Westbury-on-Severn School Policy on Attendance

1 Introduction

1.1 We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school, which have their foundation in Christian values of perseverance, respect, friendship and forgiveness, thereby ensuring that each child can reach their God-given potential. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

1.2 Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.3 In all cases relating to attendance, we will refer to Gloucestershire Local Authority's guidance documents and, where necessary, act upon advice provided by the Education Performance and Inclusion Team (EPI).

2 Definitions

2.1 Authorised absence:

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

2.2 Unauthorised absence:

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

3 THE ROLE OF THE LA

3.1 The LA strives to support schools, parents and pupils with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the LA also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness. Section 444 of the Education Act states that "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."

3.2 The LA may issue a Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

3.3 A Fixed Penalty Notice when requested by a Head teacher can be issued as long as the following criteria apply:

3.4 At least 10 sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence by the pupil during a 10 week period.

3.5 Other than in specific circumstances, the parent will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and given 15 school days to affect improvement.

3.6 Within the 15 day period, further unauthorised absence will trigger the issue of a notice without warning.

3.7 No more than two Penalty Notices will be issued per pupil per academic year.

3.8 In exceptional circumstances the Local Authority reserves the right to:

- issue a Penalty Notice for a first offence
- issue a Penalty Notice without warning

4 Attendance strategy for pupil absence

4.1 When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office, which will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian the same day.

4.2 A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment.

4.3 If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

4.4 In addition to the school contacting parents on the day of pupil absence, random home visits may also take place to verify pupil absence.

5 Requests for leave of absence

5.1 We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. a family wedding. We expect parents to contact the school at least a week in advance, but normally this request will be granted.

5.2 Parents are asked not to make a request for leave of absence for a family holiday. However, if a request is made, each request will be considered individually and authorisation given only for exceptional circumstances.

6 Long-term absence

6.1 When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

6.2 If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

7 Repeated unauthorised absences and persistent absentees

7.1 The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or

guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the Local Authority for advice and guidance, this may result in the beginning of legal proceedings. A home visit may be undertaken to seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

7.2 Children for whom intervention has been deemed necessary by the school, will have an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) drafted by the school in consultation with the parent and EPI. Once approved, the IAP will be signed by all parties involved in it and regularly reviewed and action points updated.

7.3 The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

8 Rewards for good attendance

8.1 Each week during our celebration worship, the class with the best attendance for the previous week will receive the attendance prize.

8.2 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance at the end of the autumn, spring or summer term will receive an attendance certificate during the celebration evening at the end of that term. Any child who has an attendance of 100% for the whole year, will receive a special certificate and an attendance prize at the final celebration service held in the church at the end of the school year.

9 Attendance targets

9.1 The school expects 100% attendance. Progress towards meeting this is discussed during Governors meetings, where a whole-school figure is given.

10 ABSENCES DURING TERM TIME

10.1 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

10.2 Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

10.3 Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the LA. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child (see Appendix 2).

10.4 AS OF 1ST SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS.

10.5 If the penalty notice is not paid each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to the maximum of £1,000 plus costs.

10.6 Application for term-time leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed ‘Application for leave of absence during term time’. These may be obtained from the school office.

10.7 Leave of absence will only be granted where the Head teacher considers it is due to ‘exceptional circumstances’. Parent will be informed within seven school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.

10.8 There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year which your child is expected to attend. There are also approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. This is over 13 school weeks. Please ensure that your holidays are taken during this period.

11 Term time holidays

11.1 Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

11.2 The headteacher has the discretion to grant leave, but will only do so in exceptional circumstances. If the headteacher grants a leave request, s/he will determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. Exceptional circumstances may include, but not be limited to the following:

- where a member of the child's immediate family has a severe medical illness that means a holiday must be taken at a specific time (this request should be accompanied by a letter from the medical professionals working with the family confirming the need for a family holiday at the specific times);
- where a parent has holiday times dictated to by his/her employer and is set outside term-time holidays (evidence must be provided by the parent's employer in writing);
- a child's parent is a member of the armed forces and home from a tour of duty for a specific time.

11.3 Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

11.4 For all holiday absence during term time, a formal written request must be made from a person with Parental Responsibility (see appendix 1). Each request will be considered individually taking account of factors, such as:

- Personal circumstances for the request
- Age of pupil
- Overall attendance of pupil
- The time of year holiday is proposed and whether it impacts on specific curricular issues e.g. tests/exams
- The child's stage of education and their progress

11.5 An assessment of the impact that missing out on learning will have on the individual child should be made.

11.6 The headteacher will only be able to grant permission in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body of the school (Pupil Registration (Education) Regulations 2006)

11.7 If a period over 10 days is requested, this should be referred to the Governing Body as this will be considered exceptional and the implications should be carefully considered.

11.8 Leave of absence will not be granted retrospectively and any absence without advance permission will therefore be recorded as unauthorised.

