

Spotlight on Attendance

A very important message for all parents

10th November 2011

Dear Parent,

Handsworth Wood Girls' School are working in partnership with parents to improve school attendance. We would like to congratulate the many parents who make sure their children attend school regularly.

It is parent's legal responsibility to ensure their children receive appropriate education. Failing to send your child to school regularly without good reason is a criminal offence.

Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Are you aware that children who do not attend regularly:

- do not achieve well in exams – **research shows that there is a direct link between good attendance and good achievement. Over 80% of children with 95% attendance will achieve 5 or more A-C grades whereas only 25% of children with less than 80% attendance will achieve the same.**
- find it difficult to maintain friendships
- are more likely to become involved in crime
- miss out on opportunities in further education and the world of work

Absence can only be authorised by the **Head Teacher**, within the boundaries set by the Education Act 1996.

Please remember that parental illness, going shopping, visiting family, truancy, not wanting to go to school, alleged bullying (speak to school immediately to resolve the issue) are not acceptable reasons to be absent. All of these will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Leave in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Legal action that may be taken include:

- **Issuing penalty notices:** Each parent receives a penalty notice for each child who has unauthorised absence. The penalty is £50 or £100 depending on how soon payment is made. So, if there are two parents and two children the total penalties could be up to £400. Failure to pay may result in prosecution.

- **Taking parents to court for unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £1000 per child, add costs and impose Parenting Orders.
- **Taking parents to court for persistent unauthorised absence:** Education Act 1996 Section 444(1A) - magistrates can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Being taken to court could result in you having a criminal record.

How does your child compare?

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons
70%	57 days	11.5 weeks	290 lessons

Frequent absence can add up to a considerable amount of lost learning and can seriously disadvantage your child in adult life.

If your child's level of absence is of serious concern you will receive another letter advising you about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.

We will improve attendance by making it clear within the school and local community that unauthorised absence is not acceptable. You will be informed of the number of penalty notices issued, prosecutions and also of the percentage of improvement in attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Walters
Head Teacher