10 school days' to one of 'it's not acceptable to take time out of school for any holiday'.

### Principles

- Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.
- Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required and for this reason it would be appreciated if parents could phone the school on the first day of absence.
- **Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause).
- **Unauthorised absences** are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, holidays, truancy and absences which have not been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register.
- Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.
- Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Education Authority. He or she will also try to resolve the difficulties. However, continued unsatisfactory attendance will result in parents being issued with penalty notices. These officers can also initiate court proceedings to prosecute parents.
- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

## **Procedures**

The school has made the decision that it will not approve applications for leave of absence during term-time unless in 'exceptional' circumstances, which will be at the discretion of the Governing Body. This responsibility has been delegated to the Headteacher.

If, after careful consideration, parents feel that **exceptional** circumstances apply to their situation then they are asked to complete a form and attach it to their written explanation showing how they meet the following criteria.

- The absence could not be planned to be taken outside school term time.
- It does not affect the main testing/assessment period which at Raynsford is predominantly the month of May. This is especially relevant to yrs.2 and 4.
- It is not during the beginning (first two weeks) of a new school term.
- Approval for leave of absence has been sought at least 4 weeks beforehand.
- No other absences have previously been taken during the academic year for which leave is requested other than:
  - a. Illness which will have been marked as 'I' on the register's system
  - b. No more than one day's absence for other circumstances marked as 'C' on the register's system.

After the school's consideration there will be three outcomes from which parents will be notified in writing:

1. The application will be refused.
2. The application will require further written evidence.
3. The application will be granted.

Although the school cannot prevent a child from having leave of absence, if the child's absence from school is during the time-scale for which the application was requested it will be registered as an 'unauthorised absence'. Any leave of absence which is taken without Governors' approval could be highlighted by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) during the termly Register check. This could result in a referral being made to the Education Welfare Authority

## **Other Circumstances**

Occasionally parents may wish to take their child out of school for other reasons for one day.

If the Headteacher decides that the absence is acceptable within the given situation then this will be marked in the register as 'C'. Only one 'C' per year is allowed.

## **Lateness**

Children are expected to attend on time to be given a mark for each session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Lateness before registers close is marked as 'L' and late arrival after registration without good reason is counted as unauthorised absence.