

Attendance policy

2023-24



The Laurels
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Approved by:

Date:

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1. Aims

Our school vision is 'uncompromising aspirations for all'.

In line with our school vision the school has adopted the following attendance targets to ensure the children make the best progress possible with their learning:

- Our whole school target is currently 96%.
- Our current aim is to close the persistent attendance gap between Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged groups to ensure it is in line with national averages.
- The school maintains the same ambition for pupils with medical conditions or SEND to maximise attendance.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy and leading attendance across the school
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers and, where necessary, class teachers and/or the SENDCo.
- Delivering/signposting targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and escalating concerns, when necessary, about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers (EWOs) to tackle persistent absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr. D Hindhaugh and can be contacted via the school office office@laurelsprimary.co.uk or 01903 830901.

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the school office. At The Laurels, we use Arbor to register children and this should be completed in the morning at 8.45am (Reception/KS1) and 8.40am (KS2). The afternoon registration should be submitted at 1.00pm, or as soon as possible thereafter. This is then checked by school office staff and followed up as appropriate.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls and messages from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on Arbor
- Contact any parents/carers about absence as a duty of care if we have not received any communication and alert the Attendance Lead if unable to make contact.
- Monitor Arbor/emails for daily attendance updates from parents/carers, including using the correct codes.
- Support in the administration of attendance related tasks
- Keep members of the Senior Leadership Team aware of attendance patterns/issues by providing basic reports
- Be an extra layer of vigilance in monitoring patterns of attendance and/or concerns

3.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Notify us to report a child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence or as soon as possible thereafter (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. This can be done by phone or by messaging through the Arbor app.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Provide, if requested, evidence relating to the absence e.g. a Doctor's note.

3.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time when well enough. NHS advice can be found [here](#).

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register via Arbor, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am (KS2) / 8.45am (KS1) on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.40/8.45am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the second session will be taken as soon as possible following lunchtime play, which ends at 1.00pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible by notifying us on the Arbor app or by calling the school office.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless we have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, we may ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If we are not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Leaves of absence can be requested by collecting a form from the school office or downloaded from the school website.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. **Absence can not be authorised after it has been taken.**

Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (9.00am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Ongoing punctuality issues will be tracked by the attendance lead who will work with families to ensure lateness is improved. Continued lateness may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) being issued.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police, the Integrated Front Door (social care) or any other professionals working with the family to check the family are safe and well.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via the Arbor app. An annual attendance percentage is recorded in the annual school report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Attendance Lead and/or Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Exceptional circumstances are one off events which are unavoidable. A leave of absence is granted at the Attendance Lead's/Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. We may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. Absence can not be authorised after it has been taken.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

5.2 Legal sanctions

The local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) are generally issued where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence from school within a recorded 10 school week period. However, there are some occasions where they are issued outside of these criteria.

FPNs are issued per parent, per child and are an alternative to prosecution. This gives the parent an opportunity to discharge their criminal liability by paying a fine of £120, which must be paid within 28 days. If you pay the FPN within 21 days, the amount is reduced to £60. The payment must be made directly to the local authority and is not received by the school. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Weekly class attendance and punctuality is celebrated and rewarded during our weekly celebration assembly on Friday and celebrated in the weekly newsletter. A trophy is shared by the class with highest attendance and also highest punctuality.
- Good class attendance is rewarded with extra playtime and, from time to time, other rewards as may be deemed appropriate.
- Attendance updates may also be provided via the Friday Flyer, including NHS guidance on illness affecting schoolchildren.
- Parents are thanked by email when attendance is 96%+ or when improvements have been made.

