## Thorntree Road, Thornaby,

**Stockton-on-Tees,**

**TS17 8AP**

**Tel: 01642 647010**

**Headteacher: Miss L. Moore**

Monday 12th March 2018

**Important Information Regarding Attendance**

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you know, one of our key Ofsted recommendations was in relation to attendance: *‘Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average and that all pupils attend school regularly.’*

You will have seen from our Attendance Newsletters that national average attendance is 96% and we are significantly below this. Also, any pupil with an attendance of 90% or less is classed as a persistent absentee. Last year persistent absenteeism at Mandale Mill was double the national average, a statistic I’m sure you will agree needs to improve.

To support our drive to improve attendance, we commissioned an Attendance Review conducted by the Local Authority. Following this, three key recommendations were made:

1. Conduct home visits on the first day of absence where no contact has been made with school;
2. Issue Penalty Notices for all unauthorised holidays;
3. Penalty Notices for ten sessions (five days) unauthorised absence in a six week period.

We have already implemented point one of the recommendations. Daily home visits have been completed since our return to school after half term, where children are deemed well enough to attend they have been transported to school.

The Safeguarding Committee of the Governing Body received feedback from the Local Authority about our Attendance Review and the implications for applying Penalty Notices. Governors have agreed that from the start of Summer Term, Monday 16th April 2018, Mandale Mill Primary School will work with the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team to issue warning letters and Penalty Notices. The information below should further clarify the situation.

**Penalty Notice**

* Where a Penalty Notice is applied it is a **£60.00 charge,** **per parent, per child.**
* The Penalty Notice is payable to the Local Authority within 21 days, after that the penalty doubles to **£120.00, per parent, per child.**
* You have a further seven days to pay the penalty, if payment is not received on day 28, the matter is referred to court. This could result in a much higher fine and/or 3 months imprisonment.

**Application for Leave of Absence (Holidays)**

* Parents will continue to complete a Leave of Absence form, explaining the reasons for taking a holiday in term time.
* Holidays will only be approved in exceptional circumstances as determined by school.
* If your request is declined, you will be issued with a warning letter, outlining the actions that will be taken if you still choose to take the holiday. A warning letter will be sent for each child to each parent.
* Should the holiday still be taken, school will forward a Penalty Notice referral to the Attendance and Exclusion Team, who will issue the Penalty Notice.

**Ten Sessions (five days) Unauthorised Absence in a Six Week Period**

* Where ten sessions of unauthorised absence within a six week period have been recorded, school will complete a Penalty Notice referral. This will be forwarded to the Attendance and Exclusion Team who will issue a warning letter to each parent.
* There is then a fifteen day monitoring period. Any further unauthorised absence during this time will result in a Penalty Notice being issued. If there are no further absences during this time, no further action will be taken.

I am aware that some of you may have already booked holidays prior to this letter being sent. For Summer Term only we will look at Leave of Absence forms on a case by case basis. If you can provide proof that your holiday was booked prior to Monday 12thth March 2018, your holiday may still be recorded as unauthorised, however we will not refer for a Penalty Notice. Any holiday booked after this date, which are not authorised will be subject to a Penalty Notice.

Similarly, we will be monitoring unauthorised absence within a six week period from Monday 16th April 2018. This criteria will be added to all new and reviewed Attendance Plans that take place following the date of this letter.

Please be assured that the decision to issue Penalty Notices has not been taken lightly, however, I am sure you will agree that attendance at Mandale Mill Primary School must improve. Regular and punctual attendance is a legal requirement (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) and it is parents’ responsibility to ensure their children receive a full-time education.

Your children deserve the very best and in order for us to support your children to make progress and fulfill their potential they need to be in school every day and on time. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact myself or Mrs Williams.

Yours sincerely

Miss L. Moore

Headteacher