



# St. Walburga's Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher: *Veronica Woodward*

1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

Dear Parents & Carers,

The Department for Education have shared with schools and Local Authorities changes to attendance guidance that will become statutory and must be implemented after the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024. These changes must be made by all schools and Local Authorities across the country, with the aim of ensuring consistent approaches. Therefore, at St Walburga's we are committed to following the new guidance and we have updated our attendance policy to reflect the changes.

Changes include a new National Framework for Attendance Penalty Notices, updates to the Working Together to Improve Attendance Guidance, changes to the attendance register and to mandate attendance data sharing by schools with The Department for Education.

## > A new National Framework for Attendance Penalty Notices

Any attendance penalty notices issued after the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 will be issued in line with the new regulations. They can be issued for irregular attendance - where a child has unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in any 10-week period. Sessions refer to each half a school day. These 10 sessions could be made up of term time leave (i.e. unauthorised family holiday), unauthorised late marks, or other unauthorised absences.

The new penalty notice regulations are:

- Each parent will be issued a separate penalty notice, for each child concerned.
- The fine amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, or it will be reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- This will be considered your first offence.
- The next time an offence occurs, within 3 years of the date the first penalty notice is issued, the fine amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days, with no reduction.
- The third time an offence occurs this will be presented to Magistrate's court with no penalty notice issued.

Term time leave does not just include holidays. Where a child is absent and it is believed by the school that they are absent due to term time leave, rather than illness, schools will be expected to carry out a home visit and see the child on or before the 3<sup>rd</sup> school day of absence.

The Local Authority have written a letter to explain more about the changes with regards to penalty notices and what it means for parents. **You can find their letter attached to this e-mail and I ask that you read it carefully.**

## > Updates to the Working Together to Improve Attendance Guidance

The Department for Education have updated the [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) available on the DFE website. This clarifies the expectations for parents, schools and the Local Authority to promote the importance

of regular attendance at school, and to provide ideas for support and interventions when a young person is not attending school on a regular basis.

**> Changes to school attendance and admission registers.**

The predominant change is around the use of attendance coding for schools to use on their attendance register. This may mean that you see different marks on your child's attendance report. The H code for authorised term time leave (holiday) has been removed, therefore Headteachers can no longer authorise term time leave, unless there are exceptional circumstances covered by the C code (special circumstances) and the school must request an attendance penalty notice if there are 5 or more days of unauthorised absence. You can see the full list of attendance codes within our school attendance policy.

Another change to these regulations is to the admissions register. Parents must accept a school place offered before their child goes on school roll. Therefore, if a parent has been offered a school place that was not one of their preferences they must either accept the school place or notify the Local Authority how they intend to educate their child. This is to ensure every child has access to education.

**> Attendance data sharing by all state funded schools.**

School attendance data will be shared with the Department for Education and the Local Authority every day. This will be live data and will allow the DFE to provide schools with the tools to monitor and see improvement in attendance, and will allow the Local Authority to provide advice, support, and Early Help services.

**> What have we changed?**

We have updated our school attendance policy in line with these new changes and expectations. You will find it attached to this e-mail and on our school website;

<https://stwalburgasprimary.secure-primariesite.net/policies/>. We have always had the authority to issue penalty notices but we will now be fully implementing this new statutory framework.

With all of these changes, the priority is always supporting all of our children in accessing education every day and early help to engage in their learning. If at any point in the academic year your child is finding attending school difficult, is feeling anxious about attending school, or needs help to access their education please contact us at the school office.

Every school day matters. If you have any queries, questions or concerns please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Veronica Woodward  
Headteacher