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

We will:

- Monitor which pupils are absent daily.
- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published

alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

We will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

We will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to other school staff and/or leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Class teachers will contact the parents/carers of pupils whose absence has dropped to 90-96% to see if school can offer support.
- The attendance lead will hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Invite parents/carers to attend action plan meetings to identify the reasons for absence and work together to set short term goals to improve this.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum on an annual basis by the Senior Leader responsible for attendance. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection policy (2023)
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

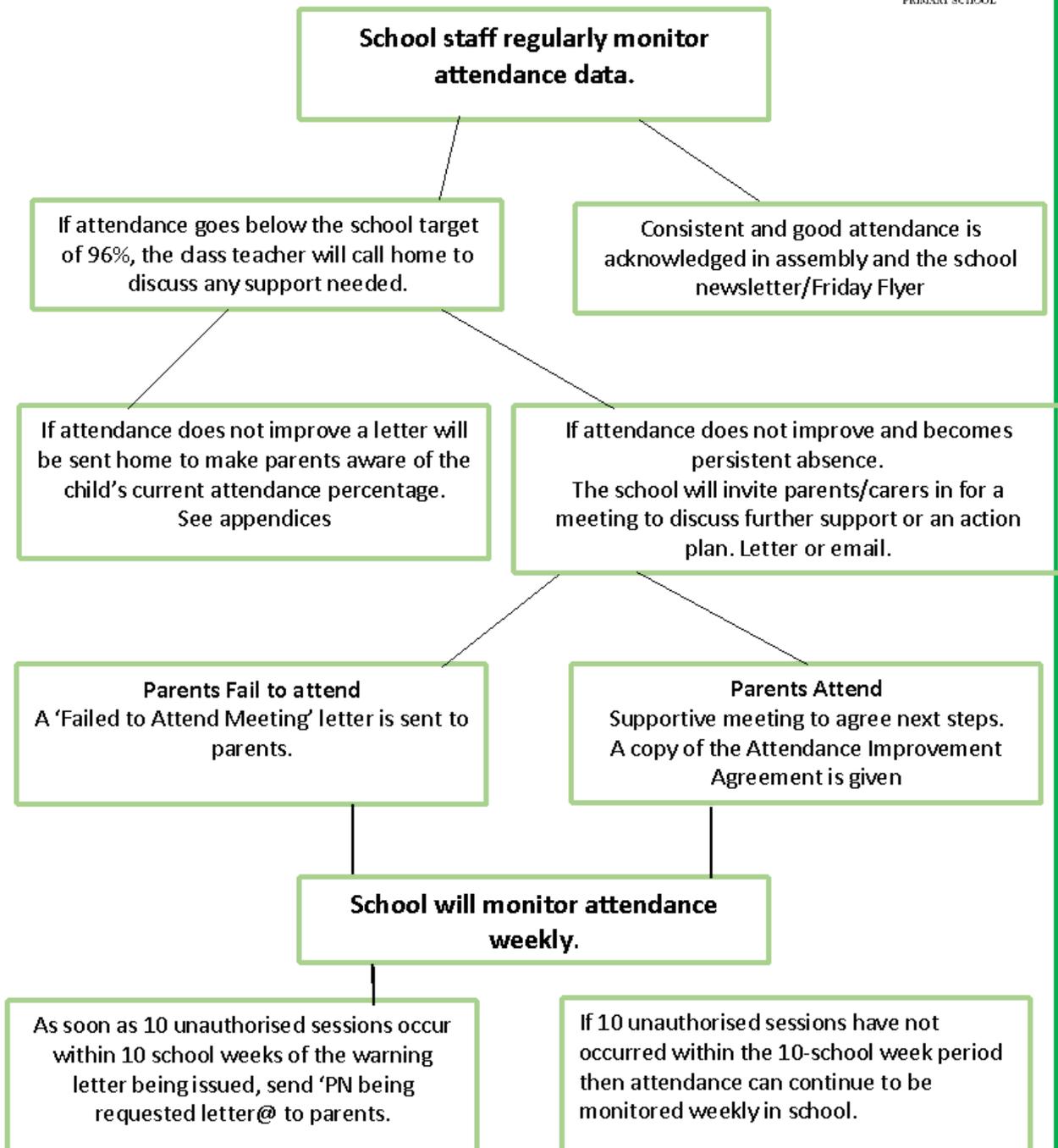
Code	Definition	Scenario
I	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Attendance Support



Appendix 2: Letter templates

Below 96%

Dear parent of XXX

I'm writing to express my concern at your child's levels of absence from school.

