

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Wellington Primary we want all our children to enjoy school and achieve their potential. We are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance and punctuality and we really appreciate your support in ensuring that children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We are writing to provide a reminder of attendance procedures at Wellington, as well as passing on national changes which have taken place over the summer break.

From 19th August 2024 the Department for Education has issued new statutory guidance called *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*. It details what schools, parents and Local Authorities should do to improve pupils' attendance at school. These details are explained in our School Attendance Policy which can be found on the school's website.

A reminder of day-to-day processes

If your child/children are absent from school, please contact us on each day of the absence and provide the reason. It is the Headteacher's decision as to whether this absence is authorised or not. In most cases, absence is genuine and marked as authorised on the register. Please let the school know 8.30am on **each** and **every day** they are unwell.

You can do this from the following ways:

By emailing office@wellington.hounslow.sch.uk with your child's full name, form, and reason for absence.

By phoning the absence line on 0208 570 6130 (Option 1) and leaving a message. Please state your child's full name, their class, and the reason for the absence.

If your child has a medical or dental appointment, please let us know in advance by either of the above methods or by sending a note in advance. We ask for any appointment cards, letters or slips to be handed in to show as evidence of the appointment. We request that wherever possible the child attends school either side of their appointment. If your child is absent for an extended period of time, or is poorly regularly, then the school will ask for medical verification, this can include prescription, sight of medication or a GP summary. In some instances we will work collaboratively with the School Nurse service who will liaise directly with medical practitioners.

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised, both of which affect a student's attendance percentage to reflect the lost learning. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given.

Children with attendance of 95% or below will be expected to provide medical verification for absence relating to illness/injury such as a copy of a prescription or a medical appointment card etc.

The following reasons are not acceptable:

- care for family members
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows parents' work commitments or business tri
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays)
- parental illness

Absence and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school you should inform us on the first day of absence before 8.30am via message or telephone, you will need to state the pupils name, your relationship to the child i.e. parent/ carer etc. and the reason for absence. Parents/carers are required to call each day a child is absent. Wellington Primary school telephone number is 0208 570 6130.

Medical/Dental Appointments

It is better if appointments can be arranged outside school hours. Where it is unavoidable to book a medical appointment outside of the school day, we ask that they are made late in the afternoon so that students have the opportunity to access as much of the school day as possible without disruption to their learning.

Where morning appointments are necessary you will need to notify school in advance if the student will be returning for the midday meal. School will need to be notified about the appointment in advance, this can be done via the absence line, telephone 0208 570 6130 , select option 1 for the absence line. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

Attendance concerns

As part of our attendance policy, the school is keen to work with families to ensure improvements in school attendance. A member of our attendance team or the class teacher, will contact families when attendance becomes a concern.

Parents are responsible by law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered. The attendance needs to be regular, punctual, with children ready to learn. Children with attendance under 90% are classified by the Department for Education as 'Persistent Absentees'. In this instance, Wellington is legally obliged to provide support and intervention for pupils who are at risk of persistent absence. This could take the form of meetings with parents, school-based interventions, and the offer of support from outside agencies and professionals.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g., bereavements, family problems, etc. where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs; they will be dealt with on an individual basis

Punctuality

Please ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present and ready for registration; this starts at 8.45am each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for a student's social development. Lateness causes problems over register marking and missed instructions.

Requests for absence in term-time

Permission from the Head Teacher must be sought for all absences that occur during term-time. A 'request for leave of absence form' must be completed in advance of the absence taking place (these are available from the school office). Only the Head Teacher can decide if the absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. Under current regulations, schools cannot authorise any holidays taken in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. School will require evidence of exceptional circumstances, which should be attached to the 'request for leave of absence form' and the judgement about what is exceptional will be made by the Head Teacher.

Changes to approach

In the new *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*, there are some important changes to attendance management which will now affect the support parents and pupils receive from schools, and the legal sanctions that are used in certain circumstances. These changes are listed below for your information.

New processes in light of Working Together to Improve School Attendance

At Wellington we are very keen to identify the barriers to attendance that families face and will welcome opportunities to overcome these barriers together. However, when a child's attendance falls outside of the parental legal obligations to send their child to school, there are legal pathways that *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* now require us to follow.

Changes to Penalty Notices:

Term Time Leave

Requests for absence should be made by parents in line with our Attendance Policy. This will be in written form with the date of the proposed absence and as much detail as possible about the reason for the absence. As is currently the case, Mrs. Norton may still only authorise absence that is considered to be an unavoidable and exceptional circumstance.

If a pupil takes unauthorised term time leave for 10 consecutive sessions or more (generally 5 days) they will be subject to a penalty notice.

The fine for a penalty notice is increasing - to £80 per parent, per child. This increases to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months per parent.

For second offences of unauthorised term time leave (10 consecutive sessions or more) within a three-year rolling period, the fine is a flat £160 per parent, per child.

For the third offence in a three-year rolling period, the referral will be automatically considered for prosecution in relation

to Section 444 Education Act 1996.

These fines will apply to term time leave taken after 19th August 2024. Previous penalty notices from the last 3 years will be considered when a period of term time leave is taken after the 19th August 2024. Therefore, if parents have already received one penalty notice in the last three years, they will get a fine of £160 per parent per child for their next one. If they have received two or more in the last three years, they should expect to be referred for prosecution.

Irregular School Attendance Over Time

If a parent is willing to support their child and the school in improving school attendance, and engage with school to achieve this, an *Attendance Contract* will be offered. This is a way of school and parents working together to improve attendance in a supportive and nurturing way. Having an Attendance Contract in place will mean regular informal meetings to identify any barriers to a pupil's attendance and discuss what support can put in place to overcome those barriers.

If a parent is not engaging with any offers of support from school, and attendance continues to decline, the school may use a different method of support, called a *Notice to Improve*. This is a last effort to engage parents before legal sanctions are considered. A Notice to Improve will be a formal collaboration between the school, the Local Authority and parents.

If these attempts at formal support fail, and a pupil's attendance continues to be a concern, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority for legal sanctions to be considered. If a pupil has unauthorised absences for ten sessions or more in a 10-week period, the school may refer a parent for a penalty notice. This will be charged at £80 per parent, per child. This increases to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days for pupils who are of statutory school age. If a penalty notice remains unpaid, parents may be the subject of court proceedings for failing to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and this could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to three months per parent.

At Wellington we are keen to work with families to support children and their engagement with school. Children are regularly praised for good attendance, but importantly praised and rewarded for improved attendance and punctuality. We very much look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Team

(October 2024)

