



Milldene News 16

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Welcome Back!

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Christmas break with family and friends. For me, after the last minute shopping frenzy, it was a chance to unwind and enjoy catching up with family and friends, both in Essex and Northern Ireland. The highlight was getting the opportunity to indulge in cooking some traditional, homemade recipes with my daughter and her friends. Needless to say, it took more than five minutes to tidy up the kitchen afterwards! But it was well worth it to see the pride in their faces with all the treats they had made. I hope you have gained some similar happy memories of the Christmas period.

The children have returned with their usual bouncy enthusiasm for school and it has been great to see them rising to new challenges already this term. Our Year 6 boys and girls deserve particular credit for the way in which they have conducted tours of the school for prospective new families. Without exception, all our visitors have been impressed with their hospitality and they have proved themselves to be great ambassadors for our school.

Mrs Locke

Attendance

Our current attendance target is 97%. However, our whole school attendance has been below this recently. In fact it has fallen well below 95%, which is the national requirement. Any parents/carers of a child that has fallen below this level will have received a letter from the school to draw this to their attention.

We have adopted a new Attendance Policy, drawn up by the local authority, which clearly sets out expectations. Please find attached some information regarding absences and how they can affect your child's progress. Also, see below, for some important aspects of the new Policy.

Milldene Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order to raise standards of pupil attainment and to give every child/young person the best educational experience possible.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absence includes:

- *parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.*
- *absences which have never been properly explained*
- *children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the attendance register*
- *shopping trips*
- *looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments*
- *their own or family birthdays*
- *holidays taken during term time without leave- 5 days unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority*
- *day trips*
- *other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed*

At Milldene Primary School 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

... being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are "rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

We will not agree leave during term time:

- *at any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.*
- *during assessment and test periods in the school's calendar affecting your child.*
- *when a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.*

The full Attendance Policy, which was ratified by Governors in December 2017, is available on the school website or you can request a copy from the school office.

