

Wootton Bassett Infants' School



Attendance Policy & Procedure

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1 - Introduction

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School we aim to promote effective learning for **all** pupils through offering a rich, broad and balanced curriculum. We understand that regular school attendance is the key to enabling our children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies to improve attendance, rewards and benefits of good attendance (defined in section 7). The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

2 - Aims of the Attendance Policy

We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School we will:

Provide information about attendance through regular communications in our newsletters and website

Include attendance information in reports about your child's performance in school and how any absence may be affecting their attainment

Work with you and your child to achieve maximum attendance

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School we expect:

Pupils to arrive at school every day on time, ready to learn

Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

3 - Attendance: The Legal Framework - roles and responsibilities

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for a formal legal intervention.

To avoid this happening, we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance.

Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absences which the headteacher has not agreed.

Wootton Bassett Infants' School is required by law to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon and to report to the Local Authority pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten consecutive school days or more without known reason. By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Reference to the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy and the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service in discharging the statutory duties of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.

4 - Partnership Working - roles and responsibilities

By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

DfE statutory guidance says that schools must have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; best practice is that this should be for a reasonable length of time but not more than 30 minutes

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.

Reference to the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy and the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service in discharging the statutory duties of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.

*At Wootton Bassett Infants' school attendance is the business
of everyone in our school community.*

The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

School is responsible for:

- Having a clear school attendance policy on the school website which **all** staff, pupils and parents understand
- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Building strong relationships with families and work with them to understand barriers to attendance
- Accurately completing admission and attendance registers
- Having robust daily processes to follow up absence (understood by everyone in the school community and communicated to any cover staff to ensure procedures are consistently applied)
- Having a dedicated senior attendance champion who is part of SLT with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance
- Being proactive in identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and working with each identified pupil and parents to understand and address the reasons for absence. This includes being sensitive to the needs of the individual pupils and parents and is reflected in the ways in which attendance issues are addressed. For example, we will recognise that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications and also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come

into school and work sensitively and proactively with parents to ensure a consistent approach to attendance management,

- Signposting and supporting access to services where out of school barriers to attendance are identified
- Ensuring a "support first" approach is taken with families to try to avoid escalation to legal processes
- Working with partners in the multi-agency effort to improve attendance
- Holding formal conversations with parents where there is lack of engagement to improve attendance and be clear about the potential for legal intervention.
- Working with the local authority where legal intervention may be appropriate
- Working with other schools in the area such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings and to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance
- Maintaining the same ambitions of attendance for pupils with medical conditions, SEND or other vulnerable or disadvantaged indicators and work to maximise attendance
- Where a pupil is open to social care to notify the pupil's social worker if there are unexplained absences and if the pupil's name is to be deleted from the register

The headteacher has a key role in improving and maintaining good attendance and at Wootton Bassett Infants' School takes on the role of Senior Attendance Champion.

The head/champion is responsible for maintaining attendance profile through:

- assemblies
- staff meetings
- monitoring
- the registration process
- target setting across the school
- liaison with the EWO
- Targeted support meetings
- Parent/carer communication
- School Attendance Meetings (SAM)
- Local Authority Attendance Meeting (LAAM)

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Accurate registration
- Follow up notes
- Parent/carer contact
- Target setting for class/individual pupils

Governor responsible for attendance will:

- Have an oversight of attendance and work closely with the Attendance Champion and provide robust support and challenge school leaders

- Ensure that the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively and targeted to the pupils who need it by prioritising staff and resources needed.
- Ensure high aspirations are maintained for all pupils taking into account the individual needs of particular pupils.
- Ensure that attendance is dealt with strategically and thematically across other school strategies including behaviour, safeguarding and SEND
- Review attendance data at meetings and think about the impact of attendance on pupil
- Monitor progress and attainment - particularly in vulnerable groups

Administrative Staff/Attendance Officer are responsible for:

- Maintaining the attendance registers
- Monitoring daily attendance and recognise patterns
- Contacting parents/carers
- Raising concerns with teachers/champion

Parents/carer are responsible for:

- Working with our school if absence becomes a concern
- Helping to promote positive attendance by:
- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close appropriately dressed and in a 'condition to learn' (i.e. not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- Working in partnership with us to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Working in partnership with us to take an active interest in their child's education
- Working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child's attendance

