



## **Westwood with Iford School Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

The school has a responsibility to implement the statutory duties in relation to school attendance. We will work closely with the Education Welfare Service, families, teams within the Education Department and other agencies in order to promote excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality.

The school acknowledges and supports the equal opportunity policies of Wiltshire County Council and recognises the need to strive against discrimination in all forms.

**All pupils** are expected to arrive at school on time every day, unless they are ill or have an emergency medical appointment.

Arriving on time is important as it gives a positive start to the day, avoids disruption to the class and gives children a sense of belonging. Learning about the importance of being punctual is a vital life skill.

The governing body recognises that very occasionally families have exceptional reasons to ask for permission for their children to miss school during term time. The school will only authorise such absence in exceptional circumstances. This policy clearly explains what 'exceptional circumstances' means.

### **Aims**

- For all pupils at Westwood with Iford to receive a full time education giving them the best opportunity to realise their true potential.
- To fulfil the school's statutory duties in relation to school attendance.

### **Parents and Carers' Responsibilities**

You will:

- work with the school to help your children understand how important it is to go to school regularly and to arrive on time.
- make sure that your children arrive in their classrooms between 08.55 and 09.05. The register closes at 09:05. A child arriving after this time will be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless an exceptional circumstances reason is provided.

- tell the school about your child's absence on the first day of absence, before the register closes at 09:05.
- tell the school about anything which affects your child's attendance.
- avoid making routine medical or dental appointments during the school day. If you need to make a non-emergency appointment, tell the school at least a day in advance.
- avoid booking family holidays in school term time (please read appendix A and appendix C).
- work with the school and other agencies (as and when appropriate) to sort out any issues relating to non-attendance.
- tell the school about any changes to your contact details (address, home telephone number, mobile number).

### **School's Responsibilities**

The school will:

- ensure that its legal responsibilities (see appendix B) are met by giving high priority to attendance and punctuality.
- provide a welcoming and caring environment where each member of the school community feels nurtured and secure.
- make sure all school staff work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.
- accurately complete the daily attendance register using the appropriate codes for authorised absences, as specified by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The attendance register is an important tool in our work to drive up standards and pupil attainment. It helps to identify pupils who might need extra support to catch up on lessons they may have missed and to target actions tackling poor attendance.
- ensure that all classes make a prompt start to each session of the school day.
- try to contact you if your child does not come to school on time and the school has not been informed why. This will happen on the first day your child is absent. It is called a "first day calling initiative". This practice encourages good attendance and helps to safeguard children. If no response is obtained, this will be repeated until clarification for absence has been verified.
- keep the Headteacher informed about any regular or ongoing absence from school.
- request a meeting with you if there is a sudden or ongoing concern regarding your child's attendance.
- contact the Education Welfare Officer if these concerns are not resolved.

- respond in writing to any request for leave of absence within 5 working days. This letter will clearly state the pupil's expected date of return to school.
- liaise with any other school where there are siblings for whom leave of absence is also requested.
- maintain up-to-date records of parents' and carers' names, addresses and contact telephone numbers.
- follow any guidance from Wiltshire Education Welfare Service.
- make the full version of its Attendance Policy available on the school's website and to any parent/carer on request.

draw parents/carers' attention to any changes in the Attendance Policy, e.g. via the website, newsletters and prospectus.

This policy is aligned with our Child Protection Policy and supports our commitment to safeguarding children.

**Approved by FGB: June 2017**

**Next review due: June 2020**

## **Appendix A** **Policy into Practice**

### **What happens if I want to take my child out of school during term time?**

#### **Requests for leave of absence**

In line with DfE legislation it is no longer possible to authorise holiday in term time. There are a number of exceptional circumstances however these do not include extended leave to visit family abroad.

#### **Exceptional circumstances are:**

- family emergency
- funeral of a close family member (please state relationship to you)
- wedding ceremony of a close family member (please state relationship to you)

Holidays will **not** count as a reason to authorise absence in term time, with the exception of children of armed forces personnel on leave from active service (when confirmation from a commanding officer will be required).

You must apply in writing to the Headteacher by completing a leave of absence form (available from the office). Your form must be submitted at least 7 working days before the requested leave of absence. No absence can be authorised after your child has been off school.

Circumstances which are notified to the school or Local Authority **after** a decision has been made by the Headteacher will not be considered and there will be no opportunity to discuss this further once a decision has been made. Therefore please be certain to provide details of the exceptional circumstances relating to your application below and attach any supporting evidence. The school will write back to you within 5 working days, telling you whether, in exceptional circumstances, the leave of absence has been approved.

#### **A request will not be authorised if**

your child's attendance is already below 95%

your child would miss a public examination

the request is for a family holiday (unless exceptional circumstances apply)

**If your request is not authorised and you decide to take your child out of school for 5 days or more, you are liable to pay a fine to the Local Authority.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Legal Requirements**

**Parents and carers** are responsible in law (Education Act 1996), for ensuring that children who are of compulsory school age receive an education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

If a pupil is absent and the school has not been told why by the parent or carer, this will be marked as an unauthorised absence. This can be changed to an authorised absence when the school is informed of the reason for the absence. The Headteacher will decide whether the absence is authorised.

The decision is based on:

- the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006; and
- the Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations (DfES, Sept 2006, version 1).