Their current attendance is [percentage] which has fallen below our school target of 96% attendance. This will likely have an impact on their academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents, carers and families to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment. To ensure this, we monitor attendance on an ongoing basis.

We want to make sure that the school is able to support their education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning that can arise due to absence.

If you have any further questions in relation to this letter, please do contact the school office or speak with the class teacher in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)
Assistant Headteacher

High unauthorized (e.g. holidays)

Dear parent of XXX

I'm writing to express concern at your child's recent unauthorised absence from school.

They have been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

In line with our attendance policy, we would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss how the school can best support an improvement in attendance.

Please can you attend a meeting at the school on:

Yours sincerely

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)
Assistant Headteacher

Persistent Absence

Dear parent of XXX

I'm writing to express concern regarding your child's attendance at school. Their attendance has significantly dropped below our school target of 96% and we are concerned about the impact on their academic progress.

Their attendance percentage is currently [percentage].

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

In line with our attendance policy, we would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss how the school can best support an improvement in attendance.

Please can you attend a meeting at school on: XXX

Yours sincerely

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)

Assistant Headteacher

96%+

Dear parent of xxx

Good news incoming!

As you know, having excellent attendance is key to helping your child succeed in school. Not only does excellent attendance reduce any gaps in learning, it helps them to feel part of Team Laurels, make and sustain friendships and gives them the opportunity to take part in many different opportunities we have on offer to enrich their lives.

I am incredibly proud to say that your child has currently got an attendance figure of 96% or above.

Thank you for your continued support. A figure of 96%+ will mean your child is not missing out, shows you are valuing their education and allowing them to access all that Team Laurels has to offer.

Long may it continue!

Many thanks,

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)
Assistant Headteacher

Approved holiday request

Dear XXXX

RE: Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date]. Having considered the exceptional circumstances set out in your application, I am able to agree to your request.

I have not come to this decision lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our pupils, and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Each request for a holiday absence is considered on its merits at the time. Please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not mean I will be able to agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)
Assistant Headteacher

Declined Holiday Request – attach WSCC leaflet

Dear xxxx

RE: Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date].

In this case I regret I cannot consent to your request.

Our school, while acknowledging that each family's circumstances are different, is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time and many variables are taken into consideration.

Because each request is unique, my decision in this instance cannot be directly compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and nor does it set a precedent for the future.

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised.

The Penalty Notice fine would be £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.

If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996. I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

You can find further information about school absence and Fixed Penalty Notices [here](#).

I am sorry to disappoint you on this occasion.

Kind Regards

Holiday taken – request not made - attach WSCC leaflet

Dear XXXXXX

I understand that your child/ren's recent absence was due to a family holiday although you did not request authorisation prior to this. I am writing to inform you that this absence has not been authorised in accordance with our School Attendance Policy. Referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service for issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Please refer to our attendance policy on our school website. I am sure you will appreciate how extended absence from school during term time can seriously disrupt your children's progress. There are 190 days in the school year, which means that there are 175 non-school days left for holidays, treats and shopping.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is £60 and could be issued per child to each parent and would need to be paid within 21 days. The expression 'parent' in relation to a child includes any person who is not a parent of the child but has parental responsibility and/or care of the child.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within this period of time then each parent will be issued with a second Fixed Penalty Notice for £60, increasing the amount to £120 per parent per child. Both invoices should be paid within 7 days.

Should the fines remain unpaid at the end of this period of time you may be prosecuted for failing to ensure regular and punctual school attendance of your child/ren. This is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and carries a maximum fine of £1,000 per parent.

Yours sincerely

D. Hindhaugh (Mr.)
Assistant Headteacher