

We have recently received a large amount of Leave of Absence forms (LOAF) requesting absence from school for a variety of reasons. This is a very worrying trend for a school that takes pride in its improving high attendance rates. Authorising absence is never a decision taken lightly therefore we have decided to write to all parents to inform you of our policy.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017, the supreme court decision by Lady Hale and four other law lords issued a comprehensive judgement which stated regular attendance means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the the school'. This in effect means a child should be in school every day the school is open.

School's can only grant a leave of absence in the case of exceptional circumstances (The Education, Pupil Registration, England, Regulations 2006). The guiding principles defining 'exceptional' mean it is rare, significant, unavoidable and short. Unavoidable means the event could not be reasonably scheduled for another time.

To this end, it is our school's policy that we do not authorise any absence unless it can be proved to be for exceptional reasons.

We appreciate the financial situation many families find themselves in these days and we know a refusal can be upsetting. However, as parents we have 175 non school days when family events, holidays and celebrations can be arranged.

Thank you for your continued support

Mr A Howard

Headteacher

## **Frequently asked questions**

### **When do I have to complete a Leave Of Absence form (LOAF)?**

A leave of absence form should be submitted to school no less than 7 days before the event. A separate form should be completed for each child.

It is not required for events such as medical appointments where the child is removed from school after the register and returned as soon as possible. Ideally appointments such as these should be organised outside school time but we do appreciate that this isn't always possible.

### **What happens if my child's leave of absence is unauthorised?**

If your child's absence is less than 10 sessions (five school days), their register will be marked as unauthorised. As long as there are no further unauthorised absences that term, no further action will follow.

In cases where the absence is 10 or more sessions long, a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) will be applied for. The register is also marked with the appropriate number of unauthorised sessions. The decision as to whether to issue a fine is made by the Attendance Team at PCC not by the school.

### **Why am I being fined when the other parent took my child out of school?**

The referral for the Fixed Penalty Notice will include details of both resident and non-resident parents and so you can find yourself being fined even if the absence was due to the other parent's decision. If you are not happy with the fact your child is being removed from school by the other parent it is important you make your opposition to the LOAF clear before the event. You may be required to prove why you could not reasonably ensure your child's attendance at school whilst the other parent is away.

### **Another school authorised the leave for the same event for a friend or sibling. Why hasn't Manor authorised it?**

Whilst we appreciate this can be very frustrating, every school has to judge each application on a case by case basis. If you can provide evidence why your child's absence can't be rescheduled for another time outside term time, we would happily take it into consideration. However this does not necessarily mean we would change our decision.

### **Why does school send out so many letters?**

It would seem to be a lot of extra paperwork. However in all cases where attendance is a cause for concern, each parent/carer must receive a letter by post in respect of each child so there is proof both parents are informed before a Penalty Notice is issued. This can be with regards to the LOAF or irregular attendance.

### **I am the parent. What gives the school the authority to make decisions about my child's attendance?**

As a parent, you have a legal obligation to ensure your child regularly attends school. As the Supreme Court ruling stated, regular attendance means every day the school is open.

In the case of Leave of Absence, we are obliged to only authorise absence where it is exceptional circumstances.