Wygate Park Academy
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October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

Attendance Expectations and Penalty Notices

As part of our commitment to promoting excellent attendance and ensuring every child receives the best possible education, we would like to remind families of our attendance expectations and the legal framework surrounding school attendance. These arrangements reflect the Department for Education's updated attendance guidance, which came into effect on 19 August 2024, and are implemented in partnership with the Local Authority.

Regular attendance at school is essential for academic achievement, emotional wellbeing, social development and future success. Every day in school matters, and even occasional absences can have a significant impact on a child's learning and progress. The academy carefully monitors attendance and works closely with families when concerns arise. Our priority is always to provide support and work collaboratively to remove barriers to attendance wherever possible.

Reporting Absence

If your child is unable to attend school, you must notify the academy as soon as possible on each day of absence, providing a clear and specific reason.

Maintaining accurate attendance records is a legal requirement, and prompt communication from parents and carers helps us safeguard children and ensure records are correct.

Where absences become frequent, prolonged or follow a concerning pattern, the academy may request additional information or evidence to support the reason given.

Medical Appointments

We encourage families to arrange routine medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. We appreciate that this is not always feasible, and where appointments must take place during the school day, we ask that pupils are absent only for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Please provide the academy with a copy or screenshot of the appointment confirmation so that the absence can be accurately recorded.

Term-Time Holidays

The Department for Education strongly advises against taking holidays during term time, as these absences can significantly disrupt a child's education.

Families are expected to arrange holidays during school holiday periods. Any leave taken during term time without the Headteacher's authorisation will normally be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If you wish to request leave during term time, a written request **must** be submitted to the academy as early as possible. Requests will only be considered where exceptional circumstances apply and must include full details of the circumstances.

Where a request is not deemed exceptional, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued by the Local Authority.

If exceptional circumstances are claimed, supporting evidence must be provided within one week of your child's return to school. Failure to provide requested evidence within this timeframe may result in any Penalty Notice proceeding without further consideration.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence may be recorded as unauthorised when a child is absent from school without a valid reason or where insufficient information or evidence has been provided.

Examples of unauthorised absence may include:

- Term-time holidays that have not been authorised.
- Failure to provide a reason for a child's absence.
- Repeated late arrival after registers have closed.
- Frequent or repeated absences attributed to minor illnesses that do not normally prevent school attendance.
- A high number of illness-related absences where medical evidence is requested but not provided.
- Absences reported as illness where academy enquiries, welfare visits or other evidence indicate that the child was not unwell.
- Absences where a child is reported ill but is subsequently observed engaging in social activities, attending events or out in public during the school day without a valid explanation.

The academy may request medical evidence where there are concerns regarding attendance, patterns of absence, or repeated illness. Examples of acceptable evidence may include appointment cards, prescriptions, copies of medication labels, hospital letters, NHS correspondence or other appropriate healthcare documentation.

Penalty Notices and Prosecution

It is important for parents and carers to understand that Penalty Notices are **not limited to term-time holidays**. They may be issued where a child accumulates unauthorised absence for any reason once the statutory threshold has been met.

This can include:

- Unauthorised term-time holidays.
- Repeated unauthorised illness absences where evidence has not been provided.
- Frequent absence for minor ailments causing attendance concerns.
- Failure to provide reasons for absence.
- Unauthorised lateness after the close of registration.
- A combination of different types of unauthorised absence.

The national threshold for issuing a Penalty Notice in England is **10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period**. This is normally equivalent to five school days.

For example, this threshold could be met through:

- One week of unauthorised holiday (10 sessions).
- Five days reported as illness where evidence has been requested but not provided.
- Repeated late arrivals after registers have closed.
- A combination of unauthorised holiday, lateness and unexplained absences.

The 10-week period can span different terms and school years and does not need to consist of consecutive absences.

Penalty Notices may be issued to parents of children of statutory school age. A child reaches statutory school age on the 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday.

A Penalty Notice may be issued under the following legislation:

- **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996** places upon parents a duty to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
- Where a child is a registered pupil at a school and the parent fails to ensure that child's regular attendance at school the parent is liable to be prosecuted for a criminal offence under **Section 444 of the Education Act**
- In cases where this duty is not being fulfilled **Section 444B** of the same Act empowers the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice.

Please also note that a Penalty Notice may be issued if a child is found in a public place during school hours within the first five days of a fixed-term or permanent exclusion without reasonable justification:

- **Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006** makes it a duty for parents in relation to pupils subject to a fixed period or permanent exclusion to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours, without reasonable justification, during the first five days of any such exclusion. If a child is present in a public place during the first five days of an exclusion during school hours the parent may be guilty of an offence for which they can be prosecuted by the LA before a magistrates' court or issued with a Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Charges

First Penalty Notice within a three-year period

- Issued to each parent.
- £80 if paid within 21 days.
- £160 if paid within 28 days.

Second Penalty Notice within a three-year period

- Issued to each parent.
- £160 if paid within 28 days.

Third Penalty Notice within a three-year period

- A Penalty Notice will not be issued.
- Alternative legal action may be considered, including prosecution or other attendance interventions.

Fines are issued per parent, per child, and are capped at two Penalty Notices within a three-year period. Where prosecution is pursued, parents may face fines of up to £2,500 and other legal sanctions which could include:

- Imprisonment for up to three months.
- Criminal record
- Impact on areas such as future employment, insurance applications

Working Together

We would like to reassure families that Penalty Notices are always considered a last resort. Before legal intervention is considered, the academy will always work with the ***Support First Approach***. We will seek to work with parents and carers to identify concerns, offer support and explore solutions to improve attendance wherever possible.

We thank you for your continued cooperation and support in ensuring that your child's education remains a priority.

If you have any questions regarding attendance or would like support with your child's attendance, please contact our Attendance Champion - who is Dr.C Early, who will be happy to assist.

Kindest regards,

Dr C Early

Executive Headteacher

Voyage
EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

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