



West Moors Middle School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Firstly, I would like to thank all of you for the effort you make in ensuring your children arrive at school every day and on time. Attendance at West Moors Middle School is currently in line with the national average, and we are pleased that the vast majority of our pupils attend regularly.

At the start of this school year, I would like to take the opportunity to outline why good attendance is so important, and to make you aware of the new regulations regarding absences during term time.

Schools have a legal duty to monitor attendance. Our attendance data — including authorised and unauthorised absences, lateness and holidays during term time — is scrutinised weekly 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. Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are classed as persistent absentees.

Number of days absent each year	Overall attendance	Impact on students education
5 days or less	97%+	These pupils have every chance to make really strong progress at school.
10 days	95%	These pupils benefit from strong overall attendance and are very well placed to make good progress at school. We aim for every pupil to have at least 95% attendance overall
19 days	90%	Pupils in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder a pupil's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistently absent from school
29 days	85%	Pupils in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder a pupil's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistently absent from school.
38 days	80%	Pupils are missing a year of school over 5 years of education. They are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents / carers of young people in this group could be fined or prosecuted.

It is easy to underestimate how quickly days absent from school can add up. While 90% attendance may sound like a high figure, by the end of the academic year it equates to around one



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 Head Teacher: **Dr D Craddock PhD MA BSc (Hons) NPQH**



month of school missed — approximately 100 lessons or 100 hours of learning lost at WMMS.

Further guidance from Dorset Council can be found on their website click [here](#).

Holiday Penalty Notices

The Department for Education states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. One of the most widely reported aspects of this law relates to fixed penalty notices for holidays taken during term time. Please be aware that these penalty notices have increased in value and are now calculated over a rolling three-year period. The infographic below explains this in more detail

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 £90 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.

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.

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

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

Penalty notice fines may be considered when there have been five days of unauthorised absence within a ten-week period. Please note that penalty notices for both poor attendance and term-time leave are issued at the discretion of the Local Authority. However, we are legally obliged to inform the Local Authority of school attendance and absence.

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 Cradock

Head Teacher

