

# 2014 -2015

Devoran School

Head Teacher – M. Thiele



## DEVORAN SCHOOL

# ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

Written: September 2014

Agreed: .....Chair Of Governors

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# Absence From School in Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## Background

Schools are required to provide education for 190 days a year and it is expected that children who are registered at a school will attend for this time. Parents do not have an automatic right for their children to have time off school and any requests for absences are entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Research shows that children do not achieve as well in their education and in public examinations the more school absence they have, for example a child absent from school for a period of two weeks each year, for exceptional circumstances and with the average absence for illness may miss the equivalent of one whole year's education over their school life.

## General Principles

The following general principles underpin this policy:

1. The principles of honesty, openness, transparency and the spirit of co-operation underpin the policy.
2. Where a request for absence form is not submitted, absences cannot be authorised retrospectively; this is prescribed in law and in these circumstances the penalty notice code of conduct must be followed.
3. The school will review this policy annually or in line with any legislative changes.

## **Policy**

Amendments to the 2006 Education Regulations came into force from September 2013. These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In order for consideration to be given, requests for absence must be for exceptional circumstances only.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

1. The death or terminal illness of family member.
2. Serious illness of a close relative – only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
3. To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family. (Only 1 day will be granted)
4. Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 3 above, the Head teacher agrees to consult with the Education Welfare Officer and a panel of local Headteachers prior to any authorisation being given to the parent. Evidence would be required in each case.

If a request meets the above exceptional circumstances but falls within the following times, the Headteacher must be convinced that absence from school is the only option:

1. The first half term of any academic year (applies to all pupils).
2. Year six transition day (for pupils in year six).
3. Year six SATs week (for pupils in year six).

## **Absence From School For Exceptional Circumstances Information for Parents**

You are required under the Education Act (1996) to ensure your child attends school regularly. There is, however, a discretionary power held by Headteachers to authorise absence in exceptional circumstances. Please note this is not an entitlement.

The Headteacher will only authorise absence in line with this 'Absence From School For Exceptional Circumstances Policy'. The Headteacher will not authorise absences if believe it is to the detriment of a child's education. Please note that supporting documents to aid decision making must be submitted at the time of your request for absence.

If your request is authorised, you are required to ensure your child catches up on any missed school work.

Any unauthorised absence will be recorded on your child's attendance records. This may result in legal proceedings against you, either through a Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court.

### Penalty Notices

Under the Anti Social Behaviour Act (2003) the local authority and schools have statutory powers to tackle poor school attendance and/or unauthorised absences. An unauthorised absence is any absence that the Headteacher has not given permission for or where an explanation has not been provided by the parent. If your child accrues 10 sessions of unauthorised absence you may be liable for a penalty notice (one days absence equals two sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions etc).

Penalty Notices are used as a deterrent to prevent a pattern of unauthorised absences developing. They will be issued by post direct to the home of a parent after possibly just one warning, or in the case of absences without acceptable cause, warnings may not be given. This includes pupils caught on truancy sweeps, persistent late arrival after the close of registration or unauthorised absence that has not been authorised as an absence from school for exceptional circumstances. In these cases the warning is given on the absence request form and detailed within this information leaflet and no written warning will be given. Fines may be issued for unauthorised absence of 5 or more days and each school day is divided into 2 registration periods. For example if your child is absent for one day this equals 2 sessions and a five day absence is equal to 10 sessions.

**If your request is declined and you still take your child out of school, each parent within your household may be issued with a £60 penalty notice for each child you have taken out of school.** If a penalty notice remains unpaid after 21 days it will increase to £120. If after 28 days it remains unpaid you may be summonsed to appear before Magistrates to explain why your child has unauthorised school absences and you may be liable for a fine of up to £1000.

Support and guidance on attendance is always available and if you have any questions about this, or if you need help to achieve an improvement, then please contact the school office to discuss this.