



Attendance and Absence at William Gilbert Endowed C of E Primary School & Nursery

Dear Parents/Carers

At the start of the academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to outline the school's policies and procedures in place to secure excellent levels of attendance and minimise absence.

I would like to begin by sharing some positive statistics from last academic year.

Academic Year 2022 – 2023

32 pupils were never absent.
123 pupils attended 98% or more of the sessions.
176 pupils attended 96% or more of the sessions.
Our overall attendance figure was 97.3%

This is excellent, but this figure masks the 2.7% of absences for some pupils, with many being due to term time holidays. Last academic year, 10 families had their term time holiday processed with the Local Authority for fines to be administered.

As a parent I recognise and understand the complexities of family life. Organising medical appointments is a challenge which require fore thought and planning. Holidays are special times when memories that last a lifetime are made. But these holidays should not be at the detriment of a child's learning. However, as headteacher I have statutory duties that must be fulfilled and one of those is to secure high levels of attendance for **all** pupils. The aim of this letter is to provide clarity around term time absence and to request the support of **all** parents, not just the vast majority, who abide by the school's policies and procedures and use the 175 non-school days to use for family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments.

Children should attend school every day so that they make the most of the education available to them. We understand that there may be occasions when a child is unwell and is not able to come into school, but this should be kept to a minimum.

By law, parents and carers of children registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. If they fail to do this they are guilty of an offence and may be given a penalty notice or prosecuted under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Attendance Expectations

What YOU must do:

- Try to telephone the school before 8.30am each day of your child's absence.
- Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments and bring in appointment cards/letters.
- If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival.

- You can see your child's current attendance on your WeDuc app where an attendance wheel, updated daily, for your child is available for you to view.
- If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help!

What WE will do:

- Check your child's attendance every day.
- Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you.
- Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.
- If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit.
- If attendance falls below 95% you will receive a letter home to inform you of this and that closer monitoring will continue until attendance improves.
- If your child's attendance falls below 90% they are known as 'persistently absent'. This is a cause for serious concern. We will work with you to help you improve attendance. If you refuse to work with school this could result in court action.

Parents and carers must avoid taking their children out of school during term time.

The Governing Body and DDAT have instructed that authorisation for absence **will not be given** for absence during term time. Holidays should be taken during the school breaks and not during term time. However, in exceptional circumstances, permission may be given by the Headteacher.

The Law

Amendments to the 2006 Education Act make clear that **Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are *exceptional circumstances***.

Parents and carers do not have any right to take a child out of school during term time except in exceptional circumstances. In most cases the Headteacher will refuse to authorise term time leave, however, each case will be considered on its individual merits.

How we deal with requests for term-time absence?

William Gilbert School, as part of DDAT has a clear policy about term time holidays. We must fulfil our duties laid out in the DDAT attendance policy, which makes it clear that all applications for holidays during term time will not be approved. If as a parent, you decide to take your child on holiday regardless of this decision the absence will be marked as unauthorised and faces a fine from the Local Authority.

Children are at school for 190 days in the year. That leaves 175 days for holidays and other trips.

How to apply for special leave during term time

Please complete the **Application for Leave of Absence during Term Time** form which can be collected from the school office. This must be done at least 2 weeks in advance of the date of the proposed leave. You should expect to hear from us within 5 working days.

Term time holidays will NOT BE AUTHORISED unless there are exceptional circumstances which might justify it. Each case will be considered on its individual merits

What are exceptional circumstances?

It is the decision of the Headteacher in conjunction with the Governing Body as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Exceptional leave is **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Parent/carer work commitments
- Poor weather experienced during school holiday periods
- Overlap with the beginning or end of term, half term.

Exceptional leave **MAY** be:

- Grandparent or other close relative is seriously ill – and you must leave in an emergency
- Significant trauma in the family recently and a holiday will benefit the child – this must be backed up by a doctor's letter
- A one-off, never to be repeated occasion that can only happen at that time.
- A day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.

What if we decide to go anyway?

If the Headteacher has not authorised the leave, and your child is out of school for between **half a day and 10 days** then you could be liable for a Fixed Penalty fine £60 per parent, per child. This fine will double to £120 if not paid within 21 days. Unpaid fines will result in court proceedings leading to a criminal record for unpaid fines.

If unauthorised leave is taken on a second occasion, fixed penalty notices will be issued again at £60 per parent, per child. Again, the fine will double to £120 if not paid within 21 days.

If unauthorised leave is taken on a third occasion, no Penalty Notice will be issued, and that parent will be taken straight to Court under the higher-level aggravated offence.

This means that the parent may be subject to a much more severe penalty i.e. a maximum fine of up to £2,500 or 3 months in custody or, a community order which may involve them doing a number of hours of unpaid work.

If the time out of school makes your child's attendance drop below 90%, then they are known as 'persistently absent'. This means that the Government have given schools new powers to deal with this through the courts. This means facing possible prosecution.

Last academic year, 10 families had their term time holiday processed with the Local Authority for fines to be administered.

Please don't take your child out of school during term time, it disrupts your child's learning, and you risk financial penalties. See the attached 'Impact on learning attendance chart' which shows the impact absence has on your child's ability to meet their educational milestones.

If we authorise your special leave

If we do authorise a leave of absence under exceptional circumstances, you must understand the educational impact upon your child. We will also explain what work your child will miss at school, and agree with you how this may be addressed, either during the holiday or upon your return. **Taking work with you on special leave is no substitute for classroom teaching.**

If we do authorise your leave you will receive a letter which confirms the dates when your child will be absent and the agreed date for return. It can only be approved by the Headteacher. A copy will be kept in the file in the office for our records.

For further information, please see our attendance page on the school website and read the school's attendance policy. This policy was written to reflect the guidance provided by the Department for Education document 'Working together to improve school attendance'. This document can be accessed following the link below.

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

I thank you for the time you have taken to read this letter. If at any time you need support with school attendance, please do not hesitate to contact our attendance officer, Mrs R Manners in the school office by phone 01332 840 395 or email enquiries@williamgilbertend.derbyshire.sch.uk. You may also wish to speak to Mrs Aston our pastoral and wellbeing lead who is available at the school gate most mornings or via the same contact details above.

Yours sincerely

Mrs E H Britten

Headteacher