



West Moors Middle School

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23rd September 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Attendance at West Moors Middle School is in line with the national average and we are pleased that the majority of our pupils attend school regularly. However, I do want to take the opportunity at the start of the school year, to outline the reasons why good attendance is so important and to make you aware of the new law regarding absences in term time.

Schools have a legal duty to monitor attendance; our attendance data, including authorised and unauthorised absences, lateness to school and holidays in term time is scrutinised on a weekly basis by the Department for Education and by the local authority. The government has set a target of 95% attendance for all pupils over an academic year and pupils below 90% attendance are classed as persistent absentees.

I wanted to raise awareness of how quickly days absent from school can add up to a significant amount of time missed over the school year as 90% sounds like a high figure. However, by the end of the academic year this equates to one month absent from school and 100 missed lessons. In WMMS that is 100 hours of learning missed. Further guidance from Dorset Council can be found on their website- click [here](#).



Thriving to Achieve our Best – Together
Head Teacher: Dr D Craddock PhD MA BSc (Hons) NPQH



The new law around attendance came into force in August 2024. The most reported information around this law is around fixed penalty notices for holidays during term time have increased and roll into a 3-year period. The infographic below explains this further.

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IS CHANGING

1 FIRST OFFENCE
The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:
£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days
Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

2 SECOND OFFENCE (WITHIN 3 YEARS)
The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:
£160 per parent, per child to be paid within 28 days. No reduced rate will be offered.

The following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after **19th August 2024**.

3 THIRD OFFENCE AND ANY FURTHER OFFENCES (WITHIN 3 YEARS)
The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on a Parents future DBS certificate, due to failure to safeguard a child's education.

10 SESSIONS (5 DAYS) OF UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE IN A 10-WEEK PERIOD
Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period.

Please follow the link for the Publication that will start from 19th August 2024.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance

However, this law also applies to unauthorised absence in term time too, and there are much stricter measures that schools must apply for pupils who are persistently absent from school.

I would also like to draw your attention to important information below which refers to requesting absence in term time:

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

We will always seek to work with you as parents and carers to support you in getting your child into school and we recognise that there are times when ill health prevents your child attending school. If you have any concerns around your child's health and attendance, please do contact your child's tutor at school.

The NHS have produced guidance to help support you in making a decision about whether to keep your child home from school: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> .

We ask that you message on each day of absence by 8:00 am. It is important that we have enough detail to authorise the absence from school so please explain why your child is not well enough for school rather than use the generic term unwell. You will receive a message if we have not heard a reason for your child's absence. You will also receive a message if your child is late to school.

Yours sincerely



Dr Craddock

Head Teacher