

## Otterburn Primary School and Nursery

*'Be happy, aim high and achieve your full potential!'*

Head Teacher - Mrs Alison Woodcock

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Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear Parents and carers,

The fourteen schools in the West Tyne cluster meet regularly to share priorities and opportunities for the families we serve in our local area. At the last of these meetings, all head teachers met to agree a consistent approach to the new legislation that came into force on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. This was regarding the issue of Penalty Notices to address attendance and in particular, holidays during term times. Sarah Wintringham, Principal Education Welfare Officer for Northumberland, joined us at this meeting.

### Key Changes to Attendance Rules

The Department for Education has introduced new guidelines for managing attendance and holidays during term time. Here's what you need to know:

#### 1. National Framework for Penalty Notices:

- Penalty Notices will now follow a consistent national approach.
- A Penalty Notice can be issued if a pupil has **10 unauthorised absences (5 school days)** within a rolling 10-week period.

#### 2. Family Holidays:

- Headteachers can no longer authorise family holidays during term time.
- The "holiday" code has been removed from attendance registers.

#### 3. Penalty Notices:

- Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority.
- The fine is **£80 per parent per child** if paid within 21 days, increasing to **£160** if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- For a second offence, the fine is **£160 per parent per child**, payable within 28 days.
- A third offence may lead to prosecution or other interventions.

### Your Responsibility as a Parent

Under the Education Act 1996, it is your legal duty to ensure your child attends school regularly. The Department for Education has clarified that holidays or absences for leisure are **not considered exceptional circumstances**.

### Our Shared Commitment to Attendance

**All Head Teachers in our locality believe in a consistent and fair approach to attendance and, as such, have agreed that if a family removes their child/children from school for 5 days or longer for a family holiday, a penalty notice will be sought.**

Each school in the West Tyne Cluster will update its own attendance policies and procedures to reflect this decision, including if parents do not notify schools when removing their children. These policies and procedures should continue to be followed by parents. As you know, any absence from school can seriously disrupt a pupil's learning and have a longer term effect on their future progress. As a cluster of schools, we feel that it is important to work together on this. We are keen to support you in any way that we can to ensure that your child attends school regularly. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like help with this we hope you will support us by not removing your child from school during term time.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Boucetla (Wark and Newbrough Primary Schools), Clare Crow (Greenhaugh Primary School)

Susie Drake (Haltwhistle Academy), Lee Ferris (Kielder Primary School), Mike Glenton (Henshaw and Greenhead Primary Schools), David Nisbet (Haydon Bridge High School), Julie Phazey (Shaftoe Trust Academy), Catriona Powell (Bellingham Primary and Middle Schools), Phil Vincent (Allendale Primary School), Rachel Watson (Whitfield Primary School)

Alison Woodcock (Otterburn Primary School)