

WESTOVER GREEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

We believe that children can reach their full potential only by receiving full-time education, through regular and structured attendance. We expect all pupils to arrive at school punctually and we emphasise this to parents.

All staff are concerned for the children's welfare and happiness and everyone plays a part in promoting regular attendance among the pupils. However, children should not attend school if they are unwell.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

Aims

- To foster a climate where regular attendance and punctuality are valued by the school community – teachers, parents and pupils.
- To provide a framework, with agreed roles and responsibilities.
- To provide support and guidance for parents and pupils.
- To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school, including set procedures for attendance information.
- To develop a systematic approach for gathering and analysing data.
- To improve the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at school and reduce unauthorised absence.
- To implement a system for rewards and sanctions.
- To promote effective partnership with the Education Welfare Officers and other agencies.

Communication

Information on punctuality, unauthorised absence and illness is set out in the School Prospectus. This emphasises the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if a child is absent for any reason.

The importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained at the pre-school induction meeting held annually for children about to enter the Foundation Stage. This reiterates that children should arrive at school on time, so that each child can be given the best possible start to the school day. It is also stressed that young children particularly should be collected promptly, as they can become upset if left behind on their own. Parents are asked to share any worries that their child might have in school. Parents need to be aware that even little things can upset children, which means that they might become unhappy and might not want to come to school.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting, the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted, together with other school routines.

It is the statutory duty of every parent/carer to ensure that their child attends school regularly and on time (Section 444(i) Education Act 1996)

All parents should contact school if their child will be absent or late. A telephone call is acceptable but when their child returns, parents/carers should send a letter to school explaining the absence. Parents/carers may call at the school office to notify their child's non-attendance. If no notification is received about a child's absence, the school contacts the parent/carer on the first day of absence.

Registration

Westover Green uses a computerised registration system and the register is completed in the morning and afternoon.

Lateness

Children arriving at school after 8.50am should report to the School Office to sign in. The adult with them will be issued with a lateness slip which explains the problems caused by and possible consequences of persistent lateness.

Arrival after 9.20 is recorded as an unauthorised absence and will be reflected in the child's percentage attendance figure.

Children arriving persistently late to school will be identified by the class teacher and will be referred to the Office Manager or Head of School for parents/carers to be contacted.

The Office Manager is responsible for collating attendance records in school and notifies the Head of School if there is any reason for concern. The school responds swiftly to lateness and / or absence.

Term Time Leave

The school holiday dates are published at least a year in advance and we ask parents/carers to book their family holidays during the school holidays. The Education (Pupil Registration) (English) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013, state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school, if leave is granted. In accordance with the above Regulations, requests for leave of absence are treated sympathetically **but only in exceptional circumstances can they be approved.** Please see Appendix A for further details regarding term time leave.

The policy of Somerset County Council, to which this school has agreed, states that parents/carers who take their child out of school for five days or more during term time, without the authority of the Headteacher, will each be liable to receive a

Penalty Notice. Parents/carers who take their child out of school for five days or more during term time, without the authority of the Headteacher, **will receive a penalty notice if the child's attendance for the academic year is below 95% on their return.**

(Penalty Notices will be issued by the Local Authority in accordance with the Somerset County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (see Appendix B).

Concerns

Attendance of all pupils is examined regularly. If there is a frequent pattern of absence from school the Office Manager will telephone the parents to ascertain the reason for persistent absence. If there are concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality, the class teacher consults the Headteacher immediately. Details of attendance or late percentage are extracted from the computer database and discussed with parents. If absences or lateness persist, the school contacts the Education Welfare Officer.

The Education Welfare Officer meets the Office manager and Head of School at least once per term to discuss attendance issues offering action, advice and support. The school's own attendance monitoring team meets at least every three weeks to monitor attendance closely. Letters are sent to parents and Parenting Contract meetings are held. At these meetings, agreed support and measures are put in place to ensure an improvement in attendance.

Westover Green engages actively with the Education Welfare Service to support and encourage good attendance. This includes, where necessary, the issue of Penalty Notices (see Appendix B).

Absence through Illness

Westover Green continues to provide as much education as the child's medical condition allows to keep up the momentum of their learning.

We monitor attendance of those pupils who are absent from school because of short term or chronic illness, and close links are maintained with parents.

Educational support, including the provision of work and materials is provided for those pupils who are absent from school, with medical conditions for more than 5 days. The teaching staff liaises with medical advisers, and/or home tuition providers so that, during prolonged absence, pupils receive suitable work for their age and ability group.

The reintegration of children into school after a long absence through ill health is considered a high priority. The school consults parents about general concerns, medical issues and the timing and pace of return. Staff, including the class teacher, teaching assistants, and Home or Hospital tutor meet to discuss the return to school. Friends and other pupils are encouraged to help the child settle back into school. Extra support is provided (subject to available resources) after an analysis of the child's needs.

Truancy

All staff at Westover Green believe in the importance of continuity in every child's learning. Staff are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although truancy is very rare, if staff are suspicious that a child might be playing truant, action is taken immediately.

