

Whitstable Junior School

Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1DB

Tel: (01227) 272385

Head Teacher : Ms Sarah Kent

e-mail: manager@whitstable-junior.kent.sch.uk

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Dear parents and carers,

I am writing to update you on recent Government changes to attendance systems.

New DfE statutory attendance guidance

The Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance aimed at reducing termtime holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

The DfE states that: 'Improving attendance is everyone's business', and it is important that we work together in partnership with you to improve the attendance of all children.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact me so that barriers to attendance can be understood and appropriate support can be put in place to support you and your family.

The new DfE guidance has meant in-school systems have needed to adapt. Any child with 10 or more unauthorised absences within a ten-week period, may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA). Please note that each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- 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

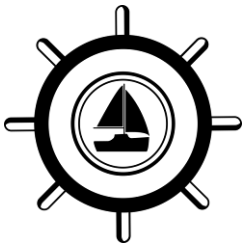
We will always discuss this with you before issuing a Notice to Improve.

Term Time Holiday Requests

The DfE have taken a firm stance on all requests for term time holiday. Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions, may result in a Penalty Notice. The penalty amount has increased to £160 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate. In the event of three or more periods of unauthorised absence within a three-year period, a penalty notice will not be issued, but a referral will be made to Kent PRU and Attendance Service Courts Team who will consider the case for prosecution.

Parents with parental responsibility and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents, may be fined, and a penalty notice will be issued for every child who is absent. Please note that Headteachers are not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances. We will always consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision, but will have to abide by the guidance laid out by





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the government.

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

Our revised school attendance policy in line with these requirements can be found on our school website: [Attendance Policy](#)

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Attending school is a crucial part of your child's learning journey and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress.

We are currently in the process of refining our attendance strategy which will outline school based support available to our families and systems we are developing to celebrate and promote good attendance for all of the children in our care. This will be shared with you in duecourse.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

With kind regards

Sarah Kent
Headteacher

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