



September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

The Wessex Learning Trust believes that all its learners should enjoy school, experience success, and realise their full potential. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

We want our learners to attend school every day unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our learners to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident, and competent adults who can realise their full potential.

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

When we have concerns about the attendance of a learner, we will do our best to make the care givers aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. However, if care givers do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions.

If your child is too unwell to attend school, you are required to make contact on the first day of absence with an explanation of their illness. If a child is absent for more than one day, the care giver should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.



The schools in The Wessex Learning Trust follow the 2019 DfE School Attendance Guidance. The school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

If a care giver fails to call in the absence of their child on the first day of illness the school will make every reasonable attempt to contact the care giver, including a visit to the registered address if deemed necessary. Alternatively, if the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the pupil, we may request a Welfare Check from the police.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will consider each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance.

The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended, or a parcel to be delivered
- Day trips



- Long weekends and holidays in term time
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances the schools within The Wessex Learning Trust will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where care givers fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the care givers that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

Please speak to your school if you have any questions or queries on the above information and we will be more than happy to help you.

Kind Regards

Lorna Richardson

Dawn Tomkies

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Executive Headteacher

Safeguarding and Educational Welfare Lead



Wessex
Learning Trust
We Learn Together!