



Wingham Primary School

Respect Inclusive Creative Hardworking

School Lane, Wingham, Canterbury, CT3 1BS

Tel: 01227 720277 Email: office@winghamprimary.co.uk
www.winghamprimary.org.uk

Ms E Douglas BA, PGCE, NASENCO Head of School

Mrs H Clements BA Ed (Hons) NPQH Executive Headteacher

Friday 10th January 2025

Dear parents / carers

You may have seen in the media that there have been some statutory changes made to guidance for schools regarding attendance.

New DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Attendance Counts'

There has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance, effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

'Support First'

As the DfE notes, '*Improving attendance is everyone's business*', and it is important that we, as your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that '*the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.*'

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact Ms Douglas or Mrs McCorry as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood, and appropriate support can be put in place to support you, your family, and your child to prevent further absences.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA). Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:



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- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time

These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings, such as transitions to secondary school or in-year school changes. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in July (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, you may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

The penalty amount has increased to £160 from September (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but it is important to inform you of these changes promptly.

Nationally, Headteachers are:

- not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and
- are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

The new policy also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria is met. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.



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Below is a summary of the changes to the Penalty Notice Fines.

- Schools MUST consider a penalty notice for 10 unauthorised sessions (usually 5 school days) within a rolling 10-week period of time (these sessions do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of any unauthorised absences and can span different terms and school years)
- Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child (for example, if there are 3 children in a family, each parent may receive 3 separate penalty notices)

National Penalty Notice Framework (offences in a three-year rolling period)

First Offence	Second Offence	Third Offence
The first penalty notice will be issued at £160 per parent if paid within 28 days (this will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days).	The second penalty notice will be issued at £160 per parent per child if paid within 28 days (This will not be reduced).	A penalty notice will not be issued, and the case will be considered for potential legal action. This can result in a criminal record and fines of up to £1000 plus costs.

Our revised school attendance policy in line with these requirements can be found on our school website, I have also attached a fact sheet of Q&A produced by the DFE.

The changes above have come as a result of changes to legislation and although we have avoided penalty notice fines in the past, we are no longer in a position to do this going forward. The new system will begin from this term.

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

If you have any questions about the information above and the policy, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Kind Regards

Mrs H Clements



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*Unauthorised Absence – Absence which are not permitted by law. Some examples of unauthorised absence.

Term time holiday	It's your child's birthday
Not informing the school the reasons for your child's absence	A sibling is unwell/ parent illness (other than emergency)
Late after the register closes (after 9:15am, 1:30pm)	Waiting for a delivery or repair
Going on a family day out	School is aware of a holiday even though the school has not been informed



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