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September 2024

### **Attendance Matters at Poltair School**

At Poltair School, we recognise that excellent attendance is crucially important to our students and we categorise this as achieving an attendance figure of above 96%. Statistics show that if a child has excellent attendance throughout their school life, on average they will achieve one grade higher in their GCSEs, across all curriculum areas, when compared to a student with an attendance figure of 90% or below. This is the reason we value attendance so highly - we believe that offering students the opportunities to succeed will enable them to reach their full potential and lead to improved life chances.

You can check your child's attendance by downloading the ClassCharts app and logging into your parent account.

**To encourage students to be in school every day, we will be promoting excellent attendance through the following:**

- Awarding merits for 100% attendance every week.
- Tutor group prizes every week based on attendance.
- Prize raffle draw every term for students with 100% attendance

### **School Absence and The Law**

As we begin the Autumn Term, the usual coughs, colds, and other minor ailments start to appear. I thought it would be useful to inform you of the school's policy when reporting illness, how punctuality can affect attendance and the legal requirements that the school must uphold in relation to attendance. Also, I have included some useful NHS guidance for school absences due to illness.

## NHS Guidance for Absence Due to Illness

<b>Coughs and colds</b> (Including a runny nose)	There is no need for your child to remain at home if they have a minor cough or common cold. However, if they have a fever they should be kept off until their temperature returns to normal.
<b>Cold Sores</b>	There is no need to keep your child off school if they have a cold sore.
<b>Head lice and nits</b>	There is no need to keep your child off school if they have head lice or nits. You should treat lice the night before returning to school.
<b>Sore throat</b>	You can still send your child to school if they have a sore throat, unless it is accompanied by a high fever.
<b>Vomiting and diarrhea</b>	If your child has severe vomiting and diarrhea, please seek medical advice. If the advice is for your child to remain at home, please provide this evidence on their return.
<b>General sickness</b>	Children should attend school once they feel better. If they are unwell in the morning, but better by the afternoon, they can return. If you feel this could be anxiety related, please seek advice from school as we can support this, rather than keep them at home.
<b>Minor headache</b>	A child with a minor headache does not need to be kept off school. If the headache is more severe, a GP should be consulted.
<b>COVID-19</b>	Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to go to school. However, those who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people where they can until their temperature returns to normal.

### Absence from School

If your child is absent from school, you must contact the school with a reason for the absence. This must be done before 8:30am by telephone on 01726 874520 (select option 1) or by email to [PoltairAttendance@poltair.celtrust.org](mailto:PoltairAttendance@poltair.celtrust.org). If we do not receive any verbal or written communication from you, the Attendance and Engagement Officer, or a Pastoral Team member, will telephone home. If no response is received, other contacts held for your child will also be contacted. Failure to respond may result in a home visit being conducted. If there is no response to this home visit, your child may be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education. Contact may also be made with Children's Services and/or the Police – in line with safeguarding procedures. **Additionally, please be aware that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**

When advising the school of the reason for your child's absence, please can we ask you to be specific about the reason given. If you report that they are 'unwell' we may call you back to obtain more details.

If your child is absent from school for a prolonged period due to illness, we may request medical evidence to authorise this absence.

## Requests for Absence

Here at Poltair School we recognise that there are occasions when it is appropriate to authorise an absence, such as when a student is genuinely too ill to attend school, has a medical appointment that cannot be taken outside of school hours or a request for leave has been agreed in exceptional circumstances. However, the Government does not support parents taking children out of school unless the school agrees this is appropriate under 'exceptional circumstances'.

Any request for leave should be made in writing to the Headteacher at least 15 days in advance, using the CELT Request for Absence Form - this can be found on page 39 of the CELT Attendance Policy and is also available [here](#) on the school's website. Once completed, this form can either be emailed to [PoltaireAttendance@poltair.celtrust.org](mailto:PoltaireAttendance@poltair.celtrust.org) or passed to our Attendance and Engagement Officer. It is important that you provide the school with full details of the reason for requesting absence.

I would like to remind you that a planned absence from school will only be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances'. This will be at the Headteacher's discretion and only if he is satisfied that *exceptional circumstances* exist.

Please note, Poltair School is making referrals to Cornwall Council for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice where holidays are taken within term-time.

### The law states:

**If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days. If your child is further absent from school without authorisation within any 3-year period, you will be committing a further offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices for a second offence are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £160, payable within 28 days. Importantly, fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may also result in legal action. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs. Absence not authorised by the school may also result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Again, Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs. Money raised from fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.**

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and; any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.

### **Punctuality**

To ensure that all students arrive promptly for an 8:30am start, the school gate is closed at 8:28am each morning. All students who arrive between 8:28am and 9:00am will have their attendance coded as 'L' (Late) and the appropriate sanction will be issued. Students arriving between 8:28am and 8:45am enter through the West Gate, arrivals from 8:45am must sign in at reception. If a student is significantly late (after 9:00am), their attendance will be coded as 'U' (Unauthorised), which affects attendance negatively, and the appropriate sanction will be issued. If 10 unauthorised lates are recorded, the Attendance Policy will be followed which may result in a fixed penalty notice.

You are welcome to contact the school to discuss any concerns you may have regarding this or if you feel you would like advice or support in helping your child attend more regularly. Poltair School is committed to maximising the education of all its pupils and aims to work with parents to ensure this can be achieved. The decision to submit a request for the issue of a Penalty Notice will be considered when a child's attendance is deemed to be 'not regular.' The definition of 'not regular' in this instance is when it is below the threshold set by Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT). For all CELT schools, this attendance threshold is set above 96% in line with national attendance data. In the Autumn Term, a child's attendance for the previous academic year will be considered before deciding on a course of action. From January onwards, the decision will be based on attendance data from the current academic year.

Finally, if you would like to discuss any issues your child may be experiencing, which are preventing them from attending school, please contact the school as soon as possible and speak to either your child's Head of Year, Tutor, Pastoral Manager, or a member of the Pastoral Team.

Yours sincerely

J Westley