Responsibilities of the local authority

The DfE places the following expectations on local authorities as detailed in the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance published February 2024:

- To rigorously track local attendance data
- To have a School Attendance Support Team which provides the following core functions free of charge to all schools regardless of type
- **Communication and advice** - bringing schools together to communicate messages, provide advice and share best practice between school and trusts within the area

- **Targeting Support Meetings** - hold regular conversations with schools using attendance data to identify pupils and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those pupils
- **Multi-disciplinary support for families** - provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole family support and unblock barriers to attendance
- **Legal intervention** - take forward legal intervention where voluntary support has not been successful or engaged with.
- **Monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker**

“Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education.”

The National Audit Office.

5 - Procedures

This section contains the procedures that are used to identify and follow up all absence together with clear channels for communicating these to staff, pupils and parents/carers. It is very important that all staff adhere to a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness, including supply teaching staff.

In-school procedures include:

- Clear systems for accurate registration
- Identified period for the register to remain open (up to 30 minutes but can be shorter)
- Scheduled and unscheduled spot checks of registers outside of statutory requirements
- Agreed criteria and consistent approach to lateness
- Consistent use of register codes which are known to all staff (including supply staff)
- Identification of absence: how, by whom, how often
- The range of in-school strategies for dealing with pupil absence including post registration truancy and broken weeks
- Procedures for re-integration following long-term absence including catch up of missed work
- Procedures for involvement of the Education Welfare Service

Home-school procedures might include:

- First day of absence contact by the school to the parent/carer
- Expectation of first day contact by the parent/carer to the school by phone, in person or in writing/electronic messaging which gives the reason for and expected length of absence

- Follow up note which gives explanation for pupil absence
- Home/school agreement through an attendance contract (voluntary) which includes reference to regular and punctual attendance and expectations of the parent/carer and the school
- Expectations with regard to medical or dental appointments taken out of school hours where possible
- Procedures for requesting pupil leave of absence for family holidays during term time -
- Parent/carer informing the school of circumstances which are or may affect their child's attendance at school

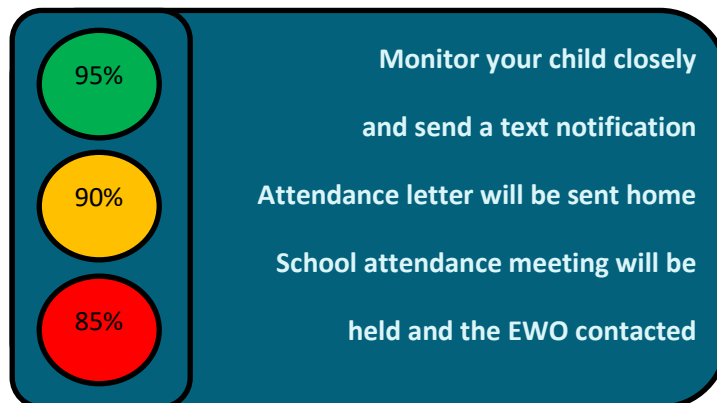
Our school attendance target is: 98%

This means that we are expecting each pupil to have 100% attendance. Pupils who miss just 3 days of school in a school year will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing board.

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School the register is taken at 9:00 am (morning registration time) and once during the afternoon session at 1:00 pm. The registers will remain open for 10 minutes. Pupils arriving before registers close will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance using our school traffic light system.



And where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 96% and enters the green, amber or red zone
- A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year) and becomes a persistent absentee
- A pupil has more than 4 recorded lates in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

Parents are asked to:

- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day. To report absences parents should call 01793852254 or email admin@woottonbassett-inf.wilts.sch.uk
- Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school
- Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment.
- Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance (The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy)
- Provide proof of medical appointment when needed

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable, and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent, and the parent/carer has not advised us that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The administrative staff will initially phone parents within 30 minutes of registers closing. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

Collecting your child from school

It is parents/carers responsibility to ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 3:00pm.

If parents are unable to collect their child as usual then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements they have made with the school.

We will not release children in these circumstances to anyone who we have not been advised of.

In the event of lateness for collection we will:

contact parents or carers

call emergency contacts if parents and carers cannot be reached so an authorised adult can come and collect the child

keep records of late collections.

