



Joy Lane Primary School

A Love of Learning, for Life, for All

SCHOOL
counts!

Oyster Bay Nursery & Oysters SRP (ASD)

Executive Headteacher: Ms DJ Hines

Head of School: Mr M Ashley-Jones

29th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Important Attendance Information

As we begin the new academic year, I am writing to you to emphasise the continuing importance of pupil attendance at school; this will also be emphasised by the class teacher at the recent 'Meet the Teacher' sessions. I am sure you will have seen on the news or read on social media that the authorities will be working very closely with schools regarding **improving school attendance, reducing persistent absenteeism and persistent late arrivals** moving forward. Perhaps the most media attention recently has been focused on the increase in Penalty Notices being issued by local authorities for unauthorised holidays taken during term time as well as persistent absence by some pupils. As we start the new academic year this continues to be the case.

Consistent attendance at school is so important for pupils to thrive and vice versa: poor attendance may mean that children will struggle with their learning, behaviour and ability to make or renew friendships. There is also a growing amount of research that suggests poor attendance can have a detrimental impact on wellbeing and mental health. Please also consider the unspoken message you are giving your child by letting them think it is acceptable to miss school or go on holiday when everyone else is at school.

Please may I also remind you that 'unwell' is not a specific enough reason for an absence from school so please be specific regarding non-attendance at school.

Our attendance officer, Mrs Allen, works hard to monitor Joy Lane's attendance figures, patterns and trends as well as working closely with our wellbeing and safeguarding team to support pupils and their families when needed. In fact, the government and local authority have recognised that 'a consistency of support' may be needed with some families to secure more regular attendance for pupils. Joy Lane is no different and I would like to re-assure you that our staff are very experienced and adept at working with different agencies to support families and children in many ways. Moving forward, Joy Lane staff will continue to challenge and support our families if unauthorised absence or persistent lates becomes an issue for your child's wellbeing and learning. Please remember that children have a legal right to a full-time education.

All schools have very specific guidelines that they work from with regards to the authorisation of a pupil's absence. In most cases absence is as a result of a short illness which would be authorised in the majority of cases on the basis of a parent/carer communication. Please be aware that the only acceptable reasons for absence are:



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- **The school and Chair of Governors/Executive Headteacher gives permission for leave due to exceptional circumstances**
- **Sickness or an unavoidable reason related to the child**
- **Religious observance**
- **Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport**

With regards to unauthorised absence and term time holidays guidance continues to raise expectations that schools/Joy Lane enforce the rules around unauthorised absence and the requesting of penalty notices. This is the clear message coming through from the local authority attendance team and these recommendations are discussed together locally within our Coastal Alliance Attendance network too.

The recommendations from the DFE and the School Liaison Officer mean that any unauthorised absence that reaches the threshold set out in the Kent County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct [KCC-Penalty-Notice-Code-of-Conduct.pdf \(kelsi.org.uk\)](#) will result in a referral to the Inclusion and Attendance service and a Penalty Notice may be issued. This will cover both poor attendance (including term time holidays) and persistent lateness. Where exceptional circumstances for absence are requested, these will be considered; however, the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. 'Unavoidable' also implies that an event cannot be reasonably scheduled at another time. For example, where an event such as a close family wedding is part of a longer holiday, it is likely that not all the absence would be authorised. Likewise, where the reason for an absence is given as illness, but it is likely that this is not the case, authorisation will not be given unless further evidence is received. The final decision on whether to authorise absence is with the school.

Moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Allen or myself if you have any questions around attendance or the statutory requirements of the school.

Yours Sincerely

Mr M Ashley Jones

Head of School