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Dear Parents

26th January 2024

School Attendance and Punctuality

As many of you will be aware the Government is highlighting school attendance as a growing area of concern with increased numbers of children being absent from school on a more regular basis.

At Sabden we have always encouraged good attendance and have over the years been commended for our high attendance rate.

Whilst we can use the services of County's Attendance team for any families who are in need of support we have not yet chosen this route and have preferred to have an informal, quiet word rather than involve outside agencies. However, going forward, if your child's attendance is a cause for concern we will now look at using this support to help you and your child.

Going forward and ensuring that we are all on the same page as regards to attendance and punctuality I want to be clear about the following points.

Absences:

Holidays in Term Time – the vast majority of these will be deemed as unauthorised and will incur a penalty notice being issued. As a mother and family member I appreciate the reasons why these holidays are taken but in this I also have a responsibility as a Headteacher to ensure that children do not miss school.

Repeated Illness Absences – thankfully, we do not have children who require repeated stays in hospital or have complex medical needs. When monitoring pupil absences we have growing concerns if an individual has several one or two day absences over a course of time with the same complaint. If a child has repeated tummy upsets, infections etc we would expect the parent to have this investigated.

One Day Absences – most one day absences are rarely anything too serious so we would encourage you to send your child in and we will, as ever, keep an eye on them. If they worsen we will get in touch. Sometimes all that is needed is a spoonful of calpol and they are back to their normal selves. I think we have all been there where we keep them off to be on the safe side and then within the hour they are bouncing around the house.

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Headteacher Elizabeth Maskell
B.Ed (Hons), N.P.Q.H.

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Medical Appointments – please keep routine appointments to times outside of the school day or holidays. We understand that we can't pick and choose consultant appointments as easily. Please show confirmation of any appointment to the office.

Every absence is at the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether it is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. The majority of absences are authorised with the exception of holidays in term time.

Lates:

The school gates open at 8.45am and all children now come straight into school and start their learning for the day without going onto the playground and lining up. This morning work may include editing and correcting work from the previous day, reading to a teacher, learning new spelling patterns or consolidating mental maths strategies. It is important work and helps your child.

Whilst this is not yet the official start of school all children are welcomed and encouraged to get in early.

ALL CHILDREN SHOULD BE IN SCHOOL AND IN CLASS READY TO LEARN BY 8.55am.

This is the official start to school and every effort should be made for your child to be in school by this time.

The school gates will close at 8.55am.

Anything after 8.55am in school is LATE.

Arriving at school at 8.55am or after will now be recorded as late, as children are not in class ready to start their learning day.

Repeated lates can be recorded as unauthorised absences and can also incur a penalty notice being issued.

Pupils who are late to school must be accompanied by an adult/ parent to ensure that they arrive safely in school. The adult/ parent must bring their child to the office and sign them in. Adults/ parents must not leave them at the main gate alone without their supervision.

Lateness has a negative impact. Being late may disrupt lessons and the learning of other children, affect achievement and embarrass or upset your child. COMING TO SCHOOL ON TIME EVERY DAY helps your child to be ready for learning and not miss learning opportunities.

Late Gates – a late gate is just an informal name we give to a specific morning being designated for monitoring of lates. Up to now we have randomly chosen certain mornings to monitor the amount of lates, if any, on those days. From now on we will monitor lateness to school **EVERY** morning.

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Last term, Autumn 2023, school was open to children for 72 days and we undertook a late gate (monitoring of lates after 8.55am) on 21 mornings out of the 72 possible. In those 21 late gates, 68 lates were recorded by 20 children. Out of these 20 children who were late during this time 11 of them only had 1 or 2 lates recorded. The remaining 9 children out of the 20 in total had 3 or more lates with these ranging from between 3 to 10 lates each.

In total 440 minutes were lost to lateness during the 21 late gates with the 11 children (only 1 or 2 lates) accruing 56 minutes of lateness leaving a huge 384 minutes of lateness for the remainder 9 pupils.

So far this term we have had 9 late gates out of a possible 11. Nine children have been late with 8 of these being regular lates last term. In total, 117 minutes of learning have already been lost due to lateness, with 5 children who are only late once accruing 19 minutes and the remaining 4 children with more than 1 late accruing a lateness total of 98 minutes.

Whilst I know that occasional lateness can happen to anyone and that it is not always the fault of the child, I really need to address those pupils who are repeatedly turning up to school late. I would be most interested in any comments you might have for actions that may serve as a deterrent. Some suggestions have been:

Not being allowed to access school run after school clubs;

Staying in at break times to catch up on missed learning;

Home/ school contracts and meeting/ support with the Headteacher and/or Mental Health/ Family Support Lead;

Early Help support;

Support from County's Attendance Team if lateness continues and becomes a real issue.

We do not use any detention system at Sabden, either during or after the school day. We may, however, set aside some time during your child's breaktimes to work with them as a result of their lateness. This is not to be confused with a detention. I am also not in the mindset of issuing penalty notices and fines to families for lateness as a deterrent and would much prefer working together to solve the problem. However, if lateness continues to be of concern and without any improvement then this may be our only option.

Hopefully we can address this matter quickly and effectively to everyone's satisfaction.

Best wishes
Elizabeth Maskell
Headteacher