### **Accessibility (in relation to Disability Discrimination Act) and Equal Opportunities**

Where a pupil with accessibility needs may have difficulty complying with this policy on account of those needs, the Headteacher will discuss these with the pupil's parents/carers. Ideally this discussion should take place before they start school or within a month of identifying an issue. The school will aim to agree any necessary adjustments consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act Accessibility Policy to ensure that the pupil is not treated less favourably.

**APPENDIX C ISSUE OF A PENALTY NOTICE FOR A HOLIDAY TAKEN DURING TERM TIME**  
**Information for Parents and Carers**

**Wiltshire Education Welfare Service**  
**July 2013**

**Why have I received this leaflet?**

This leaflet is sent to people who have been notified that they will be issued with a Penalty Notice for a holiday taken during term time.

It is intended to provide you with information and guidance and is issued by the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service. It is not a legal document.

**What is the legislation covering the use of Penalty Notices?**

The Education Act 1996 as amended by Section 23 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

The legislation requires Local Authorities (LAs) to create a Code of Conduct covering the use of Penalty Notices and a copy of this can be found on the Wiltshire Council web page at:

[www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk)

**Why have I been issued with a Penalty Notice?**

Penalty Notices are issued for a number of reasons including holidays taken during term time where the absence has not been agreed by the school. A pupil will have had a minimum of 10 sessions (5 school days) lost to unauthorised holiday absence during the previous six months up to and including the day the Education Welfare Service is notified.

**I have more than one child; will I receive a Penalty Notice for each child?**

A Penalty Notice is issued to parents/carers of each child where the LA have been notified that the child has been absent from school due to unauthorised holiday absence.

**Will my partner be issued with a Penalty Notice?**

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent/carer for each child. This includes partners who live in the same household. A parent who does not live in the same house may also be issued with a Penalty Notice. The law states that both parents (or carers) are responsible for ensuring their child's attendance at school whether they live with the child or not; also any adult who has day to day care of a child is also responsible for the child's attendance at school.

**What options do I have?**

Once you have received a Penalty Notice you have the following options:

**OPTION 1**

Pay £60 within 21 days of the date of issue as stated on the Penalty Notice. Payment can be by postal order or cheque to the address given on the reverse of this leaflet. Debit Card payments are also accepted. Part payment or by instalments will not be accepted. Please do not send cash.

**OPTION 2**

Pay £120 between 21 and 28 days of the date of issue as stated on the Penalty Notice. Payment can be by postal order or cheque to the address given on the reverse of this leaflet. Debit Card payments are also accepted. Part payment or by instalments will not be accepted. Please do not send cash.

**OPTION 3**

You can decide not to pay the Penalty. In such cases you will automatically be summonsed to appear in Court for the offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996 of failing to ensure the regular attendance at school of a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil there.

**If I pay the Penalty do I have to go to Court?**

If you pay the Penalty as stated in Option 1 or Option 2, this discharges any and all liability on your behalf concerning the non-attendance of your child for the period quoted on the Penalty Notice. This means that you will not have to attend Court and you will not have a criminal conviction recorded against you.

**What happens if I do not pay the Penalty?**

If you do not pay the Penalty as stated in Option 1 or Option 2 and the time period of 28 days expires, the Local Authority is required to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence relating to your child's non-attendance school during the specified period.

**What if I cannot afford to pay?**

If you feel you cannot afford to pay the Penalty Notice then by choosing Option 3 you will have the opportunity to explain your situation to the Court. If you either plead guilty or you are found guilty, the Courts have a wider range of sentencing options, which could include a maximum fine of up to £1000.

**What if I feel a statutory defence applies?**

The only statutory defences to the offence under Section 444(1) Education Act 1966 are:

- The child was absent for medical reasons (needs evidence by GP certificate or appointment card)
- The LA failed to provide transport when required to do so
- The absences were due to religious observance
- You had permission from the school or there was an unavoidable cause

**Can a Penalty Notice be withdrawn?**

The legislation governing Penalty Notices states that once a Penalty notice has been issued, it can only be withdrawn by Wiltshire LA in circumstances in which the Authority determines that:

- a) it ought not to have been issued, or
- b) it ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient

If you believe that either a) or b) applies in your case then you are asked to contact us in writing without delay in order that we can consider your representations. We must point out that the time period for payment does not stop whilst your representations are being considered.

**Payment of your Penalty Notice**

Crossed cheque or postal order made payable to Wiltshire Council and posted to Shared Services – Finance, PO Box 4385, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

Debit/Credit Card by using our online payment service [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk) or automated payment line 24 hours a day 7 days a week on 0300 456 0119 or by calling one of our Customer Services team on 0300 456 0100

**You will need to quote your invoice number and confirm the amount you need to pay.**

**How can I appeal against a Penalty Notice?**

Appeals must be made in writing to:

The Penalty Notice Officer

Schools and Learning Area Office - South

Wiltshire Council

P O Box 2281

Salisbury SP2 2HX

NB: Appeals can only be considered if they are in writing

**What happens if I appeal?**

You will receive a written response to your appeal usually within 2 working days. During the appeal process please be aware that the Penalty Notice process will continue and the payment period is not normally extended; however if there is undue delay in responding to an appeal the LA will take this into consideration.

**If you have any questions regarding the Penalty Notice process, please contact:**

The Penalty Notice Officer

Telephone: 01722 438123

**Issued by Wiltshire Education Welfare Service**