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| *St Stephen Churchtown Academy**Part of the Aspire Academy Trust*LOGOCOLOUR‘*Where Every Child Matters’* | St Stephen Churchtown AcademyCreakavoseSt StephenSt AustellCornwall PL26 7NZHead teacher: Mr Simon Welch B.A.Telephone 01726 822568Fax: 01726 822060e-mail: enquiries@ststephenchurchtown.org.ukwebsite: www.ststephenchurchtown.org.uk  |

10th December 2015

Dear Parents and Carers,

School attendance and ‘leave of absence request’ update

I am writing to let you know about changes regarding school attendance and leave of absence following a meeting with our school Education Welfare Officer yesterday.

In each year the Government collect information about attendance and absence rates across the country. This is used to monitor schools as attendance is a high priority for Ofsted as non-school attendance has a significant impact on a child’s future life chances.

Over the last few years the attendance at St Stephen Churchtown Academy has been improving and persistent absenteeism has been falling significantly, for which I would like to thank you all for your support in these matters.

A new challenge is now facing each and every school with the reduction of the threshold for persistent absenteeism now set at 10%, reducing from 15% in previous years. This amounts to 19 school days in a year. This is a very tight target and is linked to holidays in term time and indiscriminate days off.

Additionally, the guidance for issuing penalty notices for unauthorized absence has been revised. It now states that:

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent from school and the absence has not been authorized.

Or

Where a pupil arrives persistently late.

The minimum level of absence necessary is 10 or more school sessions (5 days) in any 100 day period.

Prosecution under the Education Act should be considered as an alternative where 20 or more sessions of unauthorised absence occur.

It is therefore essential that all requests for ‘leave of absence’ are made well in advance to enable time to check reasons, evidence and previous attendance information. Do not assume that authorization will be given. School term dates are published well in advance to enable parents to make plans for holidays out of school time. These can be found either on the school website or Cornwall Council website.

This guidance is intended to be used in tackling parentally condoned absence where it is reasonable to expect that a parent can ensure the child’s regular attendance but are not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

I thank you in advance for your continued support in these matters.

Yours sincerely

Simon Welch

Head teacher