11.9 It is accepted that some families may wish to visit their country of origin where they still have family ties. This may be seen as an exceptional circumstance. Our school will be sensitive to the different issues involved when making decisions about such visits. An assessment of impact, as per previous section, will still be carried out. Our school will consider factors such as:

- The significance of visiting family, where family live overseas

- The potential importance to the child's identity and self esteem as they grow up

11.10 Where the Local Authority has Parental Responsibility for a child or young person (when a child is in "looked after / in care"), the Authority will not make a request for a child/young person to take holidays during term time (as required – see above). Only the Head of Virtual School for LAC can sanction an exceptional request for a young person to miss school. Where a children or young person is voluntarily accommodated (s.20 Children Act 1989), the authority will discourage persons with Parental Responsibility from doing so.

12 LATENESS

12.1 Punctuality is an important life skill.

12.2 Children must be in class by 8.45 a.m. each day. Registers will be taken as soon as possible after that time.

12.3 The school gate will be shut at 8.45am. Children who arrive after that time must come into the building via the main office, where their lateness will be recorded.

12.4 Lateness will be monitored and followed up, where necessary.

12.5 If arrival at school is after the registers have closed at 8.55am, the pupil will receive an 'U', which will signify an unauthorised absence for that session. Notes on the number of minutes late and reason given will be recorded in the lateness book in the school office.

12.6 If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

12.7 Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists, parents or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Head Teacher.

12.8 Should there be more than 10 unauthorised sessions recorded in a 10 week period, a formal warning letter will be issued. If there is further lateness, a Penalty Notice may be issued by the LA.

13 ILLNESS

13.1 Please notify the school of the absence.

13.2 We reserve the right to request a doctor's/consultant's letter regarding recurring and frequent illness or if patterns develop.

14 MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

14.1 Please try to make appointments outside school hours. If a pupil misses school frequently for appointments, the school reserves the right to request evidence and will discuss these absences with the parent/carer.

15 SCHOOL CLOSURE

15.1 In the event of the school having to close at the Head teacher's discretion, e.g. adverse weather, industrial action, absences will be recorded as authorised.

16 Safeguarding/Child Protection

16.1 When considering the attendance of pupils, especially persistent absentees, all staff will pay due regard and attention to safeguarding and child protection procedures (See Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies). It should not be assumed that persistent absenteeism is always associated with safeguarding or child protection concerns, but for the safety and interest of the child, it must be considered as these pupils will be considered vulnerable. Therefore, staff must be vigilant with safeguarding when dealing with pupils who are either persistent absentees or have a very low school attendance. Concerns with a pupil's attendance must be logged and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who is the Head teacher, or the SENCO, who is the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. In some cases, the decision may be made to contact the police to assist with locating children missing from school, especially if the school has not been able to make contact with the parents/carers of the child for more than 10 days. In these cases, the school will follow the guidance issued for children missing in education.

17 Monitoring and review

17.1 It is the Governors legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in their schools. The schools attendance figures are presented to the Governing Body on a termly basis.

17.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

17.3 The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus.

17.4 Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the head teacher, who will contact the parents or guardians.

17.5 This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Signed: **Date**:

Appendix 1

Westbury-on-Severn C.E. Primary School

The Village, Westbury-on-Severn Gloucester, GL14 1PA
Tel: 01452 760303. Email:admin@westbury-on-severncofe.gloucs.sch.uk
Website: www.westburyceschool.co.uk
Head Teacher: Mr David Crunkhurn

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME FORM

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM AND READ THE INFORMATION OVERLEAF:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013: Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Pupil name:	**Date of birth:**
Year group:	
Address:	
First date of absence:	**Date of return:**
No. of days absent:	
Exceptional reason for absence:	
Name of parent/carer:	**Contact no:**
Signature of parent/carer:	**Print name:**

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Date received		
Current attendance %	**Last year's attendance %**	
Exceptional reason accepted	**Yes**	**No**
Absence authorised	**Yes**	**No**
We expect your child to be in school on		

Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time
Accompanying notes

Westbury-on-Severn CE Primary School, the Local Authority and Government believe that absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on pupils' education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional reasons that may justify authorisation of the absence by the Head teacher.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 explanatory note states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

As a **r**esult, Westbury-on-Severn CE Primary School requests:

- Application is to be made in advance by the parent with whom the child normally resides on the form headed 'Application for leave of absence during term time'. These may be obtained from the office.
- Leave of absence will only be granted where the Head teacher considers it is due to 'exceptional circumstances'. Parent will be informed within seven school days as to whether the request has been authorised or unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the LA. This may result in prosecution proceedings or a Fixed Penalty Notice. If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.

AS OF 1ST SEPTEMBER 2013, THE RATE PER PARENT PER CHILD WILL BE £60 IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS AND RISING TO £120 IF PAID BETWEEN 22 AND 28 DAYS.

If the penalty notice is not paid, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates Court, and if proved, each notice may receive a criminal conviction and/or a fine to a maximum of £1000 plus costs.

Note: Parent also includes guardian/carer.