

Salisbury Primary School

Salisbury Street

Darlaston,

Walsall

WS10 8BQ

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TERM TIME ABSENCE

Dear Parents/Carers,

I thought it important to share with you Walsall Children's Services and indeed Salisbury Primary School's current position regarding attendance. Every year the Governors and Headteacher have to agree Absence/Attendance Targets with the Local Authority and the Department for Education (DfE). Progress towards these targets is monitored **WEEKLY**, by our attendance officer from Walsall Council, who reports back to the authority on any issues regarding pupils arriving late to school and/or absence of pupils.

FOR SALISBURY PRIMARY THIS ACADEMIC YEAR THE TARGET IS 96%

Startling Fact!!!

If you miss school you miss lessons, which may not be repeated. This means:	½ day absent	=	3 morning lessons or 2 afternoon lessons missed
	1 day absent	=	5 lessons missed
	3 days absent	=	15 lessons missed
	1 week absent	=	25 lessons missed
	2 weeks absent	=	50 lessons missed

An attendance record of 95% may seem very good, but in fact this means that two weeks from the school year have been missed! I am sure that you are acutely aware of the impact of time off school; not only does it negatively affect children's learning but it can also affect their relationships with their peers.

Obviously there will be times when children are too poorly to attend school and this cannot be avoided, but when a number of days holiday leave within term time are added to this, the problem is exacerbated. As a result of this many schools throughout Walsall are beginning to take a harder line with attendance and in particular with holiday leave.

Why does coming to school every day matter?

- **Your child feels a bit left out**
- **They get upset when they fall behind others in their work**
- **They have to renew friendships**
- **Your child can lose touch**
- **Your child doesn't know how to do the work**
- **Your child finds it difficult to catch up on work missed in their absence**

It's the law - Section 36 of the Education Act 1944) states that parents can be taken to court for breaking this law (Section 199 of the Education Act). The policy from the Government Department for Education (May 1994) also says "Parents should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly attired and in a condition to learn". The Act also mentions that "Parents need to see themselves as partners with schools in the education of their children."

GOVERNORS MET TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE AGAIN RECENTLY AND WE WOULD ADVISE PARENTS THAT THE SCHOOL WILL NOT AUTHORISE LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN ORDER TO TAKE HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME.

I would remind you also that if the school denies a request for term time leave, but your child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an "unauthorised absence" and the matter WILL be referred to the Education Welfare Service in line with all Walsall Schools.

In addition, the new amendments make it clear that Head teachers **SHOULD NOT** grant leave of absence during term time for any purpose unless there are **very exceptional circumstances**.

Examples of very exceptional circumstances:

- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional, as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family. (E.g. Parent, grandparent, sibling)

Evidence would be required in each case.

In respect of penalty notices, payment thresholds are as follows: payment of £60 per parent per child must be paid within 21 days (changed from 28 days) and the charge will rise to £120 per parent per child and must be paid within 28 days (changed from 42 days) to avoid potential prosecution!

If you have pleaded guilty, or have been found guilty, the magistrates have the power to impose a fine of up to £2500 on each parent!

MEDICAL AND DENTAL APOINTMENTS

Please try to arrange non-urgent medical and dental appointments outside of school hours or in the holidays. If your child is absent for a medical or dental appointment, we will ask you to provide evidence of your appointment for our records.

I would remind you that if your child is absent from school, it is essential that you contact the school office **every day of absence** for safeguarding purposes.

PLEASE HELP OUR SCHOOL to achieve its targets by ensuring your child(ren) are in school every day unless they are ill. Please consider this very important issue when booking family holidays in future.

Thank you for your continued support of our school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. E. Maher
Chair of Governors

Mrs D. Steen
Head Teacher

Mrs L. Birch
Education Attendance Consultant