

3rd January 2024

Attendance 2023-4

Dear Parents and Friends of Castle Hill,

It has been a joy to welcome back our children after the festive break and we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year! We thank each and everyone of you who have ensured that the children are in school for the first day back of 2024.

As you will be aware, school attendance continues to be high up on the Government's agenda and we, at CHPS, are here to ensure that all our pupils are in school to receive the education that they are legally entitled to. Our school attendance continues to be just above the national figures at just over 95%, but is still below our target of over 96%.

On the last day of term, we celebrated all those pupils that were in school every day of the Autumn term (100%) and to a few pupils who have been in school despite personal challenges. The winning classes for the week were also announced (a highly sought-after accolade) and the pupils received an extra treat.

As has been well researched, school attendance has a direct impact on pupil success. School is not just about academic learning, but the social benefits of school where children have the opportunity to interact with their peers is vital to a child's development. Every day at school matters and if days are missed, pupils not only miss out on learning, but also on the wider opportunities of school life. Analysis of our whole school attendance shows that pupils are more likely to be absent on a Friday and in the last weeks of each half term. Some interesting facts:

- Each Friday off = 1/5th of the week's learning missed
- Each day missed = 1/5th of the week's teaching of reading, writing, maths and an afternoon of foundation subjects (such as art, science, history, geography & P.E.)
- A week missed at the end (or start) of a term = 8% of a term's learning.
- Persistent lateness (lessons start at 8:50) – a pupil who is consistently late will be missing their reading lessons, which is a core skill for future success.

If a pupil misses school, we do our best to catch them up on their learning, but it is impossible to make up for all the lost learning time and we cannot make up for lost interaction time with their friends.

As a reminder, pupils should only be absent if they are too ill for school (temperature, sickness and/or diarrhoea) or for exceptional reasons. Most illnesses are classed as minor and your child should continue to come to school. **Children do not need to be kept off school for minor illnesses, such as a sore throat or cold.** Please read the NHS guidance on this here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

We are seeing a growing number of requests for holidays and family celebrations. As per the guidance and our policy, holidays in term time will not be authorised. Requests for visits to families abroad will only be granted in **exceptional** circumstances ('exceptional' is defined as 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short') – the expectation is that such visits can be made in the school holidays. Compassionate leave can be requested (e.g. for a family funeral), but this is at the discretion of the headteacher. Leave of absence during and leading up to statutory testing times will also not be authorised (Y1 Phonics Screening Check **June 2024**; Y2 Teacher Assessment **June 2024**; Y4 Multiplication Tables Check **June 2024**; Y6 SATs **15th April – 17th May 2024**).

Please find the latest guidance to parents from the Government here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>

The attendance team monitor absences continuously and meet every month to discuss pupils whose attendance is causing us concern (ie dropping below 95%). You will have received a text in the last week with your child's current attendance. Where we are concerned, you will be contacted directly by your child's class teacher in the first instance, then offered support by the pastoral team and/or invited to meet with the attendance leads if we continue to see no improvement. We wish to work with you in order to overcome any barriers you might be facing getting your child into school.

We are constantly looking to improve school attendance and are planning to set up a working group with families to introduce some new initiatives. We will also be asking the student senate for their ideas on what we can try to ensure better attendance for all.

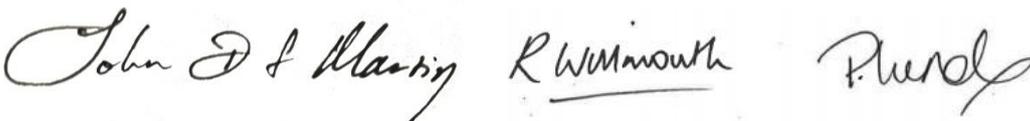
For more information on attendance and penalty notices, please follow the links below which can also be found on our website:

1. The School's Attendance Policy 2022-24 can be found under our Attendance web page
<https://www.castlehillprimary.net/our-school/attendance>
2. Working together to improve attendance (DfE, 2002) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>)
3. Everything you need to know about school attendance (DfE)
<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>
4. Is my child too ill for school (NHS)
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>
5. Information Booklet for parents on Penalty Notices
<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/code-of-conduct-issuing-penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence-from-schools.pdf>

We hope that this letter helps explain why your child attending school is vital and the importance of us working together to prevent absence becoming an issue.

If you have any questions or concerns, then please speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance. We would like to thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely



John DF Martin & The Attendance Leads

