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Acting Headteacher: Mr Sam Eden

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Dear Parents and Carers,

As some of you may be aware, from September 1st there has been a clarification of the regulations surrounding leave of absence of children in school. Previously, parents have submitted authorisation forms for instances such as family holidays and day trips and these may or may not have been authorised. New legislation means that unless an absence is for a truly exceptional circumstance; authorisation will not be granted. The Government has released the following statement;

'It is a Government priority that children of compulsory school age and who are registered at school attend school regularly. School absence should be reduced to a minimum. This is because there is clear evidence that any absence from school can and does impact on children's education attainment.'

The law places a duty on parents of every school-registered child of compulsory school age to secure their regular attendance at school. The courts have interpreted regular attendance to mean a pupil attending school every day it is open for education. Failure of a parent to ensure their child attends school regularly may constitute an offence, which can lead to a parent being fined or prosecuted.

The previous law on leave of absence allowed schools to authorise up to ten days leave for the purpose of family holiday in special circumstances if a parent applied in advance. This was interpreted by some schools and parents to mean that parents had an entitlement to take their children on an annual two week family holiday during term time. This was a misconception; the law was not intended to create any perception of an entitlement. The Government has now changed the law to remove any ambiguity.

Head teachers will still have the power to authorise leave of absence but only in exceptional circumstances. If a head teacher grants leave, it will be for them to determine the length of time the child can be away from school. There are 190 days in a school year and enough opportunities during school breaks for parents to plan their holidays.'

To clarify further, exceptional circumstances is deemed as instances such as;

- Family bereavements
- Religious circumstances
- Service personnel prevented from term time holidays
- Family crisis/serious issue meaning family needs to spend time together
- Certain exams and recognised short time sporting/ cultural activities (evidence will be needed to provide authorisation)

With this in mind, a new 'Exceptional Leave of Absence Form' has been created which is available from the school office. Whilst we recognise that there are times when unavoidable circumstances may arise, we ask that no requests are made for instances such as a family holiday as they will not be authorised. Where possible, we ask that any leave of absence forms are submitted 2 weeks before any requested dates. If you are in doubt or need advice, please contact the school office.

Yours Sincerely

Sam Eden
Acting Head Teacher