

2 September 2021

School Attendance – a very important message for all Parents and Carers

September 2021

Please Read

Dear Parents and Carers

This is an important update about school attendance for the 2021/22 academic year.

John Willmott School is working in partnership with parents and Birmingham City Council to ensure all children return to school following a difficult previous year. We would like to thank parents for the work you have done in ensuring your children received education during that time.

It is now vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on their education, wellbeing and wider development. We also know that when not in school, children missed being with their friends and the wider social aspects of school.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. **Therefore, the government has confirmed that school attendance continues to be compulsory.**

This means that (unless parents are formally notified of new lockdown arrangements where schools are closed or a child is required to self-isolate), the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to send their child/children to school regularly where they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the option for local authorities to again consider the use of legal sanctions, including penalty notices and prosecution in court.

If you are worried about your child/children attending school the first port of call is to discuss your concerns with the school directly. The school has specialist staff who may be able to help, and all schools work closely with health and council teams who may also be able to help if needed.

Please note that, given the disruption to children's education caused by the pandemic, requests for leave during term time are unlikely to be authorised by the Head Teacher.

Family emergencies also need careful consideration. It is not always appropriate or in the best interests of the child to miss school for emergencies which are being dealt with by adult family members.

No school or local authority wants to take legal action. Every attempt to resolve parents' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal legal action, which may include a penalty notice or court action, is instigated.

However, where all efforts fail and parents fail to ensure their child attends school regularly, legal action may be considered.

After so much disruption to children's education over the past year, the most important thing is that the school and parents work together to get children back into school. The school is ready to listen so please contact them if you have any worries and they will try to help you. There is also information for parents and carers on attending school during the pandemic here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Additionally, Birmingham City Council provides online information and guidance to parents on school attendance which you can access here:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/1502/school_attendance_advice_for_parents.

We wish you and your child/children all the best for the new academic year.

Kind regards

Yours faithfully

Mrs T Peters
Headteacher

Education Legal Intervention Team
Birmingham City Council