



14<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

### Reception places for Sept 2022

Applications for places <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/apply-school-place/applying-reception-places> The deadline is the 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022, so please make sure everyone you know who has a young child applies before the deadline.

### COVID-19

As you are all aware the virus is spreading rapidly through the wider community. We ask that you follow all the guidance possible. As discussed with Public Health England (PHE) we will send out additional guidance letters which from the LA and from PHE, when appropriate.

Please inform school when your child has tested positive and then enable them to isolate accordingly. The rules are changing regularly so please be patient with us as we try to keep up to date with the most current guidance, it is changing so fast at the moment.

Work is uploaded onto the school website, home learning section, for pupils who are isolating due to COVID-19 but are able and well enough to work at home.

### Attendance

I have recently been asked by a number of families to authorise holidays during term time due to families wanting to go away after COVID and whilst I appreciate that we have all had an incredibly difficult time during the last couple of years I have a statutory duty to monitor and support the positive attendance of your child in school. For the most part, most of our children have very good attendance records. Please remember that COVID isolation periods are not coded negatively against your child's attendance record as you have been directed by the government to keep them at home and isolate.

All children need to be in school all day, wherever possible. Early pick up in the afternoon has as negative impact on your child's education as late drop off in the morning. Missing a few days of school here and there may not seem a big deal, but research shows that it can have a significant impact on children's learning. Children who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers, and struggle to catch up. Most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning. Poor attendance can start at primary school, and children who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at secondary school. Pupils who miss between 10% and 20% of school (that's 19 to 38 days per year) stand only a 35% chance of achieving five or more good GCSEs, compared

to 73% of those who miss fewer than 5% of school days. Friendships and academic performance can be affected by persistent absence, too: it can be hard for a child who misses lots of school to form relationships with their classmates. Persistent absence (PA) is defined as an attendance rate of 90% or below, and our attendance officer, Helen Jordan will keep contacting you if your child is in this group. The Department for Education (DfE) states that you can only allow your child to miss school if they are ill, or if you have advance permission from the headteacher.

The following types of absence may be marked as authorised, but not guaranteed:

- **Leave of absence authorised by the headteacher** (such as time off due to bereavement).
- **Illness:** you must notify your child's school on the morning of their first day of absence. If your child has COVID-19, you **MUST** keep them at home and isolate following the national guidelines on timings.
- **Medical or dental appointments**, although you should try to arrange these outside school hours if possible.
- **Religious observance.**
- **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence** when the family is travelling for occupational purposes.
- **Offsite educational activities:** this could include music, dance or drama exams, or participation in a sporting event. Approval is at the school's discretion and they are not automatically authorised.

Certain types of absence will be marked as unauthorised, unless there are exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher, time off for holidays is always unauthorised as families are expected to make holiday arrangements outside of term time. Absences where the parents haven't given the school a reason are also recorded as unauthorised. If your child is late to school and the registers have closed, they will be marked as an unauthorised absence. As a parent, it is your responsibility to make sure your child is at school, unless they have a long-term severe health problem which needs time off for regular medical appointments eg. Cancer. If your child doesn't go to school and you haven't phoned in your notification, you'll be contacted by the school office to find out why they're absent.

Ultimately, we want all of your children in school every day, so in the case of the Persistent Absence of your child you may be asked to sign a parenting contract: a voluntary written agreement stating that you will work with the council and/or school to improve your child's attendance. Finally, if your child were to continue to miss school, legal action could be taken. Consequences include a parenting order compelling you to do what the court says to improve your child's attendance; a fine of £60, rising to £120 if you don't pay within 21 days; and prosecution, which could lead to a community service order, a fine of up to £2,500, or a custodial sentence of up to three months. I am sure that we can all work together in partnership to avoid any of these last resort sanctions. If you have concerns then please contact school via the school office.

### **Support for families**

We are fortunate enough to be able to access a wide network of support and help for all and any of our families, who for whatever reason may like some additional help. You may

want to access this extra help for any reason so please do not hesitate to contact school to ask, or on occasion school will offer you directly. We have access to:

- Class teacher and Senior leaders in school
- Rainbows and nurture groups in school
- School based counsellor – Individual pupils
- SENDCo for additional support and guidance
- Thrive, is initially starting up on a case by case basis, to support pupils with their mental health and well-being and this will eventually be whole school for all pupils
- RSE and PSHE lessons for all pupils across school
- A family support advisor, who can point you in a wide variety of different places for additional need and support for a wide range of help
- An Attendance officer
- Local Authority family support worker
- Early Help plans and working groups of professionals
- NHS Speech and Language teams – through specific referral
- SEN Support needs and referrals can be accessed and put in by our SENDCo to help access help for any of our children's extra or additional needs

### **Golden Books Assembly**

We are back to doing these online with every class joining the meeting from their room! Despite this, the children have been amazing and we continue to delight in all the fabulous things they do to earn a Golden Book Award. Please remember that if your child wins an award or is presented with something that makes them proud, outside of school, then they can bring it in on Friday morning and we will show everyone in assembly. We have some charitable super stars, swimmers, dancers, footballers and all-round great St John Vianney ambassadors out there – so be proud and show everyone how great you all are!

### **Work celebration**

On a Friday afternoon, children have started to bring work to show me what fantastic things they are doing in class. It is a real pleasure to see them come in and be so proud of all that they are accomplishing each week. I look forward to seeing next week's visitors to celebrate their hard work and efforts during the week.

We continue to keep all of our families in our thoughts and prayers.

Best wishes,

*A D Thorpe*

Mrs A. D. Thorpe  
Head Teacher