

Yerbury Primary School

Foxham Road, London N19 4RR

Telephone: 020 7272 6580

Website: www.yerbury.islington.sch.uk

e-mail: admin@yerbury.islington.sch.uk



Head teacher Cassie Moss

Thursday, November 05, 2015

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

I am writing to you to make you aware of the changes which have been made to how schools are required to promote good attendance, and to ask for your help in adjusting to these new requirements. In recent years, attendance has been placed increasingly further up on the Government's agenda, due to the link between good attendance and good achievement. This year has seen even further changes which will impact significantly on the school and on parents.

The threshold for a 'persistent absentee' has risen from 85% attendance to 90% since September 2015. To put this into practical context, by the end of last year we had 0 persistent absentees; under the new threshold, we would have had 21 persistent absentees.

In addition, due to budget cuts, the EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) positions in the borough have been eliminated. All of the meetings they held and work they did with families to support them and also hold them to account for their child's attendance, now directly fall to schools, who will receive no additional funding to support this.

If both of these changes had been in place last year, we would have been having meetings with 21 families about their child's persistent absenteeism on at least a half-termly basis, or until their attendance improved. If it didn't improve it would then have led to fines and possibly legal proceedings. Currently, as of the Friday of last half-term, there are 40 children who fall below the 90% attendance threshold. Our new Attendance Team (Heidi Bimpong, Sharon Lane and myself) will be starting these meetings at the end of the Autumn Term. As you can imagine, the impact of this additional workload on the school will be enormous.

I am asking for your help, both to ensure that children come to school regularly and on time and to avoid wasting the school's resources on unnecessary meetings and administration. In particular, there are three things that you can do to help.

1. **Please ensure that your children do not miss school except in exceptional circumstances. In particular, please don't take holidays during term time.** We cannot authorise absences for holidays. Since September 2015, 10 families have either already taken their children out of school for unauthorised holidays during term time or put in a request for later in the year.
2. **If your child is sick and cannot come to school, please call in before school starts and let us know by leaving us a message.** This helps us know the whereabouts of the child, and frees up the office staff from chasing reasons for absence at the beginning of the day.
3. **Punctuality matters! Please ensure that your children arrive at school on time.** A statistic about punctuality which may surprise you (it did us!); last year children at Yerbury accumulated 12,964 minutes of lateness, which amounts to 216 hours of learning lost. The majority of this could be avoided by simple, small changes to daily routines. If you know that you are one of those families who would benefit from such a change, please implement it. Not only will it ensure your child and his/her class have a smooth start to the day, it is important for instilling good habits for your child in later life too.

Yerbury Primary School

Foxham Road, London N19 4RR

Telephone: 020 7272 6580

Website: www.yerbury.islington.sch.uk

e-mail: admin@yerbury.islington.sch.uk



Head teacher Cassie Moss

We have revised our attendance policy (see policies page) in accordance with the new requirements. Please do take the time to read it. I would like to highlight two key changes which may be of immediate interest to you:

- Routine dentist appointments will no longer be authorised during school time. (This does not apply to dental emergencies.)
- Parents will now need to sign the late-book rather than the children, and to state the reason for their lateness. The late-book is in the office.

A repeated reminder:

- There are already 175 days in the academic year for holidays, cultural activities and family-time, and only 190 school days.
- For every hour a child misses at school, it takes around 3 hours to catch up once they get back. So a child who misses a week at school will spend at least 3 weeks catching up, if they manage to catch up at all. Some areas of Maths for example are taught in a week, and if the child has missed it due to holidays, that will impact on their learning (both progress and attainment) for possibly even years to come.
- Absences have an impact on other children's learning also, as adults need to support the child who has missed learning, and this reduces the time the adults have with other children, which isn't fair if the absence could have been avoided.
- Absences also have an impact on teachers' already heavy workload as they plan for these children's in-class catch-up support once they get back.

A final recap and request: It is a child's right by law to attend school regularly and on time, and a parent's duty to ensure that they do. Our energy, time and resources are much better spent on teaching your children and on developing and improving provision than on dealing with non-attendance and lateness. For the benefit of your child and the school, please support your child and us, and respect the importance of punctuality and attendance.

I appreciate your support and cooperation in this.

Best, Cassie

Headteacher