Persistent late collections will be recorded and in the first instance school will arrange a meeting with parents/carers. This will be recorded as a safeguarding concern using the school's safeguarding procedures.

If parents, carers or other authorised people are not able to collect the child and have arranged for someone else to come instead, the parents or carers must notify the school as soon as possible. Identification may be required when the person comes to collect the child.

If nobody comes to collect the child, the school must make every effort to contact the parents, carers or authorised person whose details have been supplied. If no contact can be made half an hour after finish time, we will apply child protection procedures and contact children's social care.

Until the child is collected, they should stay at school in the care of two members of staff who have undergone the appropriate vetting and barring checks (one member should be the lead or deputy child protection lead).

School staff and volunteers should never:

- take the child home with them

- transport the child home
- go in search of parents/carers.

The nominated child protection lead should make a full written report of the incident. This report should be added to the child's safeguarding file. If appropriate, this report should also be shared with children's social care.

New Pupils Joining a School - Expected First Day of Attendance

Pupils on the school roll from the beginning of the first day on which the school and a person with control of the pupil's attendance (in most cases this is taken to mean a person with parental responsibility) have agreed that the pupil will attend and must be listed in both the admission and attendance registers from that day. If a pupil has accepted a place at the school and fails to attend on the agreed date, school must follow up the absence to ensure that any safeguarding and missing from education concerns are addressed.

6 - Monitoring attendance

Weekly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Senior Attendance Champion and the attendance officer, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), Severe Absence (SA) patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year and as a severe absentee if they miss more than 50% of schooling for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning.

The Senior Attendance Champion,

together with attendance officer who will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially, we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting with a member of school staff where we can discuss the barriers to attendance and provide help and support to address that. We may ask parents to agree to an Attendance Contract which details how we will work together to improve attendance. However, if absence continues and the support we have offered is not working we may make a referral to the Local Authority for additional intervention.

Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment. (DfE)

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year

90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year

80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year

Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

In accordance with Department for Education statutory guidance, leave of absence from school may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

Absence for the purpose of a holiday is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance.

Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require 2 weeks' notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.

We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.

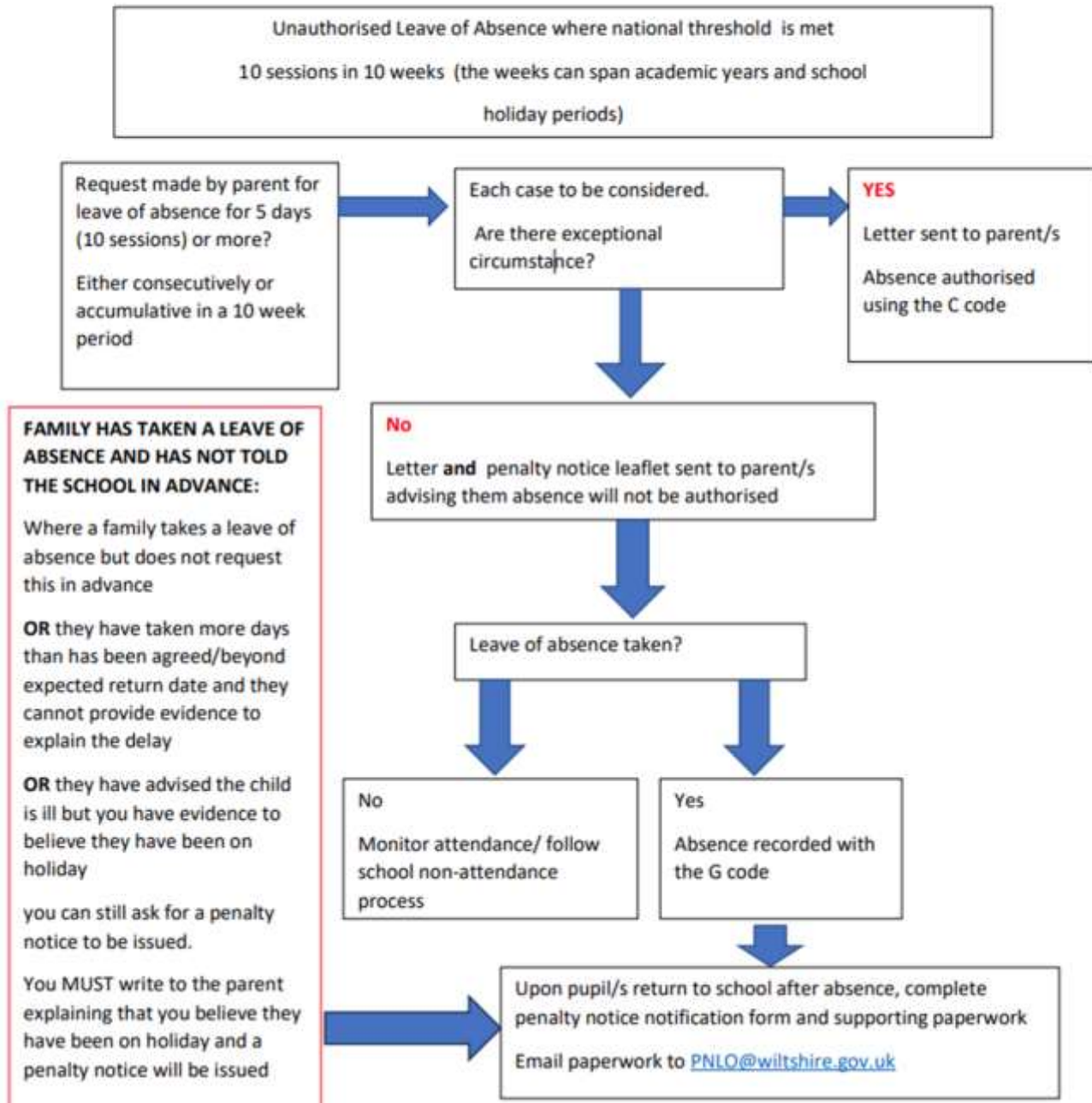
Requests will be considered by the headteacher, and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed.

