

15th October 2021

Important attendance information for pupils in all Key stages

Dear parent/carer,

We have recently updated our Attendance Policy, which can be accessed via our school website. I am writing to you to ensure you are fully aware of the importance of punctual attendance as well as your requirements as a parent/carer and the serious consequences you may face if our policy is not followed.

At West Kirby School, we are committed to promoting and modelling good attendance and behaviour – which is essential for pupils to achieve their potential. Lack of attendance is directly correlated to a pupil's deteriorating success and development in their education.

Currently, in primary schools where the average absence per pupil is 15 days per year, only 65 percent achieve good grades in maths and English. Whilst 15 days per year seems a vast amount, what may surprise you is how quickly and easily unauthorised absences can add up. We know that as parents and carers you want the best for your child, and this is why it is imperative all pupils at West Kirby School adhere to our Attendance Policy.

As a parent or carer, you have a legal requirement to ensure your child attends school on a regular basis. Therefore, you hold the responsibility to promote good attendance and punctuality.

We do understand there are times when children will need to be absent from school for a number of reasons. As a result, we will only consider authorising absences in the following instances:

- For sickness or ill health
- For medical or dental appointments which fall during school hours
- For religious or cultural observances
- For a family emergency

We ask all parents and carers to follow our absence procedure in order to grant authorised absence in the above cases. You are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 9.30am, followed by a note providing a signed explanation upon the first day of your child's return.

Any parent or carer who has not reported their child as absent by 9.30am will be contacted by the school by phone call or if no answer, via email. Failure to follow this procedure may result in the child receiving an unauthorised absence and could lead to us informing the local authority, should their attendance fall below 85 percent.

The DfE has made it clear that headteachers are not to authorise absence for any holidays during term time, except under exceptional circumstances.

We will not, therefore, grant authorisation for absence in the following instances:

- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Leaving school unnecessarily during the school day
- Not attending school for an unnecessary reason such as shopping or birthdays
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained or have failed to follow the absence procedure

I must also state the importance of punctuality with regards to the beginning of the school day. You will be aware that the school day starts at 9am and all pupils are expected to be on school premises at this time. Pupil can enter school at 8.45am and attend breakfast club or go to their form room. Registers are marked by 9.10am and close at 10am.

Should your child arrive after the register closes, they will receive a mark to show that they are on-site, though this will be recorded as a late, however if they arrive after 10am when the register closed they will receive an unauthorised absence. Continuous lateness will, therefore, result in several unauthorised absences, despite your child being on-site for the rest of the school day. Teachers will also be receiving training and will be encouraged to identify and report any potentially at-risk pupils, should they notice any of the stated unauthorised absences as common occurrences, including lateness.

It is now possible for parents and carers to be issued penalty notices for unauthorised absences. Penalty notices begin with an initial fine of £60, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Following failure of these payments, the local attendance officer may decide to prosecute a parent. If so, parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

I urge you to read our Attendance Policy which can be accessed via our school website. Similarly, a hard copy of our Attendance Policy is available in our school office. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Mr P Smith via 0151 6323201 or psmith@wkrs.co.uk.

Kind regards,

Mr P Smith

Deputy Head (Behaviour and Attitudes)