If truancy is suspected, the school and the Educational Welfare Officer are notified. Parents are contacted, either by telephone or a home visit. We encourage parents to bring their child to school, so that the reasons for truancy can be discussed and, we hope, resolved. If the Headteacher is unable to talk to the parents, he or she talks to the child to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that make that child not want to attend. If problems are identified, these are discussed and resolved with the class teacher/member of staff/other pupils.

At Westover Green, we endeavour to discover, through discussion with the individual pupils, classes, pupil council and through questionnaires, what the children like and dislike about school. The staff consider the children's opinions and, if possible, adjustments are made to teaching and learning procedures and the school environment.

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

The importance of good attendance is highlighted in PSHCE lessons, assemblies and parents' meetings. The school's Home School Liaison Worker also leads attendance groups and works with families to support good attendance.

We make use of imaginative and creative rewards to encourage good attendance and punctuality. These are reviewed annually to ensure maximum impact.

Rewards

- Class certificates for good attendance are awarded at the end of each week.
- Most improved class attendance awarded at the end of each week
- Termly raffle prizes for excellent attendance
- Annual prizes for 100% attendance
- Annual prizes for very good attendance
- Individual class rewards for good attendance and punctuality

This policy has been formally approved by the Governing Body of Westover Green Community School.

Policy Reviewed by:	Richard Rosslyn
Signed:	Chair of Governors
Dated:	

TERM TIME LEAVE

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS



Amendments to the 2006 regulations were made by the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) and come into force on 1 September 2013.

The amendments make it clear that Headteachers can only grant leave of absence during term time for exceptional circumstances. All reference to a holiday and/or extended leave, including the threshold of ten school days is removed. Any request for leave must be made in writing for the attention of the Headteacher in advance.

There is no formal definition offered for exceptional leave at present by the Department for Education. However, from discussion with the DfE and concerned professional associations it is suggested that exceptional leave may include:

- Forces staff returning from lengthy active service abroad
- Police, Fire Service staff being told when they can or cannot take leave
- If a close family member has a terminal illness and it may be a last chance to be together especially if the family member lived overseas
- Parents having to work abroad for a fixed, minimum term period

Somerset County Council (SCC) supports schools:

- In expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school regularly. Any absence from school will impact on educational achievement, success in later life and longer term health and well being
- In ensuring the law is upheld. Parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance at school of their child. Schools must explain their stance on term time leave in their attendance policy so parents/carers are clear on expectations and potential consequences, such as any unauthorised absence including taking term time leave not agreed with the school, can result in a Penalty Notice being issued to each parent for each child. Any Penalty Notice unpaid is taken to Magistrates Court as failure to secure the regular attendance of their child. If found guilty of such an offence, they might receive a criminal conviction and a potential fine of up to £1,000

SCC cannot override a school's decision not to authorise any term time leave. There is no right of appeal.

Taking a child on holiday in term time interrupts the learning of the whole class. Teachers have to spend time helping children catch up when they return. Parents should arrange holidays for the 13 week school holiday periods. Schools are open 190 days which leaves 175 days of the year for a holiday.



SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

PENALTY NOTICE – CODE OF CONDUCT

(The term “school” will include, state schools, academies and alternative provision)

1. LEGISLATION

- 1.1 Section 23 Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 empowers authorised officers of a Local Authority, Headteachers (or authorised Deputy) and Police Officers (including PCSOs) to issue a Penalty Notice in cases of unauthorised absence from school.
- 1.2 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2004 require the Local Authority, in consultation with those in 1.1, to agree a code of conduct for issuing Penalty Notices. Any issued must be done within the terms of this code of conduct.
- 1.3 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 extends the issuing of Penalty Notices to alternative provision.
- 1.4 The education provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 apply to parents defined Section 576 of the Education Act 1996. This Act defines “parent” as; all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for a child; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means that a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law.
- 1.5 Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions available under Section 444 Education Act 1996 or Section 36 Children 1989 to enforce attendance at school or alternative provision. There is no legal requirement to consider a Penalty Notice before proceeding to a section 444 prosecution - Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices DfE (DCSF) 2007.
- 1.6 Education & Inspections Act 2006 allows a Penalty Notice to be issued when an excluded child is found in a public place, during the first 5 days of a formal exclusion.
- 1.7 This Code of Conduct complies with the requirements set out in Sections 14-16 of The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.
- 1.8 The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and Equal Opportunities legislation.

2. Rationale

- 2.1 This Code of Conduct ensures that Penalty Notices are administered consistently and fairly across the Local Authority.
- 2.2 Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for children and young people to maximise their educational opportunities. An offence occurs:

2.2.1 If a parent fails to secure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school, or

2.2.2 An excluded child is found in a public place, without their parent, during the first 5 days of a formal exclusion from school.

2.3 Sanctions are used as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure improvement. Sanctions of any nature will only be used where parental co-operation is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve an attendance problem.

2.4 Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecutions under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and enable parents to discharge potential liability to a formal prosecution.

3. Authorisation

3.1 Penalty Notices are issued by the Local Authority. The Education Attendance Service (EAS) will manage this to ensure consistency and prevent conflict with other enforcement sanctions for poor school attendance.

3.2 Headteachers and the Police are accredited persons able to issue Penalty Notices. It has been agreed that only the Local Authority will issue Penalty Notices. If a Headteacher or Police Officer feels it is appropriate for a Penalty Notice to be issued they must consult with the EAS. This avoids a Penalty Notice being issued when the EAS is already instigating legal intervention proceedings for irregular school attendance.

3.3 The EAS monitors the issuing of Penalty Notices and has a dedicated officer.

4. Use of Penalty Notices

Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is considered in the following circumstances:

4.1 There have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the last 12 school weeks and the school, in consultation with the EAS, believe this early intervention will resolve the poor attendance and stop the matter moving toward a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

4.2 If a Headteacher does not authorise a request from a parent/carer for term time leave and the parent takes the leave. (School must advise parents of this and how the action conforms to the school's attendance policy.) There must be at least 10 continuous sessions of unauthorised term time leave taken.

4.3 A pupil is stopped on a school attendance sweep out of school without reason.

4.4 An excluded pupil is found in a public place, without their parent, during the school day. (A school is not deemed to be a public place for the purposes of this legislation.)

4.5 Penalty Notices should not be issued for children in care. Any attendance concerns will form part of their PEP.

4.6 For pupils with a Statement for Educational Needs an annual review should be held before considering a Penalty Notice request.

5. Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices

- 5.1 The Local Authority will consider Penalty Notice providing:
- 5.1.1 All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner.
 - 5.1.2 The pupil's absence meets the terms of the Code of Conduct.
 - 5.1.3 Issuing a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other interventions or statutory work.
- 5.2 A school's Attendance Policy must clarify to its parents the importance of full school attendance and that it will seek the use of statutory duties when required by liaison with the Local Authority.
- 5.3 Schools must record how they have tried to engage parents to bring about change in their child's poor school attendance.
- 5.4 All requests to consider a Penalty Notice should be discussed and agreed with the EAS.

Unauthorised Absence

- 5.5 If there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, as described in 4.1 above, the school will complete a request for a Penalty Notice to be considered and forwarded to the EAS. A warning letter will be sent to each parent requiring they ensure their child attend school over a 15 day school period, where there should be no unauthorised absences. If there are any unauthorised absences in this period then a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent.
- 5.6 If the 15 day monitoring period is passed the parent will receive a letter explaining that a Penalty Notice will not be issued on this occasion. The letter will also contain an expectation that the good attendance will continue and that if there are further unauthorised absences within 3 months following this letter, a Penalty Notice may still be issued or legal action under section 444 Education Act 1996 taken.

Unauthorised Term Time Leave

- 5.7 Any parent who takes their child out of school for term time leave of 10 continuous sessions, not authorised by the school, may receive a Penalty Notice. The school must complete a request for a Penalty Notice to be considered as 5.5 above and letter sent. However, this could be dealt with as in 5.5 above and a warning letter used. Headteachers need to be aware that if used solely for unauthorised term time leave and the Penalty Notice not paid, they will be required to explain to court their reasons for not authorising the leave and how it meets their school attendance policy.

Following a School Attendance Sweep

- 5.8 The parent of any child found out of school, without a valid reason, may receive a warning as explained in section 5.5 above providing this absence forms part of 10 sessions of unauthorised absences in the 12 preceding weeks. Parents will be advised by letter.

Found in a Public Place during First Five Days Following Exclusion

5.9 If an excluded child is found in a public place, during school hours without their parent, then formal notification must be made by the appropriate school staff, Police or local authority officer. Parents will be advised by letter.

NB: Somerset will issue no more than one penalty notice per child, per parent in one academic year. If poor attendance continues, the EAS will consider other legal interventions.

6. PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWING A PENALTY NOTICE

A Penalty Notice can only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

6.1 It ought not to have been issued or it ought not to have been issued to the person named as the recipient; or

6.2 It appears to the authority that the notice contains material errors.

6.3 Formal withdrawal will be by letter.

7. PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

7.1 Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and not as 'on the spot' action. This will ensure all evidential requirements are in place and safeguard officers.

7.2 The arrangements for paying the Penalty Notices will be detailed on the Notice.

7.3 Penalty Notices must be paid in full. Instalment payment is not acceptable. Once paid in full this is acknowledged by letter.

8. NON-PAYMENT OF PENALTY NOTICES

8.1 The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice (assumed as 2 working days following the Notice being sent by first class mail), or £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of the Notice.

8.2 If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority must either prosecute for the offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the Notice. This will be done by letter.

8.3 The prosecution is not for non-payment of the Notice but is a prosecution for irregular school attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.4 There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

8.5 Under this Code of Conduct all "revenue" from Penalty Notices for non-attendance will be collected by the local authority to help administer the process. The local authority will then report to schools and the Police annually.