



Hampshire County Council

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<i>Date</i>	26 February 2015	<i>E-mail</i>	LisaMarie.Smith@hants.gov.uk

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are writing to all parents and carers on behalf of Hampshire County Council Schools and Education Centres, to inform you of changes to the way in which we will be responding to unauthorised absence from school from September 2015.

Firstly, we would like to thank all parents and carers who work hard in partnership with schools to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually. We would like to thank our parents/carers in particular for responding so effectively to the changes in law related to leave of absence from school being for exceptional circumstances only. Since September 2013 we have had a 47% reduction in leave of absence requests across Hampshire increasing attendance in our schools by 28 thousand days.

Similarly to the world of work, pupils should only be absent or late to school when they are ill or for medical or dental appointments (where these cannot be scheduled outside school hours). Any other absence needs to be requested and in all cases the decision is the headteacher's. In law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school. If your child is absent and the school have not authorised this then this is subject to legal action through a fine or prosecution.

In response to the changes in school attendance law Hampshire County Council has reviewed its 'Code of Conduct'. This code sets out for all schools what actions must be taken for any child with 10 or more sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence from September 2015. We are clear in our code of conduct that where a child or family requires support to achieve attendance rates above 90% that this is the first priority for schools. We are also clear that where parent/carers choose to ignore the law and are complicit in their child's absence then all schools with the

Local Authority must take legal action through a penalty notice fine or prosecution in court.

From September 2015 all schools will be required to work with Hampshire County Council to take legal action if:

- 1. A child has unauthorised absence for 10 or more sessions.**
- 2. A child is continually late to school and this lateness is unauthorised for 10 or more sessions.**
- 3. A child has any unauthorised absence during any formal examinations, assessment or testing.**

Please note each parent/carer can be issued a separate penalty notice for each child.

Further advice and guidance for parent/carers with respect to this will be available from September via our county website:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents.htm>

Hampshire County Council is working hard to support our Headteachers in upholding the law with respect to attendance at school. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. It is our duty with schools to prioritise good attendance, thus enabling us to closely work in partnership with our families and schools to ensure all our children achieve the best education they can and enjoy their school life fully.

Yours sincerely



John Clarke
Deputy Director of Children's Services – Education and Inclusion
Hampshire County Council