



Stockingate, South Kirkby, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF9 3DP

Telephone: 01977 643187

Email: skaoffice@watertonacademytrust.org

Website: www.southkirkbyacademy.org

Headteacher: Mr Adam Potter

Proud to be part of  Waterton Academy Trust

Wednesday 16th October 2024

Communication and Term Time Holiday Requests

Dear families,

I am writing to clarify a couple of things that have been brought to my attention this week. As always, if you would like to discuss any of this further, I am usually on the gate each morning or can be contacted through the school office. Emails can also be sent to school using the office email at the top of this page.

Communication from School

Below is a reminder of the ways in which we communicate with you all as a school. Please read this carefully – I think we communicate really well and have sent out surveys before asking what we could do to be better, but these have had little engagement. As always, please catch me with any feedback as I am more than happy to listen.

MCAS App

All whole-school communications are sent through our app, MCAS (**M**y **C**hild at **S**chool).

These are often sent as 'Announcements' and will be found under the announcements tab. A few of you have flagged that you used to get notifications for this and now do not. Mrs Studd and Mrs Neary are following this up with the company but of course, their response may take a little while. In the meantime, please try to get into the habit of regularly checking the announcements section as you would have once checked your child's bag for paper letters. Please also check your phone's notification settings.

Text Messages

Sometimes, texts are sent if we need to share a message with you quickly. This might be to let you know that a club is cancelled, or that we need you to give school a ring having already tried. We try not to use the text message function as each page of SMS costs school 7p – as you can imagine, this soon adds up!

Class Dojo

The class Dojo is app is used for teachers to message families directly. It may be about something that has happened in the school day (positive and negative!) or to share some photos with you from a school trip. This cannot be done through the MCAS App so it is worth having both. It is also a useful way of messaging teachers if you need to pass on any information.

Facebook & Twitter

Our school social media feeds are used to send reminders so are useful to follow.

Website

Finally, I put all whole-school letters and newsletters on our website too.

I hope you can all agree that there are lots of ways we communicate as a school – I hope the above clarifies the use of each method and helps you keep informed with what's going on at school.

We have moved away from paper letters mostly as these were a large cost to school, environmentally unfriendly (paper waste) and often letters were left in classrooms or on the playground.



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Term Time Holidays

I want to take this opportunity to make it really clear with you all that school **follow guidance and protocol set out by the Department for Education within our government, policy set out by Wakefield Council and Waterton Academy Trust** when making decisions about holidays.

Ultimately, I have the final say as Headteacher of decisions surrounding term time holidays however, I will always follow our **Waterton Academy Trust Attendance Policy** (this is on our school website). The following extract is from this policy:

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is that which is not permissible in law, e.g. birthdays, shopping trips, days out, term time holidays, visiting relatives, medical appointments that can't be verified, and absences where no explanation has been given. The school will closely monitor all unauthorised absence with the Trust Education Welfare Officer and act when thresholds are reached.

Term Time Holidays or Extended Leave of Absence

In line with the government's amendments to the Education Regulations 2006, the Headteacher will not grant leave of absence for family holidays in term time or extended leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. This applies to all children of compulsory school age. In order to enforce this decision, the Board of Trustees has agreed to the issuing of Penalty Notices for parents taking their children out of school during term time for holiday or extended leave. Parents who intend to take pupils out of school for a term time holiday or extended leave are required to write to the Headteacher requesting a leave of absence for their child stating the purpose, no later than 4 weeks before the holiday or leave is due to commence. Parents must fill out an absence form and write a supplementary letter to the headteacher and hand this to the office. Parents will be notified in writing within two weeks of the Headteacher's decision and the intention to issue a Penalty Notice should the unauthorised term time holiday or extended leave go ahead. Pupils who are absent from school during term time because of a holiday will be marked with a 'G' code (family holiday not authorised) on the school registration system

Exceptional Circumstances

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. The headteacher will consider each application individually considering specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. In situations where exceptional circumstances arise, parents are asked to arrange a confidential meeting as soon as is practicable with the headteacher to discuss these. If a leave of absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. As headteachers should only grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. The Board of Trustees recognises exceptional circumstances as those relating to: Families in crisis; such as a terminal illness within the immediate family Pre and post operational leave for armed forces families.

My stance is that I understand why families take term-time holidays, however it is my job to follow the above protocol and policy and holidays will not be authorised (unless there are exceptional circumstances). It is Wakefield Council that issue the fine and the money goes to them, not school. It is also worth noting that when I do not authorise a holiday, it isn't anything personal! I am simply doing my job.

As always, I am happy to talk through any of the above – please get in touch.

Best wishes,

Mr Adam Potter (Headteacher)

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mr A Potter Safeguarding Team: Miss S Burns (Deputy DSL), Miss K Jones, Mrs M Matthews, Mrs E Studd
Safeguarding Governor: Mrs L Ward

Worried a child is at risk of harm? Please speak to one of the members of staff listed here or call **Social Care Direct** on 0345 8503 503.