



# **Willowtown Community Primary School**

## **Improving Attendance Information for Parents**



## **Improving Attendance and Punctuality**

At Willoughton Community Primary School we aim to be judged as Good or better by Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Wales) and judged as providing the highest possible educational standards to your children.

When visiting a school and evaluating standards, Estyn take many factors into consideration including: pupil achievement and attainment, progress, behaviour, the quality of learning and teaching, pupil wellbeing, school leadership and attendance. We believe we are improving rapidly in many of the above areas.

## **PARENTS**

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. Absences, other than for illness, should be kept to a minimum. Unacceptable reasons for absence which the school regards as unauthorised absence or truancy include:

- Lateness e.g. after 9.30am;
- Whole mornings or afternoons being taken off for doctor or dentist appointments (ideally these should be arranged in out-of-school time);
- Occasions such as birthdays and shopping trips;
- Holidays.

## **AUTHORISED ABSENCES**

Where a pupil is absent due to sickness and is genuinely unable to attend school, then the school, after being informed, may authorise a child's absence. Parents are asked to inform the school of their child's absence at the beginning of the day. The school has a very clear process for parents to follow if their child is absent. In law, only a headteacher can authorise a pupil's absence, and may require additional evidence such as a letter from your child's GP.

Parents/carers have a right to withdraw their children from school in order for them to take part in acts of religious worship. The days when this occurs are known to the school and pupils will not be disadvantaged in their education by attendance at such worship.

When their children are absent, parents are asked to let the school know as soon as possible, preferably by telephoning on the first morning, or by sending a message. In this way absences can be authorised by the headteacher. Without such notification the absence will, for record/reporting purposes, be counted as 'unauthorised'.

**Our desire to see attendance improve is because of unquestionable links to pupil attainment. Children who attend school regularly achieve more.**

- If your child is absent from school please phone the school office on the first day of absence.
- The school maintains close links with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will be informed of any unauthorised absence or persistent lateness.

Our rationale for not wanting children to be taken out of school for holidays during term time is backed up by national research funded by the Government's Department for Education:

- Holidays in school term time break the continuity of a child's learning;
- Teachers will not have the time to 're-teach' what has been missed during a holiday;
- Children find it hard to break back into friendship groups causing considerable stress and unhappiness – further impacting on learning;
- Children taking holidays in September or during times of transition miss out on learning classroom routines causing distress and anxiety upon return;
- Pupils suffer a loss of confidence as a result of feeling 'left behind' and worry about 'catching up';
- Children who work towards events and activities but then miss out as a result of being away feel disappointment;
- Gaps in learning often take considerable time to be resolved.

Whilst we appreciate that holidays are cheaper during the term time than during the 13 weeks that the children have away from school for 'official' holidays each year, we very much hope that parents and carers take the above factors into account when planning family holidays and absence from school.

#### **HOLIDAY OR LONG-TERM ABSENCE NOTIFICATION**

If you are planning to take your child out of school for a holiday or long-term absence please request a form from the school office. This ensures that absences are recorded accurately.

#### **ACTIONS DUE TO POOR ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is required by law and Wales introduced Fixed Penalty Notices and fines from September 2014 for parents who have children with more than **5 days** of unauthorised absence. These can be issued for any absences not authorised by the school, including holidays. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will issue these notices when concerns are raised by school or the police. The fine is £120 unless paid within 28 days when it will reduce to £60.

The headteacher will make the decision to enforce the Fixed Penalty Notice.

#### **Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:**

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence during the current term. These do not need to be consecutive.
- Unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term time or delayed return from extended holidays.
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed, in the current term. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.
- Truancy, where the child has come to the attention of the Police or public during the school hours for being absent from school, without an acceptable reason.

Staff at Willowtown Community Primary School are **not** able to provide children and parents with 'work' to complete to compensate for time away from the classroom as a result of absence due to holiday or extended leave being taken.

However, in the event that exceptional circumstances mean that a child is away from school for a prolonged period, there are some activities that parents can undertake with their children:

- Mental calculations involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division will lead to a good understanding in numeracy. Continuing to work on multiplication tables will help to keep children's skills sharp.
- Writing a diary of a trip is a great way to improve a child's writing but also provides them with a wonderful memento of a visit. Children can leave space in these to add photographs on their return.
- Encourage your child to read every day – whilst away, you may find it possible to hear them read more often than you would at home.
- There are a number of different websites that will provide you with 'worksheet' type activities – [www.primaryresources.co.uk](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk) is an excellent resource.

### **Lateness**

- Lateness has an enormous **negative impact** on learning as a child will tend to be missing the same subject lessons/activities.
- Children are often very embarrassed and upset at being late, they can often feel very self-conscious about entering the classroom or hall for assembly it's not a good way to start the day.
- Lateness causes much disruption for the administrative staff, it causes them extra work and takes up their time during a very busy part of the school day.

### **ATTENDANCE TEAM**

The school attendance team will provide the 'first response' to act upon lateness or poor attendance. Parents are contacted either by telephone or by letter if no explanation has been received regarding an absence. The attendance team will work with parents and offer support to help with issues relating to attendance. The attendance team may make impromptu home visits from time to time to provide support for parents/carers who require it.

Parents will be informed by letter as soon as a child's attendance causes concern. Letters will be sent out on a half-termly basis to the parents of children whose attendance falls below 95%. If the attendance drops to 85% or below, the school will contact the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) who will be in touch with you. Parents may be invited to attend a meeting with the headteacher to discuss a child's absence.

