



# Attendance

## Frequently asked Questions

### 1. What is acceptable attendance?

- The School expects all students to aim for 100% attendance
- Any attendance level below 96% would initiate intervention by the school. This could be as simple as a 'chat' with the form teacher or may, in more severe circumstances, lead to the involvement of agencies outside of the school.

### 2. What does the school do to promote excellent attendance?

- **Attendance Improvement Officer** works with students to improve their attendance/punctuality.
- **Our School Mentor** is available for students and offers a confidential service to support students emotionally and socially.
- **Nurture Groups** are available in school to help integrate nervous students or students with specific issues. Not all students are confident enough to spend every lesson in a classroom without problem. The school aims to ease such students into appropriate learning environments with the minimum of fuss and disruption to their learning.

### 3. How does the school record absence?

- The school uses an electronic system of attendance registration that is updated within each lesson by the form teacher or subject teacher.
- The system records whether the child is present or absent.
- Absence is categorised as being authorised (agreed and accepted by the school as being appropriate) or unauthorised.
- Examples of authorised absence would be genuine illness, medical appointments etc.
- Examples of unauthorised absence would be truancy, prolonged periods of absence without a medical certificate and unauthorised holidays in term time.
- The codes used are mandatory codes as issued by the government.

### 4. What should I do if my child is ill?

- Firstly, decide if your child is too ill to attend school. Each day the school is attended by a number of students who feel under the weather or 'a bit sick'. The majority of these students improve during the day and have no problems as a result of their attending.
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- If your child is too ill to attend, please ring the school ([01942 202580](tel:01942202580) – press 1 when requested in order to report a student absent) on the first day, and on each subsequent day your child is unwell. You can also email directly to the pupil office - [pupiloffice@westleigh.set.org](mailto:pupiloffice@westleigh.set.org)
- Please note that medical evidence / GP note will be requested by the school for extended or recurrent periods of absence. Please download this medical certificate (see below), if required, ensuring it is stamped by the medical surgery.

### [Medical Card Appointment Slip](#)

#### **5. If my child is absent from school, what can I expect will happen?**

- On the first day of your child's absence you will receive a text and phone call, from the school (if you have not already contacted the school) asking you to explain your child's absence.
- On the third day of the absence you will need to provide medical evidence in the form of a Doctor's note, appointment letter or card.
- If your child's absence is more frequent, you should expect to receive a letter informing you of your child's attendance level or a home visit.
- If your child's absence is unacceptable or at a significant level (regardless of the reason for the absence) you should expect to be asked to attend a meeting in school to discuss support appropriate to your child.

#### **6. If my child has an unacceptable level of unauthorised absence, what can I expect may happen?**

- You will be contacted by the school, either by telephone, letter and/or visit to your home in order that the level of, and reasons for, your child's absence can be discussed with you.
- An Action Plan will be compiled that is aimed at helping you improve your child's school attendance.
- Failure to comply with any such plan without valid reason will, if your child's school attendance does not improve, result in a referral being made to The Startwell Service who will help you to ensure your child's regular school attendance.
- Further poor school attendance by your child may result in legal action being taken against you by the local authority which is by a referral to the Attendance Enforcement Team. You may initially be issued with an Education Penalty Notice (fine).
- See the information provided below with regards to the Educational Penalty Notice.



## **7. What is an Education Penalty Notice?**

- An Education Penalty Notice is a fine issued to parents or carers and can be either £60 per parent or carer or per child (if the payment is made with 21 days of receipt) or £120 per parent or carer or per child (if paid after this, but within 28 days). Education Penalty Notices are issued by first class post to your home and will explain how and where to send your payment. You must pay the whole of the amount owing in one payment. You cannot pay in instalments or just pay part of the amount.

## **8. What does the law say about non-attendance?**

- Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents or carers may be taken to court and prosecuted if their child does not attend school regularly and their absences are unauthorised (or in other words, the school cannot or has not given permission for them to be off school).
- In 2003, the Anti -Social Behaviour Act provided an alternative means of tackling non-attendance in schools. Under Section 23 of the Act, Local Education Authorities and other designated bodies were given the powers to issue Education Penalty Notices to parents or carers who are considered capable of, but unwilling to work towards improving their child's attendance.

## **9. How many absences will result in the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice?**

- A minimum of 10 sessions (or 5 school days) which are classed as unauthorised absences during the current term and this also applies for taking leave during the current term without the permission of the school.

## **10. Can you appeal against an Education Penalty Notice?**

- There isn't a legal right of appeal after an Education Penalty Notice has been issued. You can, however, contact the issuer if you have a complaint, for example, if you believe that the Education Penalty Notice has been issued to the wrong person.

## **11. What happens if you don't pay the Education Penalty Notice?**

- If you don't pay an Education Penalty Notice within 28 days of receipt, The Startwell Service can take you to court (the Magistrates court) under the Education Act for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If proven, you may be fined anything up to £2500 and/or be sentenced to up to 3 months in prison. In addition, you may be subject to a court order, for example, a Parenting Order.



**12. Will I be taken to court if I pay the Education Penalty Notice but my child is still missing school?**

- If you pay the Education Penalty Notice within 28 days of receipt, you won't be taken to court for the period of absences covered in the Education Penalty Notice.
- If, however, your child continues to have periods of unauthorised absences which are not covered in the Notice after the payment of the Education Penalty Notice, you may be taken to court – depending on the circumstances.

**13. What kind of unauthorised absences result in the issuing of an Education Penalty Notice?**

- Where students are openly truanting.
- Absences from school of which parents or carers are aware, but that aren't authorised by the school.
- Holidays taken in term time which the head teacher has not authorised.
- An unacceptable delayed return from an extended holiday if the parents or carers haven't got permission beforehand from the school.
- Regular late arrival at school (after the Register has closed).
- No contact from parent/carer to explain reason for absence.

For more information on Education Penalty Notices please visit the Department for Education Website [www.gov.uk/dfes](http://www.gov.uk/dfes)

**14. How will absences from school affect my child's progress at school?**

**Absences will affect:**

- Attainment levels – the quality of school work and qualifications gained will be significantly lower if attendance is lower. This has been shown by data analysis and research both in Wigan and nationally
- School routine – disrupting your child's learning and that of other students by the missing of vital coursework.
- The chances of children and young people being involved in anti-social behaviour may increase as attendance at school decreases.
- A child or young person's general well-being and long term life opportunities may be negatively affected by the missing of positive experiences associated with school and learning.
- Improving regular attendance at school is therefore a key priority, both locally and nationally
- It may, in certain circumstances, be appropriate for the local authority (Startwell) to begin legal action to enforce the child's school attendance.