Any pupil who has taken a term-time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school or if the absence is immediately before or after a designated school holiday period.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Forms can be requested from the school office by emailing admin@woottonbassett-inf.wilts.sch.uk

PROCEDURE FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE OF ABSENCE (Holiday)



Consequences of persistent and severe absence

At Wootton Bassett Infants' School we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns. If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority where possible actions include:

1) The National Framework for Penalty Notices

The Department for Education has issued a national framework and the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 which govern how and when penalty notices may be used.

All local authorities and schools must work within the new framework.

This means that whenever a pupil accrues 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period a school must consider whether a penalty notice should be issued. The unauthorised absence can relate to unexplained absence, absence that the school has not agreed to including for a holiday in term time or a pupil being late after the register closes.

Where a pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks that is NOT related to a holiday in term time we may issue you with a Notice to Improve. This will provide you with an opportunity to engage with support to improve your child's attendance. If support is not working then we will refer the matter to the local authority who may decide to issue a penalty notice to you.

Where there are 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period as a result of a holiday taken in term time the absence will be notified to the local authority who may issue a penalty notice without further warning.

Each parent can receive a penalty notice for each child that has unauthorised absence. For example 2 parents with 2 children who take a holiday in term time can expect to receive 4 penalty notices.

The new framework allows for parents to receive a maximum of 2 penalty notices for each of their children in a 3-year period.

The first penalty notice issued in respect of an individual child will be in the sum of £160 to be paid within 2 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

The second penalty notice issued in respect of the same child within 3 years shall be in the sum of £160.

If the national threshold is met on a third or subsequent occasion in 3 years then the local authority may present the matter to the magistrates' court.

or

2) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.

or

3) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

7 - Strategies for Improving and Maintaining Good Attendance

We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. Wootton Bassett Infants' School provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you talk to us so that we can support you and your child. You can speak to the Headteacher, Administration Staff or their class teacher.

At this school we take every opportunity to promote excellent attendance for all pupils. We will celebrate excellent attendance by recognising improvements in attendance every term.

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance. (e.g. Wiltshire Council, school health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service, Medical Needs Education and Reintegration Service). If we feel that this would be helpful we will discuss it first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues and reward excellent attendance.

8 - Monitoring and Evaluation

The attendance policy will be reviewed annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community.

We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance in the school prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.

School attendance will feature in the school newsletter, and we will advise parents of any changes to policy and procedures.

Our policy is available